

The Highland Council

Minutes of Meeting of the **Community Challenge Fund Applications Panel** held in the Committee Room 1, Council Headquarters, Glenurquhart Road, Inverness, on Wednesday, 26 November 2014, at 3.15 p.m.

Present

Dr D Alston

Mrs C Wilson

Mr J Gray

Mrs F Robertson

Committee Chairs

Ms B McAllister

Ms M Smith

Officials in attendance:

Ms M Morris, Assistant Chief Executive

Ms L Lee, Committee Administrator

Dr D Alston in the Chair

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of Mr D Hendry, Mr A Christie, Mr G MacKenzie and Mr T Prag.

2. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

3. Minutes of Meeting of 22 October 2014

There had been circulated Minutes of Meeting of 22 October 2014. The Panel **NOTED** the Minutes and that they would be submitted to the full Council on 18 December 2014.

4. Assessment Criteria

The Panel **NOTED** that copies of the Assessment Criteria agreed by Highland Council at its meeting on 25 October 2012 were available for reference if required.

5. Expressions of Interest – Round 8

There had been circulated Report No. CCF7/14 dated 19 November 2014 by the Depute Chief Executive updating the Panel on progress with applications for the Community Challenge Fund. The report asked Members to consider the recommendations of the Officer Working Group, and agree which applications should be approved and which communities should be invited to develop their Expressions of Interest further. The report also set out some proposed changes to the Community Challenge Fund criteria for Members' consideration.

The Panel considered the Expressions of Interest and applications in turn. In discussion, the following points were made:

Expressions of Interest

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For the Right Reasons – this project met the criteria; an Application should be requested.

Stay Safe Highland – this project did not meet the criteria and should be redirected to other sources of funding, including local voluntary group funding.

Viewfield Garden Collective – this project now met the criteria; an Application should be requested, with the community being made aware that their Application would need to demonstrate clearly how Council funding would achieve additional outcomes and add value to the existing project.

Nairn River Community Council – this project met the criteria; an Application should be requested once officers were satisfied that a number of outstanding matters had been resolved, including in relation to the potential transfer of staff from the Council.

Sutherland Partnership – discussions were ongoing between Council officers and the Partnership – a decision should be deferred meantime.

In response to a question raised, Members were given an assurance that agreements including exit clauses covering the return of the activity and any staff transferred under TUPE to the Council, were put in place for all projects.

Applications Received

Alness Community Council – the project met the criteria and the community had a good track record in local delivery of services; the application should be recommended to the Council for approval; the community was also willing to take on responsibility for the public toilets and this should be included in the agreement; formal feedback should be sought from Alness Community Council on their experience in applying for funds and consideration should be given to shorteing the timescales for communities wishing to apply for funds.

Fort William Shinty Pitch – this project met the criteria; it would give rise to a 10% reduction in costs, an improved level of service, and more local control; the Application should be recommended for approval; the Panel confirmed that the award did not include yearly increases in budget to match inflation, given that the Council's own budget did not increase in line with inflation.

Applications Pending

Groups who had been invited to bring forward Applications were: Kinlochleven Community Trust, Caberfeidh Horizons, Nethy Bridge Community Council, Lochalsh Sports Association and Lochaber Sports Association. Discussions with the groups were ongoing.

Assessment Criteria

The report suggested changes to the assessment criteria which would allow cuts in the Council's budget to be reflected in future sums allocated for projects. A 6% reduction in the level of funding was proposed, to be introduced over the next three years, in line with reductions in service budgets. Communities would therefore be asked to achieve a year on year 2% reduction in costs.

Points raised in discussion included:

- if agreed, communities should be apprised in good time of the change, so that they could budget accordingly
- no reductions to funding should be made in the first year of a project
- it was important that the changes in criteria did not discourage communities from applying to the Fund.

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In wider discussion, Members also commented that the full impact of proposed projects on existing Council services and contracts must be considered by officers and that, notwithstanding that most schemes would likely be self-policing, further thought was required with regard to monitoring the projects, both in terms of finance and as to whether the objectives were achieved.

The Panel **NOTED** the progress of Expressions of Interest, Applications Received and Applications Pending, and **AGREED**:

- i. that the Expressions of Interest from For the Right Reasons, Viewfield Garden Collective and Nairn River Community Council (subject to resolution of outstanding matters) be accepted and these groups be invited to submit an Application;
- ii. that the Expression of Interest from Stay Safe Highland did not meet the criteria and should be redirected to other sources of funding;
- iii. that the Expression of Interest from the Sutherland Partnership be deferred for further information;
- iv. to recommend to the Council that the Applications from Alness Community Council and Fort William Shinty Club be approved;
- v. that the funding criteria be amended such that after the first year of a project, there be a 2% reduction in funding each year for the following three years, on a rolling basis; this to be subject to review; and
- vi. that consideration be given to the introduction of a process for monitoring project outcomes.

The meeting ended at 4.00 p.m.