

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

Minutes of Special Meeting of the **Inverness Common Good Fund Sub-Committee** held **remotely** via **Microsoft Teams** on Monday 27 November 2020 at 12.30 pm.

**Present:**

Mr A Jarvie  
Mrs C Caddick  
Mrs H Carmichael  
Miss J Campbell  
Mr A Graham

Mrs I MacKenzie  
Mrs E McAllister  
Ms E Roddick  
Mr G Ross

**Officials in Attendance:**

Mr D Haas, Inverness City Area Manager  
Mrs A Clark, Head of Policy and Reform  
Ms S McKandie, Head of Revenues and Customer Services  
Mrs H Tolmie, Administrative Assistant, City Manager's Office  
Mrs A MacArthur, Administrative Assistant, Chief Executive's Service

**Mr G Ross in the Chair**

**1. Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of Mr B Boyd and Mr I Brown.

**2. Declarations of Interest**

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

Item 5 at 6.3.3 - Miss J Campbell ( non-financial)  
Item 5 – Mr A Jarvie (non-financial)

**3. Exclusion of the 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. Inverness Common Good Fund Financial Monitoring**

There had been circulated Report No CIA/26/20 dated 5 November 2020 by the Executive Chief Officer, Resources and Finance and the Executive Chief Officer, Communities and Place. This report had been re-circulated from the City of Inverness Area Committee which showed the important underspend from this year's revenue budget of £0.235 million, adjusted figure. The funding in relation to the Operation Respect report, should it be approved, would be drawn from the Partnership Working Budget and would therefore not be drawn from the revenue budget underspend.

The Sub-Committee **NOTED** the report.

### **5ii. Operation Respect – Festive Period Inverness and Area**

There had been circulated an additional Report No GSC/05/20 dated 5 November 2020 by the Executive Chief Officer, Communities and Place. The Sub-Committee was asked to approve a contribution to the funding for activities from the Inverness Common Good Fund for the Festive Project for Winter 2020/21. Members Workshops and the City of Inverness Area Committee held on 19 November 2020 considered the best way to integrate Members expressed view that the Inverness Common Good Fund Budget for 2020/21 should be focussed on mental health and wellbeing. Particular attention would be given to the reduction of hate crime.

Members comments included:

- An update had been given from Inspector Garrow, and it had been very impressive, this year Police Scotland, with the additional Covid implications, were very well prepared and ready for the festive season; and
- a query on the area covered and this was expanded upon, where normally Operation Respect would concentrate on physical presence on the streets within the City Centre managing the hospitality sector, it would now support people wherever they may be within the city.

The Sub-Committee:

- i. **NOTED** the targeting of objectives for Operation Respect on reducing the impact of the pandemic on people's health and wellbeing; and
- ii. **AGREED** funding of £10,000 for Operation Respect 200/21 from the Inverness Common Good Fund Partnership Working Budget

### **5. Community Wellbeing and Recovery**

**Declaration of Interest: Miss J Campbell declared a non-financial interest in this item as a Board Member of Eden Court Theatre and left the meeting for the duration of this item.**

**Declaration of Interest – Mr A Jarvie declared a financial interest as he was an employee of Inclusion Scotland but, having applied the test outlined in Paragraphs 5.2 and 5.3 of the Councillors' Code of Conduct, concluded that the interest did not preclude him from taking part in the discussion.**

There had been re-circulated Report No CIA/31/20 dated 10 November 2020 by the Executive Chief Officer, Infrastructure and Environment and the Executive Chief Officer, Communities and Place. The Inverness City Committee asked that the Common Good Sub-Committee look at this report in more detail.

It was noted that at this meeting Members would be provided an update and that more detailed proposals for funding, as agreed at the City Committee, would be submitted to the next meeting of the group

## **Support for Business - Update**

*City Branding* - In discussion with Kevin Murray, who had helped enormously with the Inverness Victorian Market, the terms for supporting local businesses and the branding for Inverness would be identified. A briefing note would be brought to members identifying: the terms of reference; how the branding could look; the structure; the stakeholder engagement we are looking to incorporate; and the type of objectives we are looking to see and develop to build a brand for the city and area enabling the city to be branded in a common form across all our partner agencies.

Miss J Campbell stated that Kevin Murray had been the ultimate professional, she looked forward to the outcome of discussions and meetings with him.

This report would be taken to the next Sub Committee in January so that a more detailed report could be taken to the City Committee and City Recovery Group in February.

In relation to marketing during this period of covid restrictions, there was close contact with colleagues in Environmental Health and marketing would not be aimed at communities unable to travel at this time.

*City Marketing* - Mr Haas then shared a briefing note on the Inverness City Marketing Proposal. This was aimed at immediate marketing and addressing the key opportunities available now.

Work would progress with Inverness City BID and the Loch Ness Tourism BID to produce a proposal. The challenges right now were centred on the covid pandemic and managing the way forward on the opening of travel from other areas to the city. There was an opportunity with large numbers of potential visitors with a desire to visit Inverness if effectively marketed. There was a strong demand and we needed to be ready to meet the demand. The Highlands was also seen as a fantastic place for film locations and this had been a booming industry before coronavirus had struck.

Members comments included:

- asked that social media be utilised and not paper fliers/leaflets, social media had been used to publicise businesses in Inverness through the covid period and this had been excellent;
- on a query about the marketing, the funding would be given in partnership with other organisations which would give added value and more power to help to develop a vibrant city;
- on a query re Loch Ness advertising, when people came to the Highlands, Inverness was used as a base for tourists and therefore by supporting Loch Ness it greatly benefited the city; and
- a request was made for a cost benefit analysis to ensure the correct people were targeted, as unlike Council money, any monies not spent this year could be used next year. It was likely that next year would be even more challenging following the covid pandemic, therefore careful consideration had to be given to monies spent and targeted this year.

### **Tackling Discrimination Update**

Mrs A Clark, then spoke on developing an awareness raising campaign and associated digital training to tackle discriminatory/hate activity. There were challenges in Inverness with people who were exempt from wearing facemasks facing discrimination/hate activity. There were very good reasons why some people were unable to wear facemasks and it has been proposed awareness should be raised to address the discrimination/hate activity. A training course targeted at hospitality and retail staff that would raise awareness amongst staff but also build confidence amongst individuals experience discrimination. Isolation had been increasing in various groups due to discriminatory behaviour from people. A poster campaign, where posters could be displayed in the shop windows in the centre of Inverness, would increase awareness and understanding, with a training course also being provided.

Members comments included:

- Members had concerns that the only people taking up training courses would be those people who already understood discrimination, it was likely that a social media campaign would be more effective;
- Ambassadors in Inverness could be utilised to engage with and support people and businesses;
- It was suggested that learning from other areas should be explored
- It was noted that BID was clearly a key partner and their input should be sought
- The preference would be to avoid using leaflets and posters, with the exception perhaps of in shop windows and that social media would be a better way forward.

Ms Clark thanked members for their comments and noted that a proposal on Tackling Discrimination would be brought to the next meeting of the sub-group.

### **Third Sector Grant Fund - update**

Mrs A Clark then spoke in relation to the third sector grant fund and the proposals in relation to developing a grant fund to specifically tackle digital exclusion, isolation, food/fuel poverty and mental health and wellbeing training support.

Members comments included:

- It was suggested there was no need to ring fence the third sector grant it could be included with the normal common good funding, most grants were for the third sector and members looked forward to requests coming forward in the usual manner, each to be considered on its own merits;
- Connecting Scotland had already supplied many digital devices through Connecting Scotland Programme, was there more required? Mrs Clark responded that the latest Connecting Scotland programme had been specifically targeted at pregnant women and care experienced young people;
- It was noted that a range of contact, not just digital makes a significant difference to individuals.
- many people did not have a tablet or a means to facetime with their family, Mrs Clark responded that in Beaulieu, some carers took tablets that had been provided to them to enable their clients to facetime with their family;
- it would be beneficial if the Community Planning Partnership Core Group meeting could give a short presentation to the Inverness City Committee on social and digital inclusion and the service they provide;

- a request that community centres be re-opened even for two hours a day, as these centres could greatly assist many people who were struggling to complete forms, for example universal credit forms. These centres could be set up for use by third sector parties to come into and speak to the elderly, young people and people who had problems; and
- an important aspect for the city recovery would be to re-open service points, they provided much needed assistance in form filling and on-line applications and support generally.

Mrs Clark thanked Members for their helpful comments and it was noted that a proposal would be taken to the January meeting of the sub-group.

The Sub-Committee **NOTED:**

- i. the feedback from the workshop with Inverness groups and the key issues and challenges identified;
- ii. the update on the ongoing review of events and festivals and the wider arts and that a paper will be presented to the February committee on a new approach and programme for going forward; and
- iii. the update on City Centre infrastructure projects identified in the August paper and how it is proposed to progress these.

And thereafter **AGREED:**

- iv. that applications for funding on the three areas discussed – Supporting Business, Tackling Discrimination and Third Sector Grant Fund – would come forward to the next Sub-Committee for consideration.
- v. that a short presentation be taken to Inverness City Committee on social and digital inclusion.

## **6. Mission Christmas – Request for Financial Assistance 2020/21**

There had been circulated an application to the Common Good on behalf of Mission Christmas by the Head of Policy and the Head of Revenues and Business Support. This was in line with the City Committee Decision from 19 November, to consider the application at the Common Good Grant Sub-Committee.

Mrs S McKandie stated that there had been a reduction in donations received by Mission Christmas due to the covid pandemic as a result of normal office collections and a reduction in donation points. MFR had so far received 600 applications from families in Inverness but this was around 3,700 families in 2019. The scheme had only been open for 10 days. The Revenue Team, Social Workers and the Education Team were still putting applications through on behalf of their children.

Members sought reassurance, and were given reassurance, that MFR Mission Christmas gave to families who were the poorest in society, children who received no gifts at Christmas, who also were unlikely to have heating or even a hot meal at Christmas. Applications from Council teams were prioritised for children who had very little.

Members were further reassured that MFR had confirmed that the funding given from the Inverness Common Good would specifically benefit Inverness burgh children.

Members asked about support for other individuals and families. Mr Haas advised that the Inverness Common Good Fund already gave funding to the elderly in terms of funding to the Blythswood Food bank and the Winter Payment Scheme. Mrs McKandie also advised that there was a Financial Insecurities Fund of £700,000 that provided warm winter clothing as well as a clothing provision from MFR and the Cathedral.

Concern was also expressed that this donation to a charitable campaign, however well meaning, did not align with the policy/process that was usually undertaken to determine other applications to the ICGF and concern was expressed that this did not set a precedent going forward.

Mr Haas reassured Members that the application did align with the aims of the Common Good fund and that it was clear that this year's application was unique given the current circumstances and also as a result of an underspend in this year's Common Good budget

Mr Haas would communicate individually with Members not present, as the Inverness City Committee had asked for a unanimous decision.

Members recognised the work the team of staff in the Inverness Town House undertook each year to give parcels and donations to MFR.

Mr Ross thanked Ms McKandie for all her work and the range of activities and support given to people by herself and her staff throughout the year.

The Sub-Committee **AGREED** funding of £30,000 to MFR Mission Christmas to provide direct support to children and families this Christmas through provision of Christmas gifts for the principal benefit of the residents of the Burgh, subject to the agreement of the Committee Members not present.

## **7. Date of Next Meeting**

The Sub-Committee **NOTED** that the next meeting would be held on 25 January 2021.

The meeting ended at 2.30 pm.