

City of Inverness Area Committee

Minutes of Meeting of the **Inverness East Sports Facilities Working Group** held remotely on Thursday, 31 March 2022 at 11.15 am.

Present:

Highland Council:

Mr I Brown
Mr K Gowans (Chair)
Mrs T Robertson

Non Members in Attendance:

Mrs C Caddick
Mrs G Sinclair

Officials in Attendance:

Mr M MacLeod, Executive Chief Officer, Infrastructure, Environment & Economy
Mr D Haas, Inverness City Area Manager, Communities and Place
Mr R Campbell, Estate Strategy Manager, Property and Housing
Mr A MacInnes, Administrative Assistant, Performance and Governance

Also in Attendance:-

Mr J Croall, Head Teacher, Millburn Academy
Mr S Swanson, High Life Highland
Mr G Reid, Sports Scotland
Mr C O'Neil, University Highlands and Islands

Mr K Gowans in the Chair

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of Mr C Aitken, Mrs E McAllister, Mr S Walsh, High Life Highland, Mr D Wilby, High Life Highland, Mr R MacNeil, HIE and Mr M Rodgers, Executive Chief Officer Housing & Property.

2. Declarations of Interest

Transparency Statement:-

Item 5 – Mr K Gowans

3. Minutes of last meeting

There were circulated, for information, the Minutes of the last meeting of the Working Group held on 27 January, 2022, the terms of which were **NOTED**.

4. Exclusion of the Public

The Working Group **RESOLVED** that, under Section 50A(4) of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973, the public be excluded from the meeting during discussion of the following item on the grounds that it involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 9 of Part 1 of Schedule 7A of the Act.

5. Feasibility Study – Terms of Reference

Transparency Statement: Mr K Gowans made a Transparency Statement in respect of his wife who is an employee of High Life Highland and Mr Gowans is an employee of UHI Inverness. However, having applied the objective test he did not consider he had an interest to declare. This is because the agenda items and in particular the proposals being considered in regard to High Life Highland and UHI Inverness are couched in general terms and are sufficiently remote that they could not be reasonably be interpreted as potentially bringing benefit or advantage to his specific connection.

There was circulated to Members only Terms of Reference for the provision of a Feasibility Study into the viability of a major strategic sports facility to be located within East Inverness. The Terms of Reference had been drawn on the discussions that took place at the last meeting of the Working Group held on 27 January, 2022. The Working Group were invited to review the draft Terms of Reference following which a consultant would be procured through a tender process with a view to the feasibility study being let for a period of 3 months. This was the first step to provide an objective analysis on what sports facilities the Group wanted. Consideration would then be given to practical issues such as location, land, road access, active travel and any investment decision would be based on a detailed business case.

In discussion, the following comments were made:-

- The primary purpose of sport facilities would be to attract families, not only for East Inverness, but all of Highland. There was a desire to be ambitious on what new sports facilities should be provided and perhaps consideration should be given to taking on board a commercial partner, which had been done successfully for similar projects in other parts of the UK.
- In terms of why new sports facilities should be provided, it was felt that the commission should provide these answers. Therefore, the commission section of the terms of reference should include return on investment, economic impact, sectoral impact i.e. the health and wellbeing not just for East Inverness, but for the wider Highlands. It was agreed that the terms of reference would be amended to reflect the economic impact of new sports facilities and opportunities for both public and private sector partners to provide facilities.
- Sports Scotland undertook to provide further documents that could be added to the background information in the Terms of Reference, relating

to operating facilities and planning models and looking at the needs of the Highlands and specifically Inverness.

- Point 2 of the Commission section should also include the views of the Inverness Partnership.
- There should be provision for a swimming pool, racquet sports and preferably a site that could be expanded in future. It was highlighted that at this point nothing was being ruled in or out in terms of sports facilities to be provided.
- Work had commenced on master planning for reserve School sites in East Inverness and space for future leisure facilities would be included.
- An example of elite sports development was provided. There were centres across the UK where elite sport was developed and the ambition was to extend sports science development and offering in Inverness and wider Highlands. The Inverness East Sports Facilities project provided a great opportunity to provide elite sports development.
- There was a need to ensure that the project did not grow to an extent that it could not be sustained financially. The project did not have to be completed all at once, but may be done in phases.
- There was work being carried out on locality plans for deprived areas of the City and included priorities to help people with mental health problems. Wellbeing and social aspects of providing sports facilities and personal development through links with UHI Inverness would be a great help to those living in deprived areas.
- There were 3 main locations within the Inverness East development plan which may be suitable to locate sports facilities, namely – UHI Inverness campus; Ashton farm; Culloden site.
- Good progress was being made with the sports pitch at the UHI Inverness campus.
- Sports Scotland highlighted the need for sports facilities in Inverness from grass routes level to elite performance. Sports Scotland were taking a targeted approach with a number of local authorities to drive equality, diversity and inclusion within sports. Sport Scotland had set out their aspiration to work with Highland Council and develop a strategic relationship and align their priorities with that of the Council. Sports Scotland wished to work alongside the Working Group while the feasibility study was being developed. In this respect, it was confirmed that Sport Scotland would be invited to the Working Group meetings,

Thereafter, the Working Group:-

i **APPROVED** the draft Terms of Reference subject to the following amendments:-

- the terms of reference would be amended to reflect the economic impact of new sports facilities and opportunities for both public and private sector partners to provide facilities.
- Sports Scotland undertook to provide further documents that could be added to the background information in the Terms of Reference.
- Point 2 of the Commission section to include the views of the Inverness Partnership.

ii **NOTED** that the Executive Chief Officer for Infrastructure, Environment & Economy would finalise the Terms of Reference and arrange for a tender exercise to be undertaken.

6. AOB and Date of Next Meeting

A date for the next meeting would be advised to the Group.

The Chair thanked all the participants for their contributions and it had been a very positive meeting.

The meeting ended at 12.15 p.m.