

**The Highland Council  
City of Inverness Area Committee**

Minutes of Meeting of the **Inverness City Arts Working Group** held in the First Floor Committee Room, Town House, Inverness, on Thursday 2 May 2013 at 10.00 am.

**Present:**

Mr K Gowans (Chair)            Mr T Prag  
Mr I Brown                        Mr G Ross

**Officials in attendance:**

Mr D Haas, Inverness City Manager  
Mr G Fyfe, Public Relations Manager  
Ms F MacBain, Committee Administrator

**Also in attendance:**

Ms S Christie Programme Delivery Manager (PDM) – ICArt  
Ms C Kessler, Work Placement Student

**Declaration of Interest**

Mr G Ross – Item 4 (non-financial)  
Mr K Gowans – Item 4 (non-financial)

**1. Apologies for Absence**

An apology was intimated on behalf of Mrs B McAllister.

**2. Exclusion of the Public**

The group **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 Part 1 of schedule 7A of the Act.

**3. Flood Alleviation Scheme - Project Progress to Date**

As a representative from the Flood Alleviation Project Team was unavailable, the City Manager gave an update on the delivery of the River Ness Flood Alleviation Scheme. Tenders for Phase 1 were due to be returned by 24 May 2013, with the aim of starting construction in July 2013 and completing in January 2015, with phasing having been extended to accommodate delays resulting from scheduled repair work to the Kessock Bridge. Phase 2 would be put out for tender in July 2013, with the aim of completion by March 2015, in line with government grant conditions.

Members **NOTED** the position.

#### **4. SHIFT//SEOL Project Management and Action Plan**

##### **Declarations of Interest**

**Mr G Ross declared a non-financial interest in this item on the grounds of having a close relative who had previously undertaken work for the Programme Delivery Manager but, having applied the test outlined in Paragraphs 5.2 and 5.3 of the Councillors' Code of Conduct, concluded that his interest did not preclude his involvement in the discussion.**

**Mr K Gowans declared a non-financial interest in this item on the grounds of being a Director of High Life Highland but, having applied the test outlined in Paragraphs 5.2 and 5.3 of the Councillors' Code of Conduct, concluded that his interest did not preclude his involvement in the discussion.**

There had been circulated a copy of the report that had been approved at the City of Inverness Area Committee held on 15 April 2013. The City Manager referred to the Action Plan and additional printed update on the Shift/Seol project that were attached to the re-circulated report and the Programme Delivery Manager gave a brief verbal update on some of the issues. These included a detailed document and rough edit of a film that had captured the ideas put forward by the young people of Culloden and Inverness High Schools and which could be used at the public consultation event to be held on 16 May 2013. £600 was sought from the River Connections budget to bring the film up to a useable standard.

Members discussed the suggestion of riverside interpretation panels giving information on the flood relief scheme. While these would be beneficial at an early stage, the information and grammar of the signs could be out of date by the time the scheme was completed, therefore consideration should be given to the use of panels with changeable information boards.

**The Programme Delivery Manager left the room for the remainder of this Item.**

Members discussed various options that were being pursued in relation to the recruitment of a Project Manager, which required an unusual combination of artistic and financial management skills. The tight timescales involved in the first phase of the project, given the importance of having the art as an integral part of the flood relief scheme and not as a 'bolted on' afterthought, were emphasised. The management structure of the project urgently required to be confirmed to ensure its prompt delivery and the City Manager assured Members that the matter was in hand.

Members **NOTED** progress to date and **AGREED:-**

- i. that the Programme Delivery Manager investigate options for riverside interpretation panels; and

- ii. to allocate £600 from the river connections project budget towards the schools participatory project.

## 5. **SHIFT//SEOL Artists Procurement Process**

There had been circulated Report No (ICArts-05/13) by the Inverness City Manager updating on progress with regard to competition for the provision of public art as part of the River Ness Flood Alleviation Scheme.

The City Manager summarised the procurement process, which was appended to the report. The Head of Procurement had been involved in drawing up the process, which was unusual given the artistic nature of the tender and the tight timescales in order to coordinate the project with the Flood Alleviation Scheme's timetable.

In response to questions, it was clarified that artists would be selected based primarily on their background and experience as there was insufficient time to provide them with a research phase that would enable them to provide information on their specific proposal. If Members wanted information on artists' proposals as part of the tender selection process, artists would require to be paid for development time and, due to the tight timescales, synergy with the Flood Scheme would be lost. During discussion, some Members were strongly of the opinion that artists should be able to provide a brief outline of their proposal without a paid research period and others spoke in favour of the selection process as outlined in the annex to the report, pointing out that the art would be of a better quality if artists were permitted a reasonable research period after the tender was awarded to them. After full consideration, Members were in favour of following the suggested process, having heard that there would be an opportunity to observe the quality of the artists invited to participate in the tender process.

Members **NOTED** the report.

## 6. **SHIFT//SEOL Project Briefs – Rest Places and the Trail**

The City Manager explained that the previously agreed River Connections Brief would be used as a template and the following two Briefs, for Rest Places and the Trail would be produced for the next meeting of the Working Group.

Members expressed concern at the delay in the production of the remaining two Briefs and the City Manager explained that it had been important to finalise the procurement process and governance issues to ensure the accuracy of the Briefs as this could affect the quality of the artists who were attracted to the projects. It was confirmed that final approval of the River Connections Brief was anticipated by the end of May 2013.

