

The Highland Council

Minutes of Meeting of the **City of Inverness Area Committee** held remotely on Thursday 18 February 2021 at 10.00 am.

Present:

Mr R Balfour	Mr A Graham
Mr B Boyd	Mr J Gray
Mr I Brown	Mr A Jarvie
Mrs C Caddick	Mrs I MacKenzie
Miss J Campbell	Mr D Macpherson
Mrs G Campbell-Sinclair	Mr R MacWilliam
Mrs H Carmichael	Mrs T Robertson
Mr A Christie	Ms E Roddick
Mrs M Davidson	Mr G Ross
Mr K Gowans	Mr C Smith

Officials in Attendance:

Mr A Gunn, Executive Chief Officer Transformation and Economy
Ms L Denovan, Executive Chief Officer Resources and Finance
Mr C Howell, Head of Infrastructure
Mr E Foster, Head of Corporate Finance and Commercialism
Ms A Clark, Head of Policy
Mr D Haas, Inverness City Area Manager
Mr C Baxter, Planner
Mr N Young, Senior Engineer
Mr S Manning, Principal Traffic Officer
Mr M MacDonald, Corporate Improvement Project Manager
Mr J Mitchell, Principal Housing Officer
Mr J Kelman, Principal Project Manager
Mr K Forbes, Property Manager (Estates Management)
Miss J MacLennan, Democratic Services Manager
Ms A Macrae, Committee Administrator
Miss M Murray, Committee Administrator

An asterisk in the margin denotes a recommendation to the Council. All decisions with no marking in the margin are delegated to Committee.

Mrs H Carmichael in the Chair

Business

1. Apologies for Absence Leisgeulan

Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of Ms E Knox and Mrs B McAllister.

2. Declarations of Interest Foillseachaidhean Com-pàirt

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

Item 4: Mrs I Mackenzie (non-financial)

Item 5: Miss J Campbell (non-financial)

Item 7b: Miss J Campbell and Mr A Jarvie (both non-financial)

Item 7c: Mrs H Carmichael (non-financial)

3. New Years Honours Urraman na Bliadhna Ùire

Members were advised that Paula Morag Lloyd had been recognised in the New Year's Honours List for services to the Vulnerable in Inverness during the Covid-19 Response. The Provost advised that a letter of congratulations had been sent to Ms Lloyd.

4. Spaces for People – Updates and Next Steps Àiteachan do Dhaoine – Fios às Ùr

Declaration of Interest – Mrs I Mackenzie declared a non-financial interest in this item on the grounds a family member had set up a petition in relation to this item but, having applied the test outlined in Paragraphs 5.2 and 5.3 of the Councillors' Code of Conduct, concluded that her interest did not preclude her involvement in the discussion.

There had been circulated Report No. CIA/2/21 dated 3 February 2021 by the Executive Chief Officer, Infrastructure and Environment.

During discussion, Members raised a number of issues including the following main points:-

- it was suggested the spaces for people interventions had resulted in increased congestion in the City centre over the festive period;
- it appeared from the report, that as a percentage of space users the number of pedestrian and cyclists had decreased and there had been a slight increase in the number of road users;
- the need to acknowledge that at present some interventions to aid social distance were required, but also to recognise the significant public upset at the scheme overall;
- concern that to date there had been a lack of meaningful consultation with Members and the public, this having been conducted via the Council's online portal which was not accessible to all;
- the need to support and engage with businesses in the City centre and not implement measures which may reduce their footfall;
- in recognising the need to shift the balance of travel, a balanced stakeholder group of interests be established to produce an inclusive active travel masterplan taking into account the needs of all;
- the statistics around the public's behaviour as outlined in the report reflected the fact that most people were respecting the Government's advice to stay at home;

