

The Highland Council

Care, Learning and Housing Committee

Minutes of Meeting of the **External and Third Sector Sports, Leisure, Culture and Community Funding Working Group** held in Committee Room 1, Council Headquarters, Glenurquhart Road, Inverness on Friday 17 May 2019 at 10.30 am.

Present:

Mr B Boyd	Mr D Macpherson
Mr A Graham (Substitute)	Mr R MacWilliam
Mr T Heggie	Mr G Ross
Mr G MacKenzie	Mr C Smith

Non-Members also present:

Mr B Lobban

In attendance:

Mr B Porter, Head of Resources, Care and Learning Service
Ms I Murray, Commissioning Officer, Care and Learning Service
Mrs F Shearer, Interim Care and Learning Manager – South, Care and Learning Service
Mr D Martin, Area Care and Learning Manager – Mid, Care and Learning Service
Ms J Jennett, Area Care and Learning Manager – North, Care and Learning Service
Ms T Mcilvar, Family Resource Co-Ordinator, Care and Learning Service
Mr M Mitchell, Finance Manager, Corporate Resources Service
Miss M Murray, Committee Administrator, Chief Executive's Office

Also in attendance:

Mr I Murray, Chief Executive, High Life Highland

Business

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of Mr A Christie and Mr A Jarvie.

2. Declarations of Interest

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

Item 4 – Mr A Graham, Mr G MacKenzie, Mr G Ross and Mr C Smith (all non-financial)

Item 5 – Mr A Graham (financial)

3. Minutes

The draft Minutes of the previous meeting held on 26 April 2019 were **NOTED**.

4. Review of Funding for External and Third Sector Sports, Leisure, Culture and Community Organisations

Declarations of Interest:

The following Members declared non-financial interests in this item 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 – Member of Inverness Area Sports Council

Mr G MacKenzie – Director of the Puffin Hydrotherapy Pool

Mr G Ross – Treasurer of Highland Disability Sport, Council representative on Inverness Area Sports Council and former adviser to Youth Highland

Mr C Smith – Member of Highland Disability Sport and Inverness Area Sports Council

i. Village Halls

There had been circulated a briefing on the operation of the current scheme, changes to that over recent years, current grant recipients and funding provided.

ii. Sports Development

A verbal briefing was provided on the current funding scheme and possible options for consideration related to budget savings.

iii. Other organisations

There had been circulated a briefing on specific organisations where information had been requested, and possible options for consideration.

iv. Sports and leisure facilities

A verbal briefing was provided on sports and leisure facilities, including within Badenoch and Strathspey as requested at the previous meeting.

During discussion on the various elements of the review, the following issues were raised:-

- detailed discussion took place on the provision of leisure services in Badenoch and Strathspey, with input from Local Members and High Life Highland, during which information was sought to inform future discussions. It was emphasised that the associated implications were wider than the remit of the Working Group and the Chair explained that he had discussed the matter with the Chief Executive, who had offered to attend the next meeting. This was welcomed;
- the need for equity and fairness was reiterated;
- it was questioned whether achieving the required saving from what was already a relatively small budget was feasible;
- continuing to provide larger grants would have a significant detrimental impact on many other groups;

- the difficulties in terms of weighing up the benefits of the various organisations and the needs of their service users were recognised;
- detailed discussion took place on the issues surrounding Caithness Horizons which, it was explained, would be the subject of a report to the Care, Learning and Housing Committee on 29 May 2019. It was highlighted that the closure of the facility represented a significant financial risk to the Council and that whilst there was stakeholder support for a new vision, with High Life Highland as operator and funding from Dounreay Site Restoration Ltd, it would require a match funding commitment from the Council which would remove the scope for a financial saving in respect of Caithness Horizons and increase the impact of delivering the overall saving. Again, it was emphasised that the strategic implications were wider than the scope of the Working Group and it was necessary to involve the Chief Executive in the discussions;
- there was a case for weighting decisions in favour of geographical areas that needed support;
- third sector organisations provided a significant amount of value for relatively little public money and concern was expressed that grants were continually being cut out of necessity;
- it was recognised that High Life Highland delivered music tuition throughout Highland;
- there was potential to develop the role of Sports Councils to achieve better outcomes;
- it was difficult to know the impact of cutting funds to specific organisations;
- it was important not to focus solely on service delivery to individuals and to recognise the value of organisations that brought groups together to share knowledge and ideas;
- in relation to village hall grants, whilst it was recognised that the individual awards were relatively small, it was emphasised that a small sum could make a significant difference to a volunteer-run facility with sporadic income. Having considered the issues set out in the briefing paper, there was a consensus that there was merit in a contingency fund of £10k, with appropriate application criteria to be developed.

