

City of Inverness Area Committee

Minutes of Meeting of the **Inverness Common Good Fund Grants Sub Committee** held in the Chamber, Town House, Inverness on Monday, 9 February 2015 at 9.15 am.

Present:

Mrs H Carmichael
Mr A Christie
Mr A Graham
Mr R Laird
Mrs B McAllister

Mr T Prag
Mr G Ross
Mrs G Sinclair
Mrs J Slater

Officials in Attendance:

Mr S Wardlaw, Ward Manager, Chief Executive's Office
Mr B MacKinnon, Employability Team Leader, Development and Infrastructure Service
Miss J MacLennan, Principal Administrator, Corporate Development
Mr S Taylor, Civic & Facilities Team Leader, Finance Service
Mrs H Tolmie, Administrative Assistant, Finance Service

Also in attendance:

Ms A Clark, Secretary	}	
Ms G O'Brien, Chair	}	Aulnaskiach Dell SCIO
Mr F Millwood, Trustee	}	

Mr A Christie in the Chair

Business

1. Apologies for Absence

There were no apologies for absence.

2. Declarations of Interest

The Committee **NOTED** the following declarations of interest:-

Item 5 – Mr A Christie (financial) and Mr R Laird and Mrs B McAllister (both non-financial)

Item 6 – Mr A Christie, Mr A Graham, Mrs G Sinclair, Mr T Prag and Mrs J Slater (all non-financial)

Item 11 – Mr A Graham (non-financial)

3. Exclusion of Public

The Sub-Committee **RESOLVED** that, under Section 50(A) of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973, the public be excluded from the meeting during discussion of the following items on the grounds that they involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraphs 6 and 9 of Part 1 of Schedule 7A of the Act.

4. Aulnaskiach Dell

Ms Ann Clark made a presentation on the Aulnaskiach Dell reporting on progress and the use of the money previously awarded by the Sub Committee.

Members were reminded of the history and nature of the woodland and were informed of the process by which the Aulnaskiach Dell SCIO Group was managing the Dell. The Dell was a mature broadleaf woodland in the centre of Inverness. It was important for a variety of reasons including providing a local amenity for the community, attracting wildlife and generating a number of environmental benefits. The origins of the woodland were still being researched and it was hoped that this would help inform the Group as to what species should be replanted.

The wood contained a network of unmanaged paths but some of the terrain was difficult. When the Group took over the management of the wood it had been significantly overstocked and suffered from the dumping of litter and garden waste. The process that then led to the Group's formation was outlined and which had culminated in a lease of the wood being agreed, for a three year period, in order for it to be managed. A professional survey of trees had been carried out and a total had 25 trees felled, in consultation with the Council given that the wood was covered by a Tree Preservation Order. The removal of trees had proved challenging and various methods considered, including the use of Heavy Horses, but it was essential that it was cost effective, given the Group's limited resources, and would not cause any damage to the remaining woodland. The Group had also run a number of events including the planting of trees, burn clearing, litter clearing and wood chopping and it had been possible to raise money from selling wood and receiving donations. The funding from the Common Good had enabled match funding to be secured and there was also a considerable investment made by volunteers in terms of time. Other positive outcomes were that the tree surgery had resulted in more light reaching lower levels, benefiting the woodland as a whole. More young people were also using the wood and discussions were taking place with Millburn Academy about the possibility of them using it as a Field Centre.

There were challenges ahead. In particular, the cost of work to the trees had been underestimated and the presence of Dutch Elm Disease meant that the state of the wood in some areas was unpredictable. A management plan was being developed which would set out how some of these issues would be tackled over the next 5-10 years while taking into account factors such as the character of the wood, neighbour concerns and the wood's long term survival. In addition, the active support of the community would also be sought.

In response to Members' questions, Ms Clark pointed out the Group's aim was to maintain the paths already there. The community were wary about developing additional paths but the issue of long term liability had also been a concern. The aim was to manage the woods with as low a maintenance regime as possible and it was felt that part of the charm was that the paths were maintained at the level they were and created an informal environment where children could explore. Volunteers did however regularly walk through the wood to ensure any structures that had been erected were safe but this was carried out in a low key way. In relation to the estimated costs of a community buyout,

it was expected that this would be in the region of £20,000 primarily to be used to address any unexpected contingencies.