Members **NOTED** the position and **AGREED** that final approval of the remaining Briefs be delegated to the City Manager.

## 7. **Project Management (Ramada Commission)**

There had been circulated Report No (ICArts-05/13) by the Inverness City Manager updating on activity with the Ramada Hotel (now Mercure) undertaken during the initial Old Town Streetscaping programme.

A summary was given of the history of the project to date, namely that design work had been undertaken and some expenditure incurred to make improvements to the façade of the Mercure Hotel, given its prominent location. The original budget for the project had been jointly funded by the then hotel owners, the Streetscape public art budget, which was now closed, and lottery funding. A change of ownership in the hotel had brought a halt to the project and the new owners had not yet been contacted.

In response to considerable concern from the Chairman about the expenditure that had been incurred on the project without results and the process that had been employed, explanations were given for the £19,404 spent on the project to date and the procurement process that had been used.

As the project had attracted international attention and interest from Creative Scotland at a high level, selected artists had been paid expenses, together with the hotel providing accommodation, for a visit to Inverness to fully understand the needs of the project. This involved the artist inspecting the other public art works connected with the Streetscape programme so that they could achieve synergy with them. In response to further concern from the Chairman regarding the funding of artists travelling to Inverness from across Europe, the City Manager explained that full detail on the expenditure was available and would be provided to any Member on request.

Concerns were also raised regarding the level of expenditure noting that the contract is in abeyance. It was thought that the artist that had been selected to undertake the work was still in operation but, prior to an approach being made to the artist, informal enquiries should be made to the new owners of the hotel to establish their interest in pursuing the project. If they were not interested, then efforts should be made to recoup some of the expenditure that had been incurred.

Members expressed the hope that the project could be resurrected, given the need to improve the look of the building, for the benefit of the hotel and the wider economy of Inverness. Attention was drawn to the governance issues in relation to any use of Common Good Fund monies to make improvements to private buildings and the City Leader undertook to discuss with the City Manager the appropriate time to involve in the Inverness BID in discussions about the project.

The Working Group **NOTED** the report and **AGREED** that the City Manager:

- i. Investigate informally the revival of the project with The Accor Group, with the outcome to be reported to a future meeting of the Working Group;
- ii. investigate with Legal Services the status of the original contract and the possibility of recouping funds if the project was not to be revived; and
- iii. discuss the possible involvement of the Inverness BID in the project with the City Leader.

## 8. Artists – Support and Information

It was **AGREED** that the Inverness City Manager and Programme Delivery Manager would feedback on support strategies at a future meeting, given the need to focus on finalising the Briefs.

## 9. Media Relations

The Public Relations Manager provided Members with a summary of the services that were available to them through the Council's press office, including the issue of news releases which would appear on the Council's website as well as being distributed via its Twitter account. The Council's web site attracted 7,500 visitors each day and the Twitter account had around 5,000 followers. A protocol was suggested for handling the media in relation to the ICART's art projects to help provide a clear way forward and maximise publicity opportunities.

During discussion, Members considered some of the problems that could be faced if media relations were not correctly handled. While they wished to ensure that a protocol would not place any undue restrictions on them, for instance in allowing smaller projects to inform local media about their activities, they were in favour of a brief protocol being drawn up for their consideration. Other points made included:

- the Council's press office, while providing a valuable source of free publicity, was not always needed to communicate routine projects;
- when handling queries from journalists, the distinction between factual information and political opinion was crucial and staff needed to be aware of what queries they were permitted to answer and which should be referred to a designated spokesperson. The protocol should clearly set out who was appropriate to deal with media enquiries and be quoted in news releases; and
- the importance of having a strategic marketing and advertising plan, and related budget, rather than reacting to cold calls from advertising agencies or newspapers was emphasised.

Members **NOTED** the current position and **AGREED** that the City Manager, the Public Relations Manager, the Programme Delivery Manager and the Chairman draft a media relations protocol to be brought to the next meeting of the Working Group.

## 10. Financial Monitoring

There had been circulated a Financial Monitoring Statement setting out the Revenue Monitoring Account at as 28 February 2013 together with background information.

Following a summary of the report, concerns from Members were responded to as follows:

- the Sublime project had not gone over budget but had increased in size, generated additional income and had, as a result of the expanded project, incurred the additional expenditure reported. The expenditure had been largely grant-funded, with a contribution from the Common Good Fund (CFG), although it was emphasised, in response to queries from Members, that CGF monies had not been spent outwith the terms of the Fund, i.e. for the benefit of the citizens of Inverness;
- £250 had been incurred to pay for a trainer to teach people about Twitter at Freaky Friday events; and
- in response to concern from the Chairman that only limited information on the accounts had been made available, the City Manager would provide Mr Gowans with more information on the reported £8,766 variance under Lead Artist (Jan 2008 – June 2010) and the £600 for hospitality incurred at the event held at Inverness Cathedral.

Members **NOTED** the report and **AGREED** that the City Manager would provide Mr Gowans with further information as detailed above.

#### **11. Minutes**

There had been circulated for noting the minutes of the Working Group held on 21 March 2013.

Members **NOTED** the Minutes.

#### **12. Date of next Meeting**

Members **NOTED** that the next meeting was on Thursday 13 June 2013 from 10am to 12noon.