

Report Reference Number: E/21/25

To:	Executive
Date:	Thursday 11 November 2021
Status:	Key Decision
Wards Affected:	Selby East, Selby West, Sherburn-in-Elmet, Tadcaster
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Title: Town Centres Revitalisation Programme – Grant Policy

Summary:

To support town centre revitalisation, a grant funding policy is being established so that, when funding and opportunity allow, officers can respond flexibly and quickly to enable the delivery of community led projects.

Recommendations:

- The Executive is asked to approve the Towns Centres Revitalisation Programme (TCRP) grant policy.
- The Executive is asked to approve delegation to operate the grant policy to the Director of Economic Regeneration and Place in consultation with the Lead Executive member for Communities and Economic Development, S151 Officer and Solicitor to the Council, up to a maximum of £250,000.

Reasons for recommendation:

To enable the Economic Development and Regeneration Service to deliver the town centres revitalisation programme in a proactive and flexible way in line with the council plan priorities and principles: to develop a long-term programme of market town regeneration, and to be community focused – empowering people in decisions about their area and their services.

1. Introduction and background

- 1.1 In 2020 £2.6m of Programme for Growth (P4G) funding was agreed for town centre revitalisation in the district's three main centres Selby, Sherburn-in-

Elmet and Tadcaster. In 2021 a further 500k was allocated to Tadcaster and Sherburn with an additional £650k allocated to 'Sherburn Legacy Projects'. The Executive received a report on 9th September 2021 outlining a framework of how the £4.25m budget would be allocated to support the delivery of a pipeline of capital-based projects, using outline budget estimates. The main scope of projects was identified through stakeholder consultation carried out between February 2019 to present. There are several priority projects identified that the council would take forward for delivery. It is anticipated that the majority of these will be SDC-led with appropriate budget allocated. However, officers wish to reserve the ability to support community led capital projects where funding and opportunity allow.

- 1.2 There have been examples in recent years where communities have come forward with larger capital-based projects that have required reporting to the Executive and Full Council in order to make appropriate decisions (for example Tadcaster Community Sports Trust in July 2021 and Sherburn Astrodevelopment in Jan 2017). The Sherburn-in-Elmet community have particularly come forward with additional 'Legacy Project' ideas they wish to deliver which has prompted the need to develop the policy and enable the council to invest in such town-related community activity in a more responsive and efficient way. The policy provides a process in which to do this.
- 1.3 It is anticipated projects will require larger amounts of funding. The minimum amount available under the grant policy will be £10,000 and the maximum £250,000. Smaller projects being delivered by the community are likely more suitable for other funding schemes, such as Selby District Council Members Community Funding, where projects have a minimum of £300 and a maximum of £3000 awarded.

2. A Town Centre Revitalisation Programme Grant Policy

- 2.1 A draft policy outline is attached (Appendix A). The main objective of the policy is to provide officers with delegated powers to be able to deliver on a wider range of projects with community organisations, where funding opportunity and appropriate business case allow.
- 2.2 It is anticipated that grant funding activity would initially be focused on Sherburn due to identified projects and the funding made available at the Medium-Term Financial Strategy meeting in July. Availability of community funding across the towns would be based on any remaining funding from within the current allocated P4G Towns Regeneration funding once SDC project cost outlines have been established and any spare funding could be redistributed. Any budget reallocated in this way would require an Executive decision.
- 2.3 The policy includes:
 - An overview definition of what constitutes the town centre revitalisation programme
 - The themes/priorities for funding

- How to apply
- Any stages of application (i.e. expression of interest to full application/business case)
- Who can apply
- Any funding eligibility exclusions (i.e. funding/spend already taken place)
- The minimum and maximum range of funding
- What the funding can/cannot be spent on
- How decisions will be made
- Monitoring and Evaluation

2.4 It is anticipated that the grant scheme can be made available from 1st December 2021 at the earliest, and funding will start to be allocated to eligible projects for early 2022, and where funding availability allows once SDC led projects in each town have been actioned.

2.5 The purpose of the funding is to support projects which deliver on the key priorities of the town centre regeneration work, to:

- enhance the physical appearance;
- promote digital accessibility; and
- promote cultural engagement.

2.6 This is to achieve outcomes such as:

- increasing footfall and dwell time;
- improving health and well-being;
- reducing vacancy;
- enhancing connectivity;
- enhancing heritage;
- supporting the visitor economy and
- improving safety.

2.7 The boundary maps within the policy identify the area around the town centre which can best impact on achieving the above outcomes and aligns with the SDC led projects. This can support organisations to consider the diverse ways in which town centres can be accessed and enjoyed (i.e. through accessible walking and cycling routes, improved open space and activities which draw people to the town centre. Applying organisations can be from outside of the Selby District area but they must complete the project in the specific town centre boundary and demonstrate benefit for local business, residents and communities.

3. Benefits of the approach:

3.1 Transparency and robustness of decision making:

The grant framework will have clear criteria, decision making process and monitoring to ensure effective delivery of projects.

3.2 Increased capacity to deliver:

The Council has set out an ambitious plan for town centre revitalisation and invested significant funding into development of a series of projects that will

enhance our town centres physically, digitally and culturally. This would enable an increased number of projects to be delivered, outside of SDC capacity.