The Group having been thanked for their attendance, the Sub Committee otherwise **NOTED** the presentation.

5. Deprived Area Fund 2015/16

Declarations of Interest -

- **Mr R Laird declared a non-financial interest in relation to parts of this item on the grounds of being Chair of the Merkinch Partnership**
- **Mrs B McAllister declared non-financial interests in relation to parts of this item on the grounds of being a Board Member of Merkinch Partnership and Arts in Merkinch**

but, having applied the test outlined in Paragraphs 5.2 and 5.3 of the Councillors' Code of Conduct, concluded that their interests did not preclude their involvement in the discussion.

Mr A Christie declared a financial interest in this item on the grounds of having submitted one of the applications and left the room.

(In Mr Christie's absence, Mrs H Carmichael took the Chair for this item).

There had been circulated Report No. GSC/1/15 dated 29 January 2015 by the Director of Development and Infrastructure which set out the applications received for the Deprived Area Fund for 2015/16 and included the background to the Fund, together with a summary of applications, the assessments and funding recommendations with reasons stated. In addition, copies of the application forms had also been circulated, referred to as Booklet 2.

Prior to considering the application, Members asked that in future the criteria used to assess the applications be provided. Clarification was also sought as to the length of time grants would be provided for and it was explained that, while it was for the City of Inverness Area to determine, there were recommendations, in some instance, for funding for 2 years. It was recognised that this would provide clarity for organisations, particularly where projects were on-going, and would allow a more strategic approach to be adopted.

The Sub Committee **AGREED:-**

- i. that the criteria matrix used for assessing applications be provided at future meetings; and
- ii. **TO RECOMMEND** to the City of Inverness Area Committee the following:-

Merkinch Partnership (£83,139 sought)

Merkinch Community Building Blocks Project – concern was expressed by some Members at what they viewed as relatively high salary levels, as detailed in the application. However, other Members pointed out that the work involved was particularly labour intensive, required to be run by professionals and that it

was essential that the necessary management structure was in place. The application was for slightly more than the previous year as work was expanding into other areas, including Hilton, Culloden and Raigmore. Local Members expressed concern that they were not aware of such developments and emphasised the importance of being kept informed. Information was also sought as to which areas qualified for Deprived Area Funding and how it was being advertised to local communities to enable them to apply for it.

APPROVE £63,900 pending clarification of the points raised during discussion, including confirmation as to the work to be delivered in the Hilton, Culloden and Raigmore areas in 2015/16.

Mrs G Sinclair and Mrs J Slater asked that, given their reservations, their wish to abstain be recorded.

Inverness Blitz (£28,573 sought) **APPROVE** £9,500
Positive Life Pathways – support to enable this project to develop was emphasised.

Hilton Parish Church (£6,804 sought) **DEFER** for more information
Children's Worker – a recommendation had been made to refuse this application as it had focused mainly on pre-school children. There was, however, considerable merit in the project but it was thought more appropriate for it to be funded elsewhere and it would be brought to the attention of Children and Family Services. Disappointment was expressed given the need for applications to be submitted from Deprived Areas and it was suggested that the applicants might be able to revisit the project and amend their submission so that it better matched the necessary criteria, particularly in relation to the employability aspects.

Inverness Badenoch and Strathspey CAB (£40,000 sought) **REFUSE**
Developing Young People's Employability – the value of previous similar employability projects was recognised but the view was that, in this case, there was a lack of evidence showing engagement with others already working locally in the field. There was some support to fund this but it was felt that it would be more appropriate to be sought from other areas of Council funding. Some were of the view that the application had failed to demonstrate how community capacity had been built in and, similarly, there was no specific targeting of deprived communities.

Merkinch Enterprise (£28,600 sought) **REFUSE**
Community Training for the Unemployed

Arts In Merkinch (£30,000 sought) **APPROVE** £30,000
Arts in Merkinch – Members sought, and were provided with, information as to the number of participants. The aim was to improve employability by building personal confidence and presentation skills and Members referred to the success of the project to date.