Thereafter, the Working Group:-

- i. **NOTED** the briefings provided;
- ii. **AGREED** that the Chief Executive be invited to attend the next meeting, to be scheduled before the Care, Learning and Housing Committee on 29 May 2019 if possible, to discuss the issues surrounding Caithness Horizons and the provision of leisure services in Badenoch and Strathspey; and
- iii. **AGREED** that further information be provided, as requested, to inform the discussions.

5. Early Years Service Level Agreements

Declaration of Interest: Mr A Graham declared a financial interest in this item as an employee of Bòrd na Gàidhlig, a key funder of Fàs Mòr, and left the room during discussion on the West Area applications.

There had been circulated a briefing paper summarising the background to Early Years Service Level Agreements (SLAs) (formerly Childcare and Family Resource Partnership Applications).

In addition, copies of the applications for SLAs that had been received by the deadline of 10 May 2019 were tabled. Area Care and Learning Managers or their representatives spoke to the applications for their respective areas, explaining which they were recommending for approval and why. Members were reminded that the sum available across Highland had been reduced to £200k for 2019/20 and that, given the level of funding that had been requested by some organisations, it was necessary to consider how much could be funded through an SLA and which aspects of the services merited this.

Detailed discussion took place, during which further information was sought, and provided, on specific organisations and the following issues were raised:-

- consideration could be given to reducing the amounts applied for by 10% to encourage organisations to become more sustainable;
- in relation to SNAP in particular, it would be helpful to receive a more detailed breakdown of how the funding would be divided between the services set out in the application;
- it was confirmed that organisations that were commissioned in the future in relation to the rollout of 1140 hours of early learning and childcare provision would not require a SLA;
- it would be helpful to receive a written rationale of the Area Care and Learning Managers' recommendations;
- it was necessary to take organisations' assets into account;
- many people were affected by the decisions being taken and Members were answerable to their constituents;
- concern was expressed that some providers' models were not sustainable;
- in relation to applications that merited support but were not appropriate for a SLA, it was confirmed that other funding avenues would be explored by the relevant Family Resource Coordinator. Members added that the Council was relying on community groups to be more inventive and it was necessary to support them by minimising bureaucracy;
- it was essential to consider each application on its merits and not to fund an organisation simply because it had requested a relatively small amount;
- it was necessary to separate one-off requests from those for ongoing support;
- information was sought, and received, on the SLA process and examples of existing SLAs were provided;
- SLAs had historically not been issued for less than £10k. However, it was suggested that this was for administrative purposes rather than an established policy and there was no impediment to issuing an SLA for a lesser amount;
- the importance of equity having been emphasised, it was suggested that there was potential to develop more robust criteria/formulae for future applications, taking into account issues such as rurality, disability, the number of children in a session etc; and
- in relation to the duration of the SLAs, it was not possible to commit funding for more than one year.

Thereafter, the Working Group **AGREED**:-

- i. to enter into Service Level Agreements as follows:-

Organisation	Amount
South	
Direct Childcare	£45,922
SNAP	£65,000*
Mid	
Balintore and District Residents Group	£1,800
SOAR Youth Projects	£30,000
Stepping Stones Nursery	£2,265
West	
Fàs Mòr	£10,000
Toybox Children's Centre	£7,359
North	
Dornoch Allsorts	£12,654
Pulteneytown Peoples Project	£25,000
Total	£200,000; and

- ii. that a written rationale of the Area Care and Learning Managers' recommendations be circulated to Members of the Working Group.

6. Date of Next Meeting

The Working Group **NOTED** that the date of the next meeting would be advised in early course following consultation with the Chair, the Head of Resources and, as agreed under the item 4, the Chief Executive.

The meeting ended at 1.10 pm.

** subsequently amended to £57,361 in consultation with Members by email, leaving a balance of £7,639 to be discussed at the next meeting.*