

<b>Title of Report:</b>	<b>Consideration of extended match funding for Village Renewal funding</b>
<b>Committee Report Submitted To:</b>	<b>Leisure and Development</b>
<b>Date of Meeting:</b>	<b>21 January 2020</b>
<b>For Decision or For Information</b>	<b>Decision</b>

<b>Linkage to Council Strategy (2019-23)</b>	
Strategic Theme	Accelerating our Economy and Contributing to Prosperity
Outcome	Promoting the Borough as an attractive place to live, work, invest and visit
Lead Officer	Head of Service, Prosperity and Place

<b>Budgetary Considerations</b>	
Cost of Proposal	To be agreed
Included in Current Year Estimates	<b>YES/NO</b>
Capital/Revenue	Capital
Code	
Staffing Costs	No staff cost recoupment is possible

<b>Screening Requirements</b>	Required for new or revised Policies, Plans, Strategies or Service Delivery Proposals.		
Section 75 Screening	Screening Completed:	Yes/No	Date: Not applicable
	EQIA Required and Completed:	Yes/No	Date: Not applicable
Rural Needs Assessment (RNA)	Screening Completed	Yes/No	Date: Not applicable
	RNA Required and Completed:	Yes/No	Date: Not applicable
Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA)	Screening Completed:	Yes/No	Date: Not applicable
	DPIA Required and Completed:	Yes/No	Date: Not applicable

## **1.0 Purpose of Report**

To consider the potential for matching funding for further Village Renewal Projects.

The Village Renewal Programme is a theme within the Rural Development Programme, provided by the Department for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA), which allows for short term capital interventions in those towns and areas which are within the rural areas of the Borough.

It is currently 75% funded by the Department and 25% funded by Council, as per agreement in 2015. Council is the sole applicant and is implementing this measure on behalf of 22 villages in the Borough.

## **2.0 Background**

On 12 December 2019, correspondence was received from the DAERA:

*“Following the first tranche of additional funding offered to LAGs in May 2019 the Department has decided to go out again to LAGs to find out the scope/nature and value of projects that may be under development or in the pipeline that could be delivered by assistance from the LEADER Village Renewal Scheme.*

*“The Department at this time has not put a budget figure on the possible funding which may be available and we will wait to see what comes into the Department based on the criteria set out below. This exercise is to determine capital budget requirements only.”*

An expression of interest was included, which must be completed by 31 January 2020.

Conditions to be met include:

- Projects will be welcome where they are well advanced in terms of community agreement and *detailed within a Village Plan*.
- Projects, where design is completed or under way, would be particularly welcome.
- Costs at this stage may be indicative (where these are firmed up this would be welcome).
- Title will be a factor in the Department’s consideration on the amount of additional funding to be allocated to the LAG. Any title issues must be detailed in the EOI.
- Timescales will be important and projects must be capable of being delivered within a 12 month period from the cut-off date (i.e. September 2020) for the issue of Letters of Offer.
- Proposals detailed in an Expression of Interest must not be for the purposes of match funding projects that have received funding from Priority 6 or the LEADER Rural Tourism Scheme.
- You will be required to state whether statutory approvals are required. If so, what is the timing for submission of applications etc.
- Grant intervention rate is 75% of eligible project costs.
- Maximum grant available is per the Village Renewal Scheme sheet or the level of funding set by the Local Action Group, which may be lower than the maximum grant quoted in the Village Renewal Scheme Sheet.
- There will be no administration funding allocated against any additional funding provided to LAGs as part of this exercise.
- The Leader Scheme Rules will apply to any additional funding awarded”

### **3.0 The current Village Renewal Allocation**

In 2015, in advance of the commencement of the Rural Development Programme, a report was brought to Council seeking matching funding for both Village Renewal and Basic Services. In the case of Village Renewal, Council agreed around £300,000 towards the Local Action Group's contribution of approximately £1m.

As members are aware, 22 villages are in a position to avail of a variety of schemes from this fund.

One village – Drumsurn – was in a position to avail of the funding, but due to an environmental issue, it will now *not* be able to receive a letter of offer by end-March. This project involves the replacement of the existing community centre mobile unit.