Merkinch Enterprise Community Newsletter (£4,800 sought) **APPROVE** £4,800
Merkinch "News and Views"

TCV Scotland (£19,800 sought)
Inverness Green Gym

APPROVE £19,800

Velocity Café and Bicycle Workshop (£27,228 sought)

REFUSE

Velocity BuildaBike – given that the main thrust of the project was working with schools, it was felt that the Deprived Area Fund was not the correct source of funding. It might, however, be more suited to alternative sources of funding available from the Care and Learning Service, perhaps from the School Leaver Programme.

For the Right Reasons (£8,000 sought)

Assisting People with Drug and Alcohol Addiction – reference was made to the level of salaries for specific posts and to elements detailed in their accounts. Assurances were also sought that the necessary governance structures and financial safeguards were now in place. Furthermore, reference was made to the organisation's aims and objectives as it related to reducing the misuse of drugs and alcohol and the need for this to be evidenced. If funding was to be provided it was important that robust outcomes were stated in addition to the minimum number of participants.

APPROVE £8,000 subject to additional background information and agreed outcomes being sought.

8. Highland School of Skating

It was **AGREED** that, in terms of Standing Order 18, Agenda item 8 should be taken at this point in the meeting.

The Sub-Committee **AGREED TO HOMOLOGATE** the decision to award £4,500 to the Highland School of Skating.

6. Requests for Financial Assistance 2014/15

Declarations of Interest -

- **Mr A Christie declared a non-financial interest in relation to part of this item as he knew people involved with Highland Multicultural Friends**
- **Mr T Prag declared non-financial interests in relation to part of this item, as it related to the Uniqueness Tourism BID, on the grounds of being a Board Member of Eden Court and, as it related to the Northern Meeting Charitable Piping Trust, on the grounds of knowing one of the applicants**
- **Mrs J Slater declared a non-financial interest in relation to part of this item, as it related to the Uniqueness Tourism BID, on the grounds of being a Board Member of Eden Court**

but, having applied the test outlined in Paragraphs 5.2 and 5.3 of the Councillors' Code of Conduct, concluded that their interests did not preclude their involvement in the discussion.

Mr A Graham declared a non-financial interest as a member and Honorary Chieftain of the Gaelic Society and left the room during discussion of that application.

Mrs G Sinclair declared a non-financial interest as a Board member of the Highland Military Tattoo and, having applied the test outlined in Paragraphs 5.2 and 5.3 of the Councillors' Code of Conduct, elected to remain in the room but did not take part in discussion.

There had been circulated Report No. GSC/2/15 dated 30 January 2015 by the Inverness City Manager which listed the applications received for financial assistance from the Inverness Common Good Fund. In this connection, there had been circulated separately a copy of the applications and supporting documentation as Booklets A and B.

Prior to discussion of the applications, the Ward Manager reminded Members that the sum set aside within the Inverness Common Good Fund revenue budget 2014/15 for the Winter Payment Scheme had been increased to £100,000, with £50,000 having been ring-fenced within the current Inverness Common Good Fund Grants Sub-Committee budget to be used for winter payments but which could be released back for general allocation if it wasn't required. As of 6 February 2015, £58,202 had been paid out in winter payments and applications in progress still to be assessed amounted to £10,823. There were still three weeks before applications closed but a more accurate figure would be available at the City and Area Committee on 5 March 2015 as to how much funding could be re-allocated to the Grants cost centre.

At this juncture, information was also sought as to the position in relation to the issue of cheques for winter payments and the Ward Manager undertook to investigate specific instances where delays might have occurred.

Booklet A

The Sub Committee determined applications for funding of up to £10,000 as follows:-

<u>Planefield Road Bowling Club</u> (£3,610 sought)	APPROVED £3,610
Automated irrigation watering system – the applicant had provided the additional information sought when the application was deferred at the previous Sub Committee meeting.	

<u>Inverness High School</u> (£7,880 sought)	DEFERRED
S1 outdoor transition project 2015 – while being mindful to support the application, it was more appropriate for it to be considered in financial year 2015/16.	

<u>Gaelic Society of Inverness</u> (£1,000 sought)	REFUSED
Annual Showcase Concert at Eden Court Theatre on 13 March 2015.	

Northern Meeting Charitable Piping Trust (£9,800 requested)

APPROVED £4,900

Northern Meeting World Solo Piping Championships 2015 – queried financial support might be more appropriate from alternative cost centres such as City Promotions, Events and Festivals or Subvention.