- the current measures on Academy Street were unsightly and it was important these be replaced with more aesthetic and greener interventions going forward;
- officers had confirmed permanent measures would be unlike the current temporary interventions and would be a product of consultation and the merits of the design options would be discussed further by the Committee;
- the need to recognise there were many people who lived outwith the City that relied on their cars or public transport to travel to work;
- careful consideration be given to the alternative design options for the Castle Street/Castle Road area on the basis the current arrangements were not adequate in terms of road safety;
- in the context of the Climate emergency, the proposed interventions would help reduce air pollution and ensure a cleaner City centre environment, noting that Academy Street had been assessed to be one of the most polluted streets in Scotland;
- the spaces for people measures had already delivered a number of excellent schemes with positive benefits and feedback being received and officers be commended for their work in this regard;
- confirmation was sought and provided that a traffic assessment was being undertaken in respect of Kingsmills Road, where it was suggested a significant increase in traffic had been observed. The wider impacts of the interventions were also being analysed and monitored on an ongoing basis;
- the need to develop and consult on proposals for a comprehensive transport strategy in the City, including better park and ride facilities and public transport taking into account the impacts on climate change and public health, potentially in conjunction with the Inverness Community Partnership;
- officers had outlined the full consultation that was to be undertaken in relation to any permanent measures and the need to reinforce the fact the majority of people supported rather than opposed the proposals;
- Members should have the courage to centre spaces around people and not vehicles and design an accessible City centre that would attract people to live, work and visit and of which future generations could be proud;
- the need to take a more overarching approach and inject more urgency in developing an active travel strategy for the City, including undertaking a realistic appraisal of the financial implications and how this strategy would be funded;
- the recommendations in the report be strengthened to provide for wider consultation on the proposals;
- the potential for the City Area Recovery Group , at which there had been positive discussions in terms of supporting the City centre, to move this forward by taking ownership and project managing an active travel plan for the City.

Following further discussion, the Provost seconded by Mrs T Robertson, **moved** approval of the recommendations in the report subject to recommendations (v) and (vi) being amended and to an additional condition as follows:-

- v. agree for officers to develop design options for a permanent street change for Academy Street for consideration at a future committee *with the proviso that the design development process includes consultation with representatives of the City business and residential communities to include representatives from Disability Access Groups*; and
- vi. agree for officers to develop design options for a permanent street change around Inverness Castle for consideration at a future committee *subject to consultation as in recommendation v, above*.

Additional Condition

Agree (a) to the development of proposals for a comprehensive transport strategy in the City taking into account the likely impact of Climate change and pollution on public health and (b) that effective pro-active public engagement be introduced in parallel with the strategic study, potentially in conjunction with the Inverness Community Partnership.

As a **first amendment**, Mr A Jarvie, seconded by Mr C Smith, moved that the Committee:-

- i. Acknowledge the need at present for some interventions to aid social distance, but also the significant public upset at the scheme overall;
- ii. Where these measures are not needed for the purpose of social distancing, these will be removed and those measure still required in the short term retained – subject to continual review and adaption where needed. At the appropriate time and social distancing is neither required or advised, all spaces for people measures to be reversed and returned to the pre-covid layout; and
- iii. In recognising the need to shift the balance of travel, agrees to establish a balanced stakeholder group of business representatives and owners, walking, cycling, disability and motorist groups, local residents, Community Councils and Councillors with the aim of producing an active travel masterplan with route specifics, enabling future measures to be rolled out on an informed manner taking into account the needs of all.

As a **second amendment**, Mr R MacWilliam seconded by Mrs G Campbell-Sinclair, moved the following addition to the recommendations in the report:-

The Highland Council will consult Highland citizens, public bodies and community groups on an agreed strategy which is grounded in up-to-date research and accessible design principles with intention to accelerate modal shift from vehicles to cycling and walking across Inverness city centre. Officers are asked to report back on progress to the next meeting of the Committee with a detailed position from the council administration as to how this strategy will be funded.

On a vote being taken between the **first amendment** and the **second amendment**, the **first amendment** received 4 votes and the **second amendment** received 11 votes, with 5 abstentions, the votes having been cast as follows:-

For the First Amendment:

Mr R Balfour, Mr A Jarvie, Mrs I Mackenzie, Mr C Smith.

For the Second Amendment:

Mr B Boyd, Mr I Brown, Mrs G Campbell-Sinclair, Mr A Christie, Mrs M Davidson, Mr K Gowans, Mr A Graham, Mr J Gray, Mr D Macpherson, Mr R MacWilliam, Ms E Roddick.

Abstentions:

Mrs C Caddick, Miss J Campbell, Mrs H Carmichael, Mrs T Robertson, Mr G Ross.

On a subsequent vote being taken between the **motion** and the **second amendment**, the **motion** received 11 votes and the **second amendment** received 6 votes, with 3 abstentions. The **motion** was therefore **carried**, the votes having been cast as follows:-

For the Motion:

Mr R Balfour, Mrs C Caddick, Miss J Campbell, Mrs H Carmichael, Mr A Christie, Mrs M Davidson, Mr A Graham, Mr J Gray, Mr D Macpherson, Mrs T Robertson, Mr G Ross.

