



**REPORT TO: PLANNING AND REGULATORY SERVICES COMMITTEE ON
25 OCTOBER 2022**

SUBJECT: TOWN CENTRE IMPROVEMENT PLANS

**BY: DEPUTE CHIEF EXECUTIVE (ECONOMY, ENVIRONMENT AND
FINANCE)**

1. REASON FOR REPORT

- 1.1 To ask the Committee to note the representations received to the draft Town Centre Improvement Plans (TCIP) and agree the Council's response to these, approve the final TCIP for Aberlour, Buckie, Dufftown, Forres, Keith and Lossiemouth and Delivery Plan, and agree the allocation of funds for TCIP proposals as set out in section 5.4 of this report.
- 1.2 This report is submitted to Committee in terms of Section III (E) (1) of the Council's Scheme of Administration relating to exercising the statutory functions of the Council as a Planning Authority.

2. RECOMMENDATION

2.1 It is recommended that the Committee:

- (i) notes the representations received to the public consultation on the draft TCIP for Aberlour, Buckie, Dufftown, Forres, Keith and Lossiemouth and agrees the Council's response to these set out in Appendix 1;**
- (ii) approves the final TCIP and Delivery Plan for Aberlour, Buckie, Dufftown, Forres, Keith and Lossiemouth set out in Appendix 2 and agrees that these will be a material consideration in the development management process; and,**
- (iii) agrees the TCIP projects set out in section 5.4 of this report are to be funded through the Place-based Investment Fund (PBIF) for the financial year 2022/23 and Economic Recovery Fund (ERF) for the financial year 2023/24.**

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The draft TCIP for Aberlour, Buckie, Dufftown, Forres, Keith and Lossiemouth were approved at a meeting of this Committee on 18 January 2022 for an 8

week public consultation (para 10 of the Minute refers). The draft TCIP set out a range of proposals to support the regeneration of the town centres which included bringing vacant and derelict buildings and sites back into use, improving active travel connections, heritage trails, greening and other streetscape improvements in order to create vibrant, attractive, green, health, safer and inclusive town centres. The purpose of the TCIP is to provide a framework for investment and attracting external funding whether projects are led by the Council, a community group or a partnership of both.

- 3.2 The Elgin City Centre Masterplan (ECCMP) was approved at the meeting of this Committee on 16 November 2021 (para 12 of the Minute refers). The TCIP's were prepared as many of the issues identified for Elgin City Centre were common across other town centres in Moray.

4. PUBLIC CONSULTATION

- 4.1 The 8-week public consultation on the draft TCIP commenced on 18 January and ended on 14 March 2022. The draft TCIP were advertised via social media, press releases, letters and emails. Given the covid restrictions, the draft TCIP were subject to an online virtual consultation and supported by online interactive story mapping, which allowed people to click on mapped points to find out more information about each project and submit comments online. Hard copies of the draft TCIP were made available in local libraries and the mobile library.
- 4.2 Virtual 1-2-1 sessions with Council officers were held with Buckie Area Forum and Buckie Community Council, Forres Area Community Trust (FACT), Forres Heritage Trust, Friends of the Falconer Museum, Keith Community Council, Lossiemouth Business Association and Lossiemouth Community Development Trust. During the consultation period, covid restrictions eased slightly and officers were able to hold a public drop-in exhibition in Aberlour at the request of Speyside Community Council and attend meetings with Dufftown and District Community Association (DDCA), Dufftown and Mortlach Development Trust (DMDT), and Forres Area Forum. Comments are reflected in the representations received to the consultation.
- 4.3 A total of 243 representations were received (50 for Aberlour, 43 for Buckie, 19 for Dufftown, 28 for Forres, 75 for Keith, 24 for Lossiemouth, 3 responses from internal consultees and 1 response from a nature conservation group that applied to all TCIPs). A summary of the representations received and the Council's response to these is provided in **Appendix 1**. The key issues raised and the resultant changes proposed for each town are set out below:

Aberlour

- General support for play and recreation enhancements at Alice Littler Memorial Park; more cycle parking and Electric Vehicle (EV) charging points; and, streetscape/furniture improvements. These proposals have been retained in the final TCIP.
- Suggestions to relocate crossing point and install traffic lights on the A95. The A95 is the responsibility of Transport Scotland and Moray Council cannot make any changes to this road, including pedestrian

crossings. These concerns have been raised with Transport Scotland for future reference.

- Lack of support for proposal to enhance public realm around the Square (co-op/Gather'n) and for motorhome provision. These proposals have been removed from the final TCIP.
- Queries over the need for public Wi-Fi. This proposal has been removed from all TCIP's as further investigation has highlighted issues with future maintenance and revenue streams.