Music in Hospitals (£4,554 sought)

Live music in Inverness Care Units - during discussion the view was expressed that Care Units themselves might contribute more to this although the care home sector did have financial challenges. In addition, there were local groups providing a similar service but who did not seek financial assistance while Music in Hospital was a national charity. Other Members cited the benefits of providing live music in Care Units and suggested that, in fact, it should be encouraged and that, for the relatively modest sum, Music in Hospital already covered a large number of Care Units.

Thereafter, Mr G Ross, seconded by Mrs G Sinclair, **MOVED** that a grant of 50% be awarded.

As an **AMENDMENT**, Mr T Prag, seconded by Mr R Laird, **MOVED** that the full amount requested be awarded.

On a vote being taken, the **MOTION** received 3 votes and the **AMENDMENT** received 4 votes and the **AMENDMENT** was therefore **CARRIED**, the votes having been cast as follows:-

For the Motion:

McAllister, B; Ross, G; Sinclair, G.

For the Amendment:

Graham, A; Laird, R; Prag, T; Slater, J.

Decision

The Sub Committee **APPROVED** an award of £4,554.

Highland Council Corporate Communications Department (£559 sought)

Purchase of an IPAD

APPROVED £559

Highland Brass (£3,854 sought)

REFUSED

Purchase of music, music stands and instruments for Brass Band

City of Inverness Youth Pipe Band (£4,500 sought)

APPROVED £4,500

Purchase of a new set of pipe band drums

Caledonian Concepts (Scotland) Limited (£9,500 sought)

APPROVED £4,750

Etape Loch Ness 2015 – information was provided explaining the relatively large cash balance in their accounts. However, concern was expressed at the proportion of funding that was being sought and a 50% was considered more appropriate.

Highland Multicultural Friends (£900 sought)

APPROVED £900

International Women's Day and follow on Road Show – it might also be possible for them to obtain support in kind i.e. a reception.

Highland Military Tattoo (£9,900 sought)

DEFERRED

Start-up costs for the Highland Military Tattoo 2015 – While deferring the application meantime for more detailed information on the business plan and other funding for the project, Members were generally supportive but suggested that consideration be given to guaranteeing that if the Tattoo did not make a profit through ticket sales, a grant might be provided up to a specific amount. The application also related to start-up costs so there was potential for other applications from them.

Booklet B

The Sub Committee **AGREED TO RECOMMEND** the following to the City of Inverness Area Committee (at its meeting on 5 March) as they related to applications for more than £10,000:-

Hilton Parish Church (£20,412 sought)

DEFER

Hilton Youth Project Children's Project – Given the earlier decision to defer the application for Deprived Area Funding, it was acknowledged that there was further work required on this application but this could be reported to the City of Inverness Area Committee.

Uniqueness Tourism BID Ltd (£20,000 sought)

DEFER

Support for new sales team promoting Inverness for Business Tourism – in consideration of this application it was suggested that it might be more appropriately funded from elsewhere, particularly the City Promotion Subvention cost centres. It was recognised that Inverness thrived on tourism but concern was expressed that this substantial application could set a precedent for future funding and that the Common Good should not be the major funder. Further information was sought and the Tourism BID was asked to re-examine their Business Case with a view to bringing back a reworked financial proposal.

7. Inverness BID

There had been circulated Report No. GSC/3/15 dated 28 January 2015 by the Inverness City Manager which invited Members to recommend approval of the applications by Inverness BID to the City of Inverness Area Committee on 5 March 2015.

In discussion, Members requested that Inverness BID work more closely with the Events and Festivals Working Group and keep them better informed. In addition, Members also stressed the need for a revised approach by refreshing events and avoiding repetition.

Thereafter, the Sub-Committee **AGREED TO RECOMMEND** to the City of Inverness Area Committee at its meeting on 5 March **APPROVAL** of the applications as detailed in Appendix 7 to the report.

9. Castle Wynd Conveniences

There had been circulated Report No. GSC/4/15 dated 2 February 2015 by the Inverness City Manager which sought approval for a licence to occupy Castle Wynd Public Conveniences during 2015 and to recommend approval of £16,000 for this provision to the City of Inverness Area Committee on 5 March 2015.