### **4.0 Issues**

Members should note the following:

- No extra administration funding is in place to cover the cost of any works which are funded, and go beyond the end of the current programme at December 2020 – this means that both Proesperity & Place staff and Capital Projects staff will need to include any new projects into their existing portfolio of work.
- Matching funding will be required to the value of 25 percent of any agreed projects
- The list provided is indicative based on the content of existing Village Plans – there may only be a very small number of advanced projects which emerge from this indicative list
- Of those villages which did not participate in the Village Renewal Process, three were covered by funding from the Economic Development Budget to develop their own plans – Mosside, Dernaflaw, and Armoy, and projects from their village plans have been identified.
- Taking on further village renewal projects at this point may have a negative impact on any time frame for Council's own prioritised projects.
- Anything project which requires planning permission may add up to six months or more to the scheme, and affect timelines

In terms of the Drumsurn project mentioned earlier, it is envisaged that this will be able to proceed at a later time, given that the environmental issue mentioned will be resolved in early April 2020. This project will not require the allocation of extra Council funding – the amount required is contained within Council's original allocation.

## **Potential for New Village Renewal Interventions**

Three villages did not enter the Stage 1 Village Renewal process of village plans, and after subsequent approaches, Council funded village plans for Armoy, Mosside, and Dernaflaw.

After the approach from the Department, these three village plans were examined for potential projects. This yielded the following, however it should be noted that no consultation has yet taken place with the villages, given the very recent nature of the request from the Department.

<b>Village</b>	<b>Project</b>	<b>Guesstimate Value</b>
Armoy	Both signage and interpretive panels are mentioned throughout. General directional signage through the village is featured	From £20-50k depending on location and number
	Park area near to Tilly Molloy's – potential for some EI schemes	Anything up to £100,000 based on the space available
	Both playparks require some refurbishment – council-owned	Potentially £30k, based on existing schemes elsewhere
	Limepark is a Council-owned, former rugby pitch – potential for refurbishment to include a MUGA type facility, depending on need.	£150,000
Dernaflaw	Identified within the Village Plan – space has been identified in conjunction with the only community facility which is the local primary school – “development of space for leisure, community and sports use outside school hours”, “a safe and accessible play park in “school road” area of village” – approx. 15x20m of existing space which requires surfacing, finalise fencing, perhaps some play equipment.	£50,000 maximum (may also have some potential for matching funding through private sector)
Mosside	Actions identified included resurfacing of an existing football pitch – this would be dependent on usage, which is not thought to be high, currently; however, there is extensive surrounding area to the pitch which is unused – suggestion for community gardens/allotments	£50,000 based on other schemes – may be more depending on drainage, topo etc.
	Outdoor gym – existing council land	£20,000
	Skateboard and/or BMX ramps is suggested – existing council land	£100,000 – no work around need or potential uptake has been done on this
	The current war memorial is inside the local church – suggested new memorial for existing NIHE grounds at Rockfields.	£20,000 based on other sculpture trail ideas



## **5.0 Options and Recommendation**

Members are first asked to consider if they wish to pursue the potential funding on offer from the Department, with a cost to Council of 25%, with attention given to the issues mentioned above.

If Members agree to the funding, Armoy, Dernaflaw and Mosside are identified for projects that are deliverable within the framework set out by the Department. This will also require the agreement of the Local Action Group.

The next step will be to submit the requisite expressions of interest to the Department. Officers will undertake a review of the village plans to ascertain which projects could potentially fulfil the criteria mentioned in the email from the Department.

If Members do not wish to submit extra expressions of interest, in terms of the Drumsurn project, which will require no extra allocation from Council, and is “shovel ready”, it is recommended that an expression of interest is submitted; the outstanding environmental assessment which needs to be completed will be resolved by April; this project’s matching funding is included within the existing allocation from Council.

Given the completion date of 31 January for this action, there will not be an opportunity to revert to full Council for approval. Members may wish to place a cap on the level of match funding which will be required – for example, £100,000 will yield funding of £300,000 if successful.

**This report is submitted for consideration based on the options outlined above.**