For the Second Amendment:

Mr B Boyd, Mr I Brown, Mrs G Campbell-Sinclair, Mr K Gowans, Mr R MacWilliam, Ms E Roddick.

Abstentions:

Mr A Jarvie, Mrs I Mackenzie, Mr C Smith.

Decision

The Committee:-

- i. **AGREED** to consider the progress made to implement the Spaces for People Highland project to support physical distancing during the pandemic;
- ii. **NOTED** the outcome of monitoring of interventions;
- iii. **NOTED** that work was progressing on schemes for Riverside Way & Millburn Road through the Inverness City Active Travel Network project;
- iv. **AGREED** to retain the four key interventions in Inverness whilst Government recommendations for physical distancing remained in place, including extending Temporary Traffic Regulation Orders under Coronavirus legislation, if required;
- v. **AGREED** (a) to the development of proposals for a comprehensive transport strategy in the City taking into account the likely impact of Climate change and pollution on public health and (b) that effective proactive public engagement be introduced in parallel with the strategic study, potentially in conjunction with the Inverness Community Partnership;
- vi. **AGREED** for officers to develop design options for a permanent street change for Academy Street for consideration at a future committee with the proviso that the design development process includes consultation

- with representatives of the City business and residential communities to include representatives from Disability Access Groups; and
- vii. **AGREED** for officers to develop design options for a permanent street change around Inverness Castle for consideration at a future committee subject to consultation as in recommendation vi, above.

5. Events and Festivals Tachartasan agus Fèisean

Declaration of Interest – Miss J Campbell declared a non-financial interest in this item as a Director of Eden Court Highlands but, as a Council appointee and in terms of the specific exclusion in Section 5.18 of the Councillors’ Code of Conduct, concluded that her interest did not preclude her involvement in the discussion.

There had been circulated Report No. CIA/3/21 dated 28 January 2021 by the Executive Chief Officer, Transformation.

During discussion, Members raised the following issues:-

- the proposals outlined in the report represented an exciting and unique opportunity to work in collaboration with High Life Highland and Eden Court to bring high quality events and festivals to Inverness;
- the need to have a proposed programme of events and costings prior to agreeing a budget and whether it was intended to fill the vacant Events Manager post going forward. It was confirmed that a further report on the way forward and the operating model to inform resource requirements would be brought to the Committee in May 2021;
- the need to consider the types of offerings going forward and the timing of events over the year;
- the importance of there being no conflict of interest in collaborating with preferred partners when inviting tenders for events in terms of the Council’s contract standing orders;
- the potential to include the University of the Highlands and Islands, Inverness Caledonian Thistle FC, Royal National Mòd and the Blas Festival in the collaborative partnership framework arrangement going forward;
- a successful and holistic events and festivals programme had been delivered since 2009 and the opportunity for the vision to be further refreshed on the basis it replicated much of what was already in place;
- concern at the proposal to charge for some events on the basis it was important they remained accessible to all. It was confirmed that any proposals to charge for an event would be subject to equality and socio-economic impact assessments;
- it was hoped that collaboration with partners would enhance the core programme of events, provide an opportunity to share costs and attract additional sources of funding;
- in agreeing to preserve the current events and festivals budget, any under-spend on the budget should be retained for the following year but not as an additional sum to budget agreed for the following year;
- while entry to events should continue to be free, there was the opportunity to introduce charging for enhanced viewing areas or facilities

and the potential to harness other opportunities for the Council to generate income from its events;

- the potential for more digital online events be explored on the basis this would help support equalities and may encourage some people to attend events in person in future. Digital events also had the potential to significantly increase exposure and this in turn may attract sponsorship for events;
- events and festivals was key to the economic recovery of the City and in relation to wellbeing, and it was hoped that if Covid guidelines allowed a larger event could be organised towards the end of the year; and
- meeting invites to the Events and Festivals Working Group and the Committee's other Sub Committees/Working Groups be circulated to all Committee Members to allow for more participation and scrutiny.

Thereafter, the Committee: -

- i. **AGREED** the vision, values and objectives detailed in Appendix 1;
- ii. **AGREED** to preserve the current events & festivals budget in the sum of £0.303m to support the development of a refreshed events and festivals programme;
- iii. **AGREED** that any under-spend on the budget be retained for the following year noting that this sum would not be added to the budget agreed for the following year;
- iv. **NOTED** that the governance arrangements with scrutiny through the Events and Festivals Working Group, with annual reports to CIAC will continue;
- v. **NOTED** the next steps as detailed in section 7.1 of this report and that a subsequent paper will be presented at the May 2021 CIAC; and
- vi. **AGREED** that all Committee Members receive meeting invites to the Committee's Sub Committees/Working Groups.

