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## **BUILD BACK A BETTER BORDERS RECOVERY FUND**

**Report by Service Director Customer and Communities**

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### **SCOTTISH BORDERS COUNCIL**

**13 May 2021**

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#### **1 PURPOSE AND SUMMARY**

- 1.1 This report outlines proposals for the administration of the Build Back a Better Borders Fund which was agreed within the Council's Financial Plan on 19 March 2021.**
- 1.2 This new fund has been established in response to the Covid-19 pandemic, and, in recovery from it, will provide support for initiatives, projects or events that will "re-boot" or "kick start" activities relating to sport, culture, tackling environment and climate change issues in the year of COP26 (26<sup>th</sup> Conference of the Parties to the Convention) or volunteering, and therefore strengthening community capacity, resilience and engagement.
- 1.3 The Fund, due to its focus on communities, will be allocated to each of the five localities and will be managed through each Area Partnerships in line with the Scottish Community Development Centre (SCDC) Report recommendations of empowering communities, improving transparency of the grant making process and being part of decision making at a local level.
- 1.4 The focus of the Fund is to support those most in need to recover from the pandemic. There are a number of recent studies that have highlighted that those in particular SIMD areas have been disproportionately impacted as a result of Covid-19, and the risk of falling into poverty and extreme poverty is therefore considerably higher to those who were already vulnerable. In line with national and local policies such as Fairer Scotland Duty (including the Child Poverty (Scotland) Act), UN Sustainable Development Goals, Scottish Borders Council's Anti-Poverty Strategy and Child Poverty Action Plan, it is therefore proposed that the budget allocation is based on an 80%/20% split of population and Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD), which is detailed at section 5. A draft framework for the Fund is detailed at Appendix 1.
- 1.6 Applications will be invited from 1 June 2021 to 31 May 2022, will be assessed by officers and presented to each Area Partnership for consensus. If consensus is not reached, it will be for Elected Members to make the decision, with the Chair having the casting vote.

- 1.7 In order to expedite the Fund efficiently and effectively, there may be a requirement to convene additional Area Partnership meetings if there is a high level of applications.

## **2 RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **2.1 I recommend that Council:**

- (a) Approve the proposed funding model as detailed in Appendix 1.**
- (b) Agree the funding allocation to each locality on the basis of 80%/20% population and SIMD as detailed at section 5.**

### **3 BACKGROUND**

- 3.1 On 1 March 2020 the first death in Scotland from Covid-19 was announced. Over the coming weeks and months, the impact of the pandemic and the two phases of lockdown has had a significant impact on our communities and local community groups within the Borders.
- 3.2 We are aware that there are a number of emerging themes and issues for those in our communities as a result of the pandemic – health and physical activity, loneliness and social isolation, mental health and wellbeing, lack of community cohesion, environmental issues, lack of money and opportunities for groups to generate income.
- 3.3 In line with stated government policy in both Holyrood and Westminster, local government has been challenged to ensure that, post COVID, there is a return to a life where there is opportunity for everybody, irrespective of means, to enjoy a quality of life which is enhanced beyond that which existed pre-COVID.
- 3.4 Charged with that ambition it is necessary to provide a financial means to encourage and provide the opportunity for this to happen, for the greater cohesion of all communities and those who live therein, building on the atmosphere created by so many willing volunteers and helpers, who provided such valiant service during the pandemic.
- 3.5 This fund is about communities coming together and collaborating so that all sections of society and communities can engage and play their part in the Borders recovery.
- 3.6 Applications will be encouraged for projects and events which increase or improve access to sport or arts and culture to enhance community wellbeing and tackle social isolation.
- 3.7 Projects and events that improve the local environment or make a contribution to sustainability, in line with the UN Sustainable Development Goals and the Council's Climate Change Checklist and Food Growing Strategy.
- 3.8 Applications to increase or improve community capacity, resilience and engagement will be invited as well as applications that enhance and support both formal and informal volunteering. Applications for initiatives that recognise those that have given service to their communities during the pandemic, will also be welcomed in light of the overwhelming response from communities over the last year.
- 3.9 Applications for intergenerational projects and events will also be invited, and those that can provide support to the socially isolated.
- 3.10 On 27 August 2021, Council noted the recommendations within the SCDC report in relation to community empowerment, improved transparency of grant making process and communities being involved in decision making at a local level.

