

Title of Report:	Town Centre Experience Fund 2021
Committee Report Submitted To:	The Leisure & Development Committee
Date of Meeting:	18 January 2022
For Decision or For Information	For Decision

Linkage to Council Strategy (2019-23)	
Strategic Theme	Improvement and Innovation
Outcome	Council facilitates towns and villages in the Borough to continue to provide quality environments which evolve to meet the needs of their citizens, businesses and visitors to them
Lead Officer	Interim Head of Prosperity & Place

Budgetary Considerations	
Cost of Proposal	£24K
Included in Current Year Estimates	Yes
Capital/Revenue	Revenue
Code	31405
Staffing Costs	Within budget

Screening Requirements	Required for new or revised Policies, Plans, Strategies or Service Delivery Proposals.		
Section 75 Screening	Screening Completed:		
	EQIA Required and Completed:		
Rural Needs Assessment (RNA)	Screening Completed		
	RNA Required and Completed:		
Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA)	Screening Completed:		
	DPIA Required and Completed:		

1.0 Purpose of Report

The purpose of this report is to update members on the level of applications and the outcome of the assessment panel decisions in respect of the Town Centre Experience Fund Pilot Programme 2021, and to seek Council's approval to issue letters of offer.

2.0 Background:

The Town Centre Experience Fund was open for grants, up to a maximum of £4,000. The total Pilot Programme fund is £40,000. Groups of traders/town centre stakeholders were encouraged to work together to introduce new experiences, activities, marketing or event development for their respective town centre.

The Town Centre Experience Fund opened on Tuesday 16th November 2021 and closed at noon on Monday 13th December 2021, with expenditure to be completed and claimed by Thursday 31st March 2022. This was promoted through Council's corporate social media and a mailout to all town centre organisations.

Initial Eligibility Criteria as follows:

- All applicants must be based within the town centres of Coleraine, Limavady, Ballymoney, Portrush, Portstewart. or, Ballycastle, or the village centres of Ballykelly, Bushmills, Cushendall, Dungiven, Garvagh or Kilrea.
- They must be actively trading commercially or a constituted organisation.
- The lead applicant must have a business bank (or other financial institution) account for the sole purpose of their business/organisation – i.e., separate from personal finances.
- Businesses / organisations may only make one or be involved in one application per year.

Pre-Application Support:

Guidelines were made available to all interested businesses and included full details in respect of levels of award, exclusions and assessment and scoring processes. [Annex A].

A named contact was also provided to potential applicants wishing to discuss their idea pre-application.

3.0 Applications Received

7 applications were received at closing time 12noon, 13th December 2021.

Following eligibility checks through the funding unit, an assessment panel of Council Officers assessed the applications received against the criteria as stated in the Guidance Notes on Tuesday 21st December 2021.

Applicants were required to attain a score of at least 65% in order to be recommended for funding, in line with Council's Grant Funding Policy.

The following is a summary of the assessment of the applications:

Town Centre Experience Fund – Pilot Programme 2021	
No. of applications received	7
No. of ineligible applications	0
No. of unsuccessful applications (scoring less than 65%)	1
No. of successful applications (scoring 65% and above)	6

Total Value of Town Centre Experience Fund Applied for	£33,634
Total Value of Town Centre Experience Fund recommended [based on maximum grant £4000 per applicant]	£24,000

A list of the applications received, the assessment scores and the grant amount recommended are listed in the table below.

Town Centre Experience Fund 2021-22 Pilot - Assessment Scores & Recommended Grant Amounts

Applicant ID	Project Title	Amount Requested (£)	Total Score	Amount Recommended (£)
8225	Cushendall Together	£4,000	72%	£4,000
8229	Ballycastle Town	£4,570	70%	£4,000
8254	New mascot for Ballymoney to aid community and marketing events and campaigns	£5,604	68%	£4,000
8266	Experience Bushmills	£4,000	72%	£4,000
8269	PortstewART art trail to be launched at St Patrick's Day Duck Fest	£4,000	86%	£4,000
8276	Garvagh Forest Town	£4,000	58%	£0
8279	Town speakers	£7,460	66%	£4,000

The unsuccessful applicant will receive feedback from the Town & Village management team to support future successful applications to the Fund.

4.0 Recommendation

That Council agrees to award Town Centre Experience Funding to the applicants listed for the maximum grant of £4000 each totalling £24,000.

Annex A:

Eligibility and Assessment Criteria for Town Centre Experience Fund – Pilot Programme 2021-2022

Purpose of Grant Programme

Eligibility and Assessment Criteria for Town Centre Experience Fund – Pilot Programme 2021-2022

Purpose of Grant Programme

The Town Centre Experience Fund is aimed at the 12 towns and villages of Ballymoney, Ballycastle, Ballykelly, Bushmills, Coleraine, Cushendall, Dungiven, Garvagh, Kilrea, Limavady, Portrush and Portstewart. It's about bringing different ideas together and developing cohesive thinking around activities which can improve the town centre experience. These could be commercial, community or cultural experiences which will contribute to the vibrancy of the town centre and generate more engagement in the town.

Level of Grant Award

The Town Centre Experience Fund can provide funding of up to 100% costs to a maximum of £4,000. Match funding is not a requirement. Applicant businesses/organisations must be in a position to pay for items and claim the money from Council retrospectively.

Eligible Organisations

All applicants must be based within the town centre of Ballymoney, Ballycastle, Ballykelly, Bushmills, Coleraine, Cushendall, Dungiven, Garvagh, Kilrea, Limavady, Portrush and Portstewart. They must also be actively trading commercially or a constituted organisation. The lead applicant must have a business bank (or other financial institution) account for the sole purpose of their business/organisation – i.e. separate from personal finances.

Businesses/organisations may only make one or be involved in one application per year

Eligible Activities to be funded

New equipment linked to creating a new event for the town.

Creating new marketing and promotional material.

Implementing a significant marketing campaign which will lead to increased footfall.

Development of an initiative or event which will lead to more engagement within the town.

Ineligible Organisations / Activities

Businesses/organisations whose address is outside the main retail town/village centres of Ballymoney, Ballycastle, Ballykelly, Bushmills, Coleraine, Cushendall, Dungiven, Garvagh, Kilrea, Limavady, Portrush and Portstewart.

Political Organisations

Businesses/organisations yet to commence trading

Any business where there are ethical or reputational considerations – e.g. gambling, money lending, adult entertainment, tobacco products or cannabis products not authorised as medicines, debt factoring, hire purchase financing; pyramid schemes; projects which have as their object the promotion of political or religious views; illegal or immoral activities.

Any other business that the Council may from time to time deem to be ineligible.

Assessment Criteria

Criteria	Score out of a possible 5	Weighting	Possible Score
Detailed description of the project		X2	10
Clear and concise evidence of the need for the project within the scope of the fund		X3	15
Clear and realistic outcomes set for the project e.g. increase in footfall, increase in dwell time, increased spend in towns		X4	20
Clear and concise evidence of a collaborative approach to achieve the project objectives		X1	5