

## **NITHSDALE AREA REGENERATION BUDGET PROPOSALS FOR 2007/2008**

### **1. Reason for Report**

To advise Members on the proposed expenditure from the Nithsdale Area Regeneration budget for 2007/2008 managed by the Economic Regeneration Service for area based regeneration.

### **2. Report Summary**

The report considers a request for financial assistance from the available budgets for Economic Regeneration and provides background information to the project proposal.

### **3. Glossary of Terms**

MCMC: More Chances More Choices  
NCVS: Nithsdale Council of Voluntary Services  
PID: Project Initiation Document  
RDGS: Rent Deposit Guarantee Scheme

### **4. Recommendation**

Members are asked to agree the proposed allocation of £4,950 funding for the My Place Pilot Project from the Nithsdale Area Regeneration budget for 2007/2008.

### **5. Corporate Plan Links and Contribution**

5.1 The project detailed within this report will contribute to the Wealthier and Fairer theme of the current Corporate Plan – Increase Economic Regeneration, and to the objectives to provide lifelong learning opportunities and to remove barriers to education, training and employment under the Smarter theme of the Corporate Plan.

5.2 The project also supports and links to the current Operational Plan for the Economic Regeneration Group, Strategic Objective 8, to improve the economic, social and environmental sustainability of the region.

5.3 The project also contributes to the strategic vision of Nithsdale Area Community Plan 2006-2008, and to the priority to promote a range of anti poverty initiatives under the Inclusive Communities theme of the Area Community Plan, and to provide access to key employability skills under the Enterprising and Learning theme of the Plan.

5.4 The project also contributes to the Promoting Living and Working theme of the Dumfries Town Centre Regeneration Strategy and Action Plan 2004-2014, by providing necessary supporting measures to likely increases in the residential population of the town centre.

### **6. Resources/Value for Money Assessment**

6.1 The Planning and Environment Services Directorate has been allocated £200,000 per year from Policy Headroom to support area based regeneration. This allows up to £50,000 per year to be spent in each of the four areas of Annandale and

Eskdale, Nithsdale, Stewartry and Wigtownshire. Final approval of spending rests with the Planning, Housing and Environment Services Committee.

6.2 Nithsdale Area Regeneration budget 2007-2008:

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|------------------------|---------|
| • Budget available     | £50,000 |
| • Existing commitments | £44,261 |
| • Current request      | £4,950  |
| • Balance              | £789    |

6.4 A key requirement for the programme is that all projects requesting financial support from the area regeneration budgets should:

- Be additional to existing provision;
- Demonstrate both need and economic benefit;
- Build upon exiting local capacity or assets;
- Maximise other sources of funding; and
- Reflect a partnership approach.

6.5 In addition to this, where projects receive financial assistance, the outputs and outcomes of the projects are closely monitored using PRINCE2 project management procedures to ensure that the financial support provides value for money. As part of this approach, projects that receive funding approval are made the subject of Project Initiation Documents (PIDs) to be prepared and signed by each Project Team prior to funding being released.

6.6 The My Place Pilot Project presents an opportunity to reduce the turnover of private sector tenancies in Dumfries Town Centre among young people in receipt of assistance through the Rent Deposit Guarantee Scheme by the providing intensive Resettlement and Employability support on a pilot basis. The pilot project will cost £9,950 to operate and a contribution of £4,950 has been requested from the Nithsdale Area Regeneration budget to fund provision of additional resettlement support to young people seeking assistance under the Rent Deposit Guarantee Scheme. Financial support for the employability element of the project is the subject of an application to the More Choices More Chances fund.

6.7 Value for money will be offered through achievement of the following outcomes:

- Up to 15 people aged 24 years or under will have improved their independent living skills as evidenced by an increased ability to manage and maintain their tenancies including improved levels of budgeting skills and take up of other support provision identified as relevant to their situation;
- Up to 15 people aged 24 years or under will have improved their life chances as evidenced by the numbers maintaining their tenancies and the number accessing paid employment, employment related training, and accessing other relevant support; and,
- Notices to Quit issued by private landlords within 6 months of commencement of tenancies will have been reduced among Dumfries Town Centre tenants assisted by this scheme, as evidenced by the number of tenants renewing their tenancy agreements.

## 7. Risk Assessment

7.1 Within the context of the regeneration programme, each project receiving financial support from Dumfries and Galloway Council is subject to a risk

assessment which is then recorded in the PID. Also recorded in the PID is the support that will be provided by the Economic Regeneration Officer designated for the project, to assist in ensuring control measures are adopted and risks are properly managed.