The Sub-Committee **AGREED**:-

- i. for the Director of Community Services using Delegated Powers, to grant a Licence of Castle Wynd Toilets block to the successful tenderer without prejudicing the development potential of the site, for 2015/16; and
- ii. to recommend approval to the City of Inverness Area Committee on 5 March 2015 of a maximum budget of £16k from the Inverness Common Good Fund 2015/16 revenue budget to fund the operation, noting liability for the maintenance of the structure would be retained by the Council.

10. Halberdier Uniforms

Members were advised that the civic tradition of having Civic Officers in Halberdier Uniforms was long-standing and much valued. In this connection, the current uniforms required refurbishment and replacement and the cost would be £2,400.

During discussion, some Members expressed the view that they could not support such expenditure in the current financial climate and given the fact that staff could change over time. However, other Members were in support of the proposal on the basis that the uniforms would be made locally and would help to maintain one of the few longstanding traditions remaining in Inverness.

Thereafter, Mr R Laird, seconded by Mrs G Sinclair, **MOVED** that Halberdier Uniforms should not be purchased.

As an **AMENDMENT**, Mr T Prag, seconded by Mrs B McAllister, **MOVED** that new Halberdier Uniforms should be purchased from the Common Good Budget.

On a vote being taken, the **MOTION** received 2 votes and the **AMENDMENT** received 5 votes and the **AMENDMENT** was therefore **CARRIED**, the votes having been cast as follows:-

For the Motion:

Laird, R; Sinclair, G.

For the Amendment:

Graham, A; McAllister, E; Prag, T; Ross, G; Slater, J.

Decision

The Sub Committee **AGREED** that new Halberdier Uniforms should be purchased from the Common Good Budget.

11. Civic Hospitality Requests

Declaration of Interest - Mr A Graham declared a non-financial interest as a member of Clan Graham and left the room during discussion of that request.

There had been circulated Report No. GSC/5/15 dated 27 January 2015 by the Inverness City Manager which listed the applications received for Civic Hospitality from the Inverness Common Good Fund. In this connection, a copy of the applications and supporting documentation had also been circulated as Booklet C.

Prior to determining the requests, it was confirmed that £93,195 had been spent to date – from an annual budget of £120,000.

Thereafter, the Sub Committee determined applications for civic hospitality as follows:

<u>50th Anniversary of SCDI in the North</u> Request for reception and buffet (March 2015)	AGREED
<u>Inner Wheel District 1</u> Inner Wheel District 1 rally – request for financial contribution with drinks reception at Kingsmills Hotel (May 2016)	AGREED
<u>La Baule Rugby Club Visit to Inverness</u> Request for civic reception at the Town House (June 2015)	AGREED but hot buffet recommended
<u>Scotland's Salmon Festival</u> Request for civic reception, drinks reception and award ceremony at the Town House (September 2015)	AGREED
<u>Clan Graham Society 40th Anniversary</u> Request for civic reception at the Town House (August 2015)	AGREED
<u>Cadet Forces Pipes and Drums Beating Retreat</u> Request for finger buffet reception (April 2015)	AGREED
<u>Fly a Flag for the Commonwealth</u> Request for civic reception (March 2015)	AGREED

12. Homologation of Civic Hospitality Requests

The Sub Committee **AGREED TO HOMOLOGATE** the decision to award Civic Hospitality to the Energy North Conference 2015 for a Civic Buffet on 10 February 2015, as detailed in Booklet C, at a cost of £894.10 to be met from the Subvention Budget.

13. Recurring Annual Events

There had been circulated Report No. GSC/6/15 dated 28 January 2015 by the Inverness City Manager which invited Members to consider approval for recurring annual events and to decide which option, as outlined in Section 2.4 of the report, should be used to determine them.

The Sub-Committee **APPROVED:-**

- i. the expenditure for the annually recurring events as listed in Appendix 1 of the report; and
- ii. the events in principle and to delegate authority to the City Manager in consultation with the ICGF Chairman and the Provost to approve the necessary expenditure in 2015/16.

14. Date of Next Meeting

It was **NOTED** that the next meeting would take place on Monday 11 May 2015.

The meeting ended at 11.55 am