3.3 Direct investment in the community:

Allocating funds to projects delivered by the community, as well as the recently approved budget allocation to priority projects under the programme of town centre regeneration, allows significant investment in the district's centres, with a flexible approach to delivery.

3.4 Community power to make a difference:

Community organisations will take the lead on managing and delivering projects in line with the policy framework, that support the community's needs. By enabling ownership of projects by the community, the framework will encourage and enable community action to improve the district centres using local knowledge and resources.

4. Risks:

4.1 Community projects presented do not fit town centre criteria.

The policy includes clear criteria (as listed at 2.3) for each centre. For other potential projects or of smaller size, communities can be signposted to other eligible funding.

4.2 Some community projects will be funded when others won't.

The policy includes clear criteria for eligibility. A due diligence process will ensure that community organisations are operationally stable and able to deliver. An evaluation process will be followed, with decisions recorded.

4.3 No community organisations come forward.

The Sherburn community have proactively identified projects that could be led by community organisations. The policy is to enable working with communities as and when funding is available. The town centre revitalisation programme is not reliant on community led projects.

4.4 Community organisations do not have the infrastructure or capacity to deliver.

Once established, the policy framework enables officers to engage with communities at regular intervals and when opportunities arise, so organisations could develop the structures needed to apply in future.

4.5 Local Government Review processes halt progress.

Dependent on decisions made during the reorganisation there could be a risk that projects are halted or opportunities to access funding are restricted. The town centre revitalisation programme and this grant policy should offer a coherent plan for delivery over several years and which the new authority is able to support.

4.6 Staff capacity to manage application and grant monitoring processes.

The Economic Development and Regeneration Service is a small team focused on delivering major projects. There will invariably be some capacity issues in order to manage both SDC focused projects and work with the community. A Project Support Officer post has been established for recruitment, to support the team and the Community, Partnerships and Customer Service to increase engagement and monitoring capacity and to mitigate this as much as possible.

4.7 Community funding may not be available within each town centre area, or accessible at the time of application.

The majority of the towns centre revitalisation funding is currently allocated to work which will be SDC-led. However, this is not the case for the Sherburn Legacy Project funding. There may also be opportunity to support other community led projects once SDC projects have been fully costed and outlined. Therefore, the policy offers flexibility as and when opportunity arises. Officers will manage any approach from communities and clarify where there may be available funding. Where funding through this programme is unavailable, officers can assist in understanding whether there are other opportunities with external funders.

5. Implications

5.1 Legal Implications

The policy identifies that there will be a set criteria for relevant projects, as well as application and decision-making processes to ensure a robust and relevant approach. Each project will include entering into a grant agreement with ongoing monitoring requirements.

SDC is aware of its obligations under the UK Subsidy Control regime following the cessation of EU State Aid Rules and SDC may require grant recipients to complete Subsidy Control assessments where relevant.

5.2 Financial Implications

There are no financial implications as a direct result of this report. The funding required to establish a grant policy would be drawn from within the approved programme for growth budgets for town centre revitalisation. Funding is capped at the approved budget. The policy provides for closure of the grants programme once funds have been fully committed. Due diligence processes will also be completed on each community organisation to be funded to ensure a robust approach to grant awarding and monitoring.

5.3 Policy and Risk Implications

Any submitted projects would need to align with/complement any local regeneration policy or restrictions at that time (i.e. Conservation Areas, Planning Permissions). All projects should consider the Preferred Options Local Plan and Neighbourhood Planning in Selby and Tadcaster.

There may be a risk in ability to deliver projects due to Local Government Reorganisation (LGR), with a new unitary authority in place April 2023. However, the Council has committed the funding within current budget allocations and there are clear adopted strategies in place that justify these investments. We will ensure projects are progressed as quickly as possible to leave a positive legacy for the District.

5.4 Corporate Plan Implications

The actions are in line with and will help deliver the following aspects of the Council Plan by making the District:

- a great place to live, with regenerated town centres.
- a great place to enjoy, with more sustainable transport and improved community safety and public spaces.

The approach being taken also demonstrates our principles of being collaborative and community focussed, enabling communities to take an active role in delivering for their local areas.

5.5 Resource Implications

The successful delivery of all the schemes identified relies heavily upon effective collaborative working across SDC and the timely involvement of partners.

Administration of the grant funding will be supported by the new post currently being recruited for within the Community, Partnerships and Customers Team.

5.6 Other Implications

Ongoing revenue costs should be identified within individual Business Cases.

5.7 Equalities Impact Assessment

There are not considered to be any specific equalities implications in this report. The approach encourages a community led approach. Part of funding applications would be to consider how project outcomes improve well-being for all, and sustainability. Applicants are asked to include who the beneficiaries of funding are in their application.

6. Conclusion

- 6.1** The Communities Team and Economic Development and Regeneration Team are working together to provide this new grant policy for Executive approval, which will enable officers to work flexibly and where appropriate, fund community led projects in the three main District centres, that deliver town centre revitalisation aims.

7. Background Documents

- Forward Frameworks/Action Plans developed by the People and Places Partnership are available at <https://www.selby.gov.uk/our-town-centres>

8. Appendices

- Appendix A: Draft Town Centre Revitalisation Programme Grant Policy

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