- 3.11 One-off Funds with specific timescales and criteria have previously been assessed by officers and then went forward for decision making at Executive or Council. In line with the recommendations within the SDCD report, it is being proposed that this should change, with the Recovery Fund being managed through each Area Partnership with consensus and decision making at a local level.
- 3.12 However, it is recognised that there is a great deal of work being undertaken by Working Groups within each Area Partnership in reviewing their current Community Fund arrangements, and it would therefore be an extremely difficult ask of them to expedite this fund within the timescales, given that the launch date is 01 June 2021 and that arrangements within all areas are still being finalised.
- 3.13 In order to reduce the burden for Area Partnerships until they have appropriate assessment arrangements in place, it is therefore proposed that applications will be assessed by officers and presented to each Area Partnership for consensus. If consensus is not reached, it will be for Elected Members to make the decision, with the Chair having the casting vote.
- 3.14 Communities and community groups will require a range of support in order to recover from the impact of the pandemic, and the Build Back a Better Borders Recovery Fund is one element that can assist by funding being dispersed in a timely and effective manner.

#### **4 KEY POINTS OF PROPOSED FUND**

- 4.1 A focus for this funding will be areas of those most in need. There are a number of recent studies and reports by organisations such as the Joseph Rowntree Foundation (JRF's UK Poverty Grassroots Action Group), the Trussell Trust, Scotland's Wellbeing Group etc., that have highlighted that in general terms, those in high SIMD areas have been more impacted as a result of Covid-19. Therefore the risk of falling into poverty and extreme poverty is likely to be borne unequally, widen inequalities and produce disproportionate impacts for those groups that already face particular challenges.
- 4.2 The Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) is a recognised tool for identifying the places in Scotland where people are experiencing disadvantage across different aspects of their lives and this has been used to calculate the allocations shown below at Section 5.
- 4.3 Therefore, given the above, and in line with national and local policies such as Fairer Scotland Duty (including the Child Poverty (Scotland) Act), UN Sustainable Development Goals, Scottish Borders Council's Anti-Poverty Strategy and Child Poverty Action Plan, an 80%/20% population and SIMD split has been proposed. Applicants must be able to demonstrate that their project or event is a new initiative that will assist in opening up avenues and opportunities for all regardless of circumstance.
- 4.4 The Build Back a Better Borders Recovery Fund will:
- a) Open from 1 June 2021 to 31 May 2022
  - b) Support local suppliers where possible

- c) Support the Living Wage in relation to staffing costs
- d) Be available to constituted groups (max £15k), and non-constituted (max £5k, with payment through an umbrella body), with a fast track process for applications up to £1.5k
- e) Increase community engagement and capacity
- f) Projects and events must be for new initiatives, meet the required outcomes, and be accessible to all within the community and be free of charge
- g) Projects and events must demonstrate within their applications how they meet at least one of the following outcomes for all within the community:
  - i. Improved access to sport
  - ii. Improved access to arts & culture
  - iii. Increased volunteering capacity
  - iv. Improved or enhanced community capacity, resilience and engagement
  - v. Local environment enhanced in a sustainable way
  - vi. Greater Intergenerational work

4.5 Applicants must also be able to demonstrate within their application that their local communities are coming together and collaborating in the delivery of the above outcomes within their proposals.

4.6 Projects or events should be able to commence when restrictions allow, and must meet and adhere to all applicable Covid-19 guidance. They must also be completed within 6 months of receiving award payment. Any unspent funds will be transferred to each respective Area Partnership's Community Fund.