Buckie

- General support for redevelopment and refurbishment of derelict and vacant buildings with suggestions that this should go beyond the town centre; shopfront improvements; public realm, public art and streetscape improvements such as enhanced seating, planting and signage; gateway improvements; lighting up important buildings and monuments to highlight the town's heritage; public conveniences; additional EV charging points with a number of locations suggested; and, Speyside Way enhancements. These proposals have been retained within the final TCIP.
- Lack of support for removal of parking spaces in north east quadrant of the Square to create an enhanced streetscape for pedestrians. This proposal has been removed from the final TCIP.
- Concerns regarding speed of traffic on West Cathcart Street and suggestions to install speed bumps. These concerns are noted and have been referred to the Council's Transportation Service for investigation.
- A recent review of the Buckie Locality Plan identified the community's aspiration for a community hub. This has been reflected in the final TCIP.

Dufftown

- General support for refurbishment of Clock Tower and public realm improvements to the Square given it is a focal point; bringing vacant and derelict buildings back into use; shopfront improvements although some respondents cited concerns about the recent loss of shops; EV charging points; and, bike hire although concerns about proposed location at the Square. These proposals have been retained in the final TCIP.
- Concerns about lack of outdoor space with suggestions for a basketball court or outdoor gym. This is outwith the scope of the TCIP however, the open space requirements for Dufftown will be considered through the review of the Open Space Strategy (OSS) which will be subject to public consultation as part of the LDP review.

Forres

- General support for a heritage trail; public realm improvements including Tolbooth Street/Museum Square and lanes; public art with suggestions for murals and installations; lighting up prominent historic buildings; public conveniences; bringing vacant and derelict buildings

back into use; enhanced signage; shopfront improvements; funding initiatives such as the Heritage and Place Programme; more cycle parking and EV charging points; and, active travel connections. These proposals have been retained in the final TCIP.

- Limited support for the introduction of street trees in the High Street given the lack of space. Alternative soft landscaping is currently carried out by community groups in the town centre and the final TCIP has been updated to reflect this.
- A number of respondents suggested that Grant Park be included within the TCIP given it is an important asset that draws people into the town centre. Grant Park has been included within the final TCIP.
- The reopening of the Falconer Museum was raised by a number of respondents. It is not the intention of the TCIP to revisit a previous Council decision to close this facility. The Council are seeking to establish an alternative delivery model for the Museum. The TCIP seeks to promote a package of proposals to support the High Street which are considered complementary to the potential reopening of the Museum. A statement has been included within the final TCIP reflecting this.

Keith

- General support for bringing vacant and derelict buildings back into use with suggestions for specific premises; public conveniences; active travel connections/routes; shopfront improvements; enhanced signage and street furniture; promoting Keith's heritage including a heritage trail and lighting up important historic buildings; public art and opportunities to involve young people and for local artists to create niche markets; greening and local food growing opportunities; 'pop-up' shops; and, more cycle parking. These proposals have been retained in the final TCIP.
- Public realm improvements at Reidhaven Square attracted little support. This appears to be due to a perception that a significant number, or all, of the parking spaces would be removed from the Square. This is not the case and nor was this cited in the draft TCIP. The creation of a more attractive, user-friendly, inclusive environment with seating areas, greening, etc. would likely require the removal of 6-8 parking spaces. However, given the representations received on this proposal it has been removed from the final TCIP and public realm improvements will be limited to areas outwith the parking bays initially. The potential to expand into the car park to create a civic space for markets, events, etc. in the future will be explored with local stakeholders through the development of proposals by external landscape architects.
- St Rufus Park has been added to the final TCIP given its proximity to the town centre and potential to attract people to Keith. The regeneration proposals implemented by a local community group are welcomed and the Council will support further compatible proposals should these be forthcoming by a community group. Development options for the adjacent derelict Tourist Information building will be explored by the Council.