6. Housing Revenue Account: Garage Rents 2021/22 Cunntas Teachd-a-steach Taigheadais: Màil Gharaidsean 2020/21

There had been circulated Report No. CIA/4/21 dated 3 February 2021 by the Executive Chief Officer, Housing and Property.

The Committee **AGREED** that a 2% rent increase be applied to Inverness Garages and Garage Sites.

7. Inverness Common Good Fund Maoin Math Coitcheann Inbhir Nis

a) 2019/20 Final Position, Financial Monitoring and Capital Projects Sgrùdadh Ionmhasail agus Pròiseactan Calpa

There had been circulated Report No. CIA/5/21 dated 3 February 2021 by the Executive Chief Officer, Resources and Finance.

In introducing the report, the Inverness City Area Manager provided an update in respect of winter fuel payments, confirming that a total of £127,968 had been paid out to date.

Inverness Town House - The Principal Project Manager provided an update on the two current major capital projects, namely, the Town House and the Victorian Market. It was explained that the Town House had been scheduled for completion in late December/early January, but delays had been experienced due to Covid and the revised completion date was the end of March 2021. The main issue was the external works and the fact that contractors were having to limit what they could do, or use mechanical means, to maintain social distancing. In addition, there had been some issues with the delivery of materials, often sourced from Europe. On a positive note, the fact that there were no staff working in the building at present had allowed progress to be made on the internal works. It was hoped that the revised completion date was achievable, but progress was being monitored week by week. There was no change to the cost frame at present, but an extension of time claim had been received and was currently being evaluated. The Inverness City Area Manager would be notified of any developments as soon as possible and a further update would be provided at the next meeting of the Committee.

Victorian Market - In relation to the Victorian Market, work had commenced on site in January, beginning with the asbestos removal works. It had originally been intended to have site accommodation on Academy Street. However, due to the Spaces for People interventions and the installation of fibreoptic cables on Academy Street it had been necessary to rethink, and it had been agreed that the main contractor would hire a vacant shop unit on Union Street for the duration of the contract. In addition, space for a skip would be allocated in Union Street. It was hoped that the associated costs would be covered by the contingency element of the contract, but he would report back to a future meeting of the Committee if that was not the case. It was a one-year contract so the end of the contract period was (unforeseen circumstances permitting) January 2022 but the contractor was currently scheduled to finish in December 2021 and Covid-related issues had been allowed for.

At this stage, the Chair of the City and Area of Inverness Economic Recovery Group addressed the Committee, explaining that the Recovery Group had been formed in June 2020 and had met on ten occasions since. It had examined options to help residents and businesses recover from the effects of the Covid pandemic, worked through a variety of issues and established a system of checks to ensure proper governance of any proposed actions prior to their implementation.

To fully understand the implications of any actions the Committee might wish to implement to assist Council or Common Good business tenants it was first necessary to carry out a full financial, economic and equalities assessment. When that had been completed, it was suggested that there would be an additional meeting of the Committee to fully consider the subsequent recommended actions prior to their implementation.

One of the many issues on the agenda had been the viability of businesses in the centre of Inverness, including Council and Common Good business tenants. Businesses on a global basis had been impacted by Covid and various levels and lengths of lockdown restrictions. The impact on businesses had varied considerably: generally, but not always, the impact had been negative. The UK and Scottish Governments had made various business support grants available to support businesses impacted by Covid and these

had been open to businesses across Highland, including city centre businesses, to apply for. Although these grants had been administered by Council staff, they had been widely available to businesses other than Council business tenants.

Members of the Recovery Group had asked for advice from Council officials with knowledge, expertise and responsibility as to how the Group could further assist businesses to recover. The advice given was that the Council had responsibilities with regards to both Council and Common Good business tenants. In the case of supporting businesses during Covid, the Council had a responsibility to clearly establish the level of need, not only of those that had raised the issue but of others to whom the Council had a responsibility. It would be irresponsible to consider any group, such as the Victorian Market traders, in isolation and as a reaction to a campaign. There was a Victorian Market Stakeholders Group, chaired by Councillor Isabelle MacKenzie