4.7 The application forms, guidance, assessment documents and promotion of this fund will look distinctly different to the current Community Fund to ensure that this is clearly seen as an opportunity to apply for **recovery funding** at a local level.

4.8 A review of the fund will be carried out after six months of operation with further promotional activity taking place as required.

## **5 BUILD BACK A BETTER BORDERS RECOVERY FUND BUDGET 2021/22**

5.1 The Build Back a Better Borders Recovery Fund budget is £500k. As the focus of this fund is based on those most in need, it is proposed that the allocation will acknowledge those areas that have a higher percentage of deprivation.

- 5.2 Based on the percentages of 80% population and 20% SIMD estimates, the allocations for each Area Partnership are shown at table 1 below:

<b>Area</b>	<b>Population</b>	<b>80% pop/20% SIMD split</b>	<b>£</b>
Berwickshire	20,969	17.6	87,783
Cheviot	19,433	16.0	79,926
Eildon	35,598	30.7	153,633
T&L	17,925	19.6	98,003
Tweeddale	21,345	16.1	80,655
<b>Total</b>	<b>115,270*</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>500,000</b>

\*2018 Population Estimate (NRS)

## 6 IMPLICATIONS

### 6.1 Financial

There are no further financial implications other than those detailed within the body of the report.

### 6.2 Risk and Mitigations

There is a risk that in the event of further Covid-19 restrictions being imposed, that projects/events may not be able to go ahead or complete within 6 months of awards being made. Flexibility regarding timescales will be required if further restrictions occur.

### 6.3 Integrated Impact Assessment

- (a) A focus for this funding will be areas of deprivation and SIMD profiling. Applicants will be required to demonstrate that their project/event is a new initiative, meet the required outcomes and will assist in opening up avenues and opportunities for all regardless of circumstance.
- (b) In order to support the aims of the fund to reach those most in need, the allocation of funding will be based on an 80%/20% population and SIMD split which recognises and reflects where additional funding and support is required.
- (c) Any staffing costs within successful applications must pay the Living Wage in support of Fairer Scotland Duty.
- (d) It is anticipated that the above allocation formula and Living Wage stipulation will assist in eliminating discrimination, help promote equality of opportunity with those who have equality characteristics as the way in which the recommendations are addressed will be chosen and agreed by the membership of the Area Partnership and the wider community. The recommendations and guidance will be working to avoid exclusion, tackle inequality and empower local communities.

## 6.4 Sustainable Development Goals

Projects/events will be assessed against the UN Sustainable Development Goals Checklist, and applicants will need to detail within their applications which specific goals they aim to achieve and what the impact/difference their project will make.

## 6.5 Climate Change

This criteria of this proposed fund will invite applications that enhance the local environment in a sustainable way. Applications will be assessed against the Climate Change Checklist to ensure that they meet the necessary requirements.

## 6.6 Rural Proofing

This is a Borders-wide fund available across five localities, with an 80% /20% population and SIMD split in recognition of those most in need.

## 6.7 Data Protection Impact Statement

There are no personal data implications arising from the proposals contained in this report.

## 6.8 Changes to Scheme of Administration or Scheme of Delegation

Appropriate changes will be made by the Clerk to the Council (using her delegated authority) to the Area Partnership functions within the Scheme of Administration and the Scheme of Delegation as a result of this report.

## 7 CONSULTATION

- 7.1 The Executive Director (Finance & Regulatory), the Monitoring Officer/Chief Legal Officer, the Chief Officer Audit and Risk, the Service Director HR & Communications, the Clerk to the Council and Corporate Communications have been consulted and any comments received have been incorporated into the final report.

### Approved by

**Jenni Craig**

**Service Director, Customer & Communities**

**Signature .....**

### Author(s)

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**Background Papers: Nil**

**Previous Minute Reference: N/A**

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