

The Highland Council

Minutes of Meeting of the **Community Challenge Fund Applications Panel** held in Committee Room 2, Council Headquarters, Glenurquhart Road, Inverness, on Thursday, 18 April 2013, at 10.00 a.m.

Present

Dr D Alston
Mr D Hendry

Mr J Gray
Ms F Robertson

Committee Chair:
Mrs B McAllister

Officials in attendance:

Ms M Morris, Assistant Chief Executive
Mr R Guest, Head of Roads and Community Works, TECS
Mr D Robertson, Head of Accounting, Finance Service
Ms L Lee, Committee Administrator

Dr D Alston in the Chair

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of Mrs C Wilson and Mr G Phillips.

2. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

3. Minutes of Meeting of 13 February 2013

There had been circulated and were **NOTED** Minutes of Meeting held on 13 February 2013.

The Assistant Chief Executive provided an update on actions take since the February meeting, including clarification of guidance on the Council's website, development of guidance for officers, and briefings for Ward Managers (the first point of contact for applicants). A seminar would be also arranged for groups prior to their submitting full applications, to provide advice on the process.

Of the six Expressions of Interest supported by the Panel in February, three full applications had been received. The other three full applications, if submitted, would be brought to a future meeting. Members welcomed the update on improvements to the process and stressed the importance of early contact with groups following Panel decisions, and urged that the process be made as customer-friendly as possible. In response, the Chair commented that the scheme was as yet in its early stages and that greater clarity would evolve over time.

The Panel **NOTED** the comments made in discussion and **AGREED** that reports providing information on the Challenge Fund should be promoted through Ward Forums and the Area Committees.

4. Assessment Criteria

There had been circulated and were **NOTED** the Assessment Criteria against which applications for funding would be assessed.

5. Applications

There had been circulated Report No. CCF1/13 dated 15 April 2013 by the Chief Executive, presenting the applications received for the first round of the Community Challenge Fund. All the applications fell within the scope of activities carried out by the Transport, Environmental and Community Service. The Panel considered each application in turn.

5.1 Nairn County Cricket Club (NCCC)

This application proposed that NCCC would take responsibility for maintenance of the cricket pitch, on a voluntary basis, allowing the outfield to be cut more frequently. A mowing machine would be required.

The Head of Roads and Community Works summarised the potential costs and savings of the project, and the implications for the Council's existing grass cutting contract. Issues relating to storage, transport, maintenance and eventual replacement of a mower would need to be resolved. An alternative way forward might be to ask the contractor to cut the field more frequently. Officers would be meeting with representatives of NCCC on 20 April. The Head of Accounting advised that as the mower would need replaced in due course, the project did not appear to meet the Assessment Criteria relating to sustainability.

Points raised in discussion included: potential savings; alternative ways of funding a replacement mower; that other clubs cut their grass without Council assistance; and potential precedents.

The Panel also discussed whether there might be scope for NCCC to join with other groups in Nairn in future to maximise use of the mower, and **NOTED** that the Chair would speak to Local Members in this regard.

5.2 Kyle & Lochalsh Community Trust

This application proposed the transfer of the pontoons at Kyle harbour and the public toilets to Kyle and Lochalsh Community Trust, and the expansion of the toilet facilities to include showers and a laundry.

The Head of Roads and Community Works summarised the potential costs and savings of the project and the implications for the Council's existing service contract for the toilets. It was likely that the Council would face a penalty cost if this contract was altered. There would also be a TUPE consideration. The Community Trust's proposals were currently being considered in principle by the Council's Fishery Harbours Management Board. The Board was also

considering a separate harbour development proposal which, if approved, would be likely to reduce the Trust's income. The question of whether the Council could legally pass on harbour dues to the Trust had also to be resolved.

In discussion, the Chair emphasised the importance of the Council's role as enabler. Members were minded that, in view of the uncertainty as to the Trust's future income streams, more detailed figures should be sought, and a revised application or business plan be submitted.

5.3 Fort Augustus and Glenmoriston Community Company

This application proposed to take over the majority of the role of community officer for the villages of Fort Augustus & Invermoriston, to improve the appearance and aesthetics of the villages. A tractor would be required.

The Head of Roads and Community Works summarised the proposals; advice would be taken with regard to TUPE implications. The project would improve the level of service delivered to the villages, particularly in winter. Discussions would need to be held with Transerve with regard to pavement gritting along the main street. It would be beneficial if the project could include maintenance of Strathoich cemetery and of the public toilets. The Head of Accounting advised that as the tractor would need to be replaced in due course, the project did not appear to meet the Assessment Criteria relating to sustainability.

In discussion, Members were of the view that the Community Company should be asked to take on the toilet servicing and cemetery maintenance, and that alternative ways of funding a replacement tractor should be investigated.

For each of the above applications, the Panel **AGREED** that:

- i. further meetings be arranged with each of the Groups to discuss issues and points of clarification arising from their applications;
- ii. meetings should be convened by the Head of Community Works & Roads, and involve the appropriate Ward Manager and other officers as required; and
- iii. consideration of the finalised applications should be deferred to the next meeting of the Panel.

6. Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Panel would take place in early June (date to be confirmed), and would consider:

- a) further progress with the above applications;
- b) any more full applications received for Round 1 of the funding
- c) Expressions of Interest for Round 2 of the funding.

The meeting ended at 10.45 a.m.