7.2 The My Place Pilot Project will be administered by Nithsdale Council of Voluntary Services, and if approved, the funding for the project will pay for the extra hours of support to be provided through this scheme by the worker employed by NCVS to deliver the Rent Deposit Guarantee Scheme service. The Director of NCVS will act as Project Manager with Resettlement Support services provided by the Rent Deposit Guarantee Scheme worker currently employed by NCVS. Where the funding application for Employability support services is successful, these services will be delivered by the Access to Work project worker currently employed by NCVS. Regular progress reports will be provided to the Economic Regeneration Officer.

7.3 The main risk associated with this project is that if funding is not available then it will be unable to proceed. Parts of Dumfries Town Centre have been identified in the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivations as amongst the most deprived datazones in Scotland and without actions to support town centre residents to improve their housing security and employability, efforts to deliver Town Centre Regeneration will be weakened.

## **8. Consultations**

The Group Manager for Economic Regeneration, the Town Centre Regeneration Officer, the Housing Strategy and Development Manager, the Homelessness Strategy Implementation Officer, the More Choices More Chances Implementation Officer, the Area Manager for Nithsdale and officers from the Nithsdale Management Team have been consulted and where comments have been provided, they have been incorporated into this report.

## **9. Background**

9.1 Economic Regeneration & Europe and Housing Services jointly commissioned a Housing Study in 2007 to explore key motivations, attitudes and perceptions in relation to house buying and developing in Dumfries town centre. The aim was to identify how the socio economic mix of the residential population could be improved by attracting higher income groups to reside there, and in so doing, ensure that efforts to regenerate Dumfries Town Centre would be sustainable. The Study concluded that there were a range of factors that are acting as a deterrent to housing development in the Town Centre, and putting off potential buyers from living there.

9.2 The Study found that over 1 in 3 households in the town centre (35%) are non pensioner single people – these are twice as prevalent as found nationally or in Dumfries as a whole. There is a considerable concentration of young adults (16-29s), who account for as much as 23% of the population. It also found that the combined proportion of economically inactive and unemployed people among the town centre population is 36%, and that there are more unemployed people living in the town centre (8%) - twice that of the Dumfries town and Dumfries and Galloway regional levels (4% and 3% respectively). Almost 1 in 3 living in the town centre area live in private rented housing, and as many as 2 in 3 people living in this sector are under the age of 35. Previous research in 2002, found that the numbers living in private rented housing and on Housing Benefit were increasing significantly, the lower end of the furnished market in Dumfries was playing a key role in housing the vulnerable households with unstable histories, and many of these were young single

males with histories of being in care, prison, homelessness service contact, current/previous misuse of alcohol and drugs.

9.3 The Study found that amongst prospective house purchasers, fear of living beside bad neighbours is one of the reasons for not wanting to live in the town centre (72% of respondents do not believe that the Town Centre is a good place to bring up a family). Among focus groups, it was determined that the public perception of Dumfries Town Centre is that it is suitable mainly for accommodating young people and the elderly. Given the low incomes of these two groups, the prospects for improving the economic performance of the Town Centre are potentially quite poor unless some action is taken to broaden the socio economic mix of the resident population, and at the same time support younger Town Centre residents who are inevitably drawn there to stabilise their lives, improve their life chances and become economically active.

9.4 The aim of this pilot project will be to determine if the provision of intensive support to people applying for assistance through the Rent Deposit Guarantee Scheme will result in a reduction in the turnover of private sector tenancies in Dumfries town centre amongst people receiving support through the scheme. It will achieve this by assisting people in receipt of RDGS Bonds to maintain tenancies beyond the initial 6 month period, by developing their independent living skills, and improving their life chances. The project will provide each beneficiary with an initial 4-8 week support service that will:

- Ensure that adequate furniture and equipment is sourced;
- Ensure utilities are connected and calibrated correctly if there is any outstanding fuel debt;
- Provide budgeting advice;
- Mediate with landlord and tenant over the early stages of the tenancy;
- Identify any longer term support needs and refer to appropriate agencies;
- Ensure a full benefits check is carried out, including means tested 'in-work' benefits;
- Ensure all benefit claims are completed and submitted as quickly as possible.

9.5 A key feature of this project will be the provision to those young people aged 16-19 that apply for RDGS for tenancies in Dumfries Town Centre with learning and employability support through the Nithsdale Access to Work scheme. The costs of this part of the project are currently the subject of a funding application to the More Choices More Chances fund held by the Council and disbursed through the multi agency MCMC Strategy Group.

## 10. Key Issues

Key issues in relation to these projects include their relevance to the delivery of objectives set out in the Council's Corporate Plan, and links to other relevant regeneration plans and strategies, as discussed in Section 5 of this report.

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