Lossiemouth

- General support for public realm improvements along the Esplanade and Clifton Road (North-West) to make it more inclusive and pedestrian-focused with more seating and shower facilities; cycle hub and active travel proposals; greening; public conveniences; reinvigoration of Station Park with suggestions for a splash pad, outdoor gym and enhanced play equipment/area; EV charging points for bikes and vehicles; public art; heritage trail and improved waymarking/signage that is inclusive for people of all abilities;
- Lack of support to widen the use of James Square for community food growing, etc. as majority of respondents consider that this is currently a pleasant space that the proposal may detract from. This proposal has been removed from the final TCIP.
- Parking provision along the Esplanade and Queen Street and safety concerns has been raised in a number of representations. The needs of all road users (residents, visitors, businesses) will be taken into consideration at the detailed planning stage as well as identifying enhanced pedestrian crossing facilities for people of all abilities.
- Gregory Street car park has been resurfaced since the publication of the draft TCIP. Therefore, this proposal has been removed from the final TCIP. Comments regarding improved signage will be taken into consideration when reviewing signage in the town centre.
- A community well-being hub is currently being progressed by the Lossie 2-3 group. This proposal will provide a wrap-around service for the most disadvantaged. Given the proximity of the currently vacant building (Warehouse Theatre) and potential benefits for residents as well as the wider town centre, this proposal has been included in the final TCIP.

4.4 The majority of proposals have been retained in the final TCIP as set out in **Appendix 2**. Further work will be carried out to investigate the feasibility of larger proposals such as the redevelopment of vacant buildings some of which are included within a report on Brownfield sites subject to a separate report to this Committee. Where relevant, detailed plans for the proposals will be the subject of further public consultation.

5. DELIVERY/FUNDING

Place-Based Investment Fund (PBIF)

- 5.1 A report to a meeting of the Moray Council on 10 August 2022 (para 20 of the Minute refers) allocated £130k from the Scottish Government funded Place-Based Investment Fund (PBIF) to commence delivery of projects contained within the TCIP's and to provide a small grant scheme for the fitting of traditional wooden windows in conservation areas. £80k has been identified for projects within the TCIP's and £50k for the windows grant scheme. The grant scheme is anticipated to be launched in October/early November.
- 5.2 The terms of the PBIF funding require that the PBIF allocation must be committed by the end of the 2022/23 financial year. This means that projects that are 'shovel-ready' can be supported. The refurbishment of the vacant Warehouse Theatre in Lossiemouth to create a community well-being hub is

at an advanced stage and scores highly in terms of the outcomes for PBIF. It is therefore proposed to allocate £50k towards this project. It is proposed that the remaining £30k will be the subject of a 'greening' grant scheme where community groups across the 6 towns will be able to bid for up to £5k each for small scale environmental improvements such as landscaping and food growing. Any funds not spent within a town will be redistributed to other towns where eligible proposals exceed £5k.

Economic Recovery Fund (ERF)

- 5.3 As part of the Economic Recovery Plan which was agreed at the Economic Growth, Housing and Environmental Sustainability Committee on 6 October 2020 (para 9 of the Minute refers) £200k capital expenditure funded by Moray Council was allocated for works to improve and adapt town centres resulting from masterplanning. This is currently included in the indicative capital plan for 2023/24.
- 5.4 Whilst the timescale for spending the £200k is slightly longer, it is still relatively short given the lead-in time for projects. Therefore, subject to business cases being approved by the Asset Management Working Group, it is proposed to allocate:
- £35k to match fund the Town Centre Capital Fund (TCCF) for public realm improvements at Museum Square/Tolbooth Street in Forres. This supports the community's aspirations to create a Heritage Quarter for Forres which is part of a wider application to Historic Environment Scotland (HES) Heritage and Place Programme and the work being undertaken by FACT to refurbish the Town Hall. The creation of an attractive public space would also complement the setting of the A listed Tolbooth which is a popular visitor attraction. Landscape architects will be appointed to work with local stakeholders to develop and cost a design.
 - £10k for the refurbishment of public toilets in Aberlour. These are the only public toilets that have been subject to a Community Asset Transfer (CAT) in a TCIP. The importance of public toilets was highlighted through the public consultation on the draft TCIP's. Any underspend will be reallocated to upgrading seating and landscaping at the Square.
 - £75k towards bespoke signage, including a digital noticeboard, street furniture and other small scale environmental improvements that showcase Buckie's unique heritage. An artist will be appointed to work with the local community and young people to develop a Buckie 'theme' for the public realm works. This builds on the success of the Buckie Darling and community's aspirations to attract more visitors to Buckie.
 - £80k towards public realm including upgrading signage potentially incorporating opportunities for digital (QR codes) signage, street furniture, greening, food growing, etc. This will be used for projects at Reidhaven Square in Keith and the Square at Dufftown. Landscape architects will be appointed to work with local stakeholders on these projects to develop and cost designs.

Future/Other Funding

- 5.5 The Delivery Plans sets out 'known' potential funding sources for the TCIP projects. The Council's allocation for PBIF and the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) for the financial year 2023/24 is awaited from the Scottish and UK Governments and further TCIP projects may be delivered through these funds. Other funding streams may become available and the Delivery Plan will be updated to reflect these should this occur.

6. SUMMARY OF IMPLICATIONS

(a) Corporate Plan and 10 Year Plan (Local Outcomes Improvement Plan (LOIP))

The proposals are intended to support the economic recovery and diversification of town centres as well as support healthy living and climate change mitigation.

(b) Policy and Legal

Progressing the TCIP proposals supports delivery of the Moray Local Development Plan (MLDP) 2020 and town centre regeneration aims set out in national policy. Once approved the final TCIP will be a material consideration for development management purposes.

(c) Financial implications

£130,000 to be spent this financial year as part of the Place Based Improvement Fund as agreed at a meeting of the Moray Council on 10 August 2022 (para 20 of the Minute refers). £80,000 of the £130,000 is to be spent on town centre regeneration proposals. Any funds not committed will result in the Council's allocation from the Scottish Government PBIF for the financial year 2023/24 being reduced by a commensurate amount.

£200,000 capital was approved as part of the Economic Recovery Plan which was agreed at the Economic Growth, Housing and Environmental Sustainability Committee on 6 October 2020 (para 9 of Minute refers) to be available towards works to improve and adapt town centres resulting from masterplanning and is included in the indicative capital plan for 2023/24. It is proposed to allocate the £200k to the projects identified in paragraph 5.4 of this report, subject to business cases being approved by the Asset Management Working Group.

To develop longer terms projects such as the redevelopment of vacant and derelict buildings, and public realm works external consultants will require to be appointed to carry out feasibility studies, develop detailed plans, etc. as the PBIF and ERF can only be utilised for capital works. This will be resourced from the LDP revenue budget, where possible.

(d) Risk Implications

Any underspend for the PBIF will result in the Council's allocation from the Scottish Government for the financial year 2023/24 being reduced by a commensurate amount, and the projected benefits of the projects in terms of town centre revitalisation, community led regeneration, tackling

inequality and disadvantaged groups, and transitioning to net zero, not being realised.

(e) Staffing Implications

Whilst the projects within the TCIP's will be carried out as part of the current workload by officers in the Strategic Planning and Development Team, Economic Development and Regeneration Team, Transportation Development Team and Community Support Unit, this will place additional demand on resources.

(f) Property

A number of properties referred to within the final TCIP are owned by the Council.

(g) Equalities/Socio Economic Impact

An EIA has been carried out on the final version of the TCIPs and Delivery Plan. The proposals are considered to have a positive impact on groups protected under the Equality Act 2010. More detailed EIAs will be carried out throughout the design phase of the various projects.

(h) Climate Change and Biodiversity Impacts

The final TCIP set out in this report strengthen local town centres, provide improvements to active travel, propose redevelopment of vacant and derelict buildings to encourage town centre living and therefore reduce car reliance helping to minimise carbon emissions. The proposals also include greening of the town centres by improving soft landscaping such as planting and exploring food growing opportunities to further enhance biodiversity. In addition, there might be opportunities to progress the decarbonisation of public buildings as part of the TCIP to achieve net zero emissions by 2030 as per Moray Council timescale or at the very latest have zero emissions heating by 2038 as per Scottish Government timescale. Carbon and biodiversity assessments will be undertaken on proposals at the detailed planning stage.

(i) Consultations

Depute Chief Executive (Economy, Environment and Finance), the Head of Economic Growth and Development, the Chief Financial Officer, the Legal Services Manager, the Development Management and Building Standards Manager, the Assets Manager (Commercial Buildings), the Economic Growth and Regeneration Manager, the Environmental Health Manager, the Communities (CLD) Manager, the Equal Opportunities Officer, the Consultancy Manager, the Senior Engineer Transportation, the Principal Climate Change Strategy Officer and Lissa Rowan (Committee Services Officer) have been consulted and comments received have been incorporated into the report.

7. CONCLUSION

7.1 This report asks the Committee to approve the final TCIP's for Aberlour, Buckie, Dufftown, Forres, Keith and Lossiemouth and Delivery Plan as set out in Appendix 2. The final TCIP have been updated to reflect the

representations received to the public consultation on the draft TCIP as set out in Appendix 1. Given the short timescales to spend the funds allocated through the PBIF and ERF and lead-in time required to deliver projects it is proposed to allocate the funds as per the recommendations in para 5.4 of this report. This means that all towns will benefit from funding over the period 2022-24. Further funds may become available for proposals within the TCIP's and the Delivery Plan will be updated accordingly and reported back to a future meeting of this Committee for approval.

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Background Papers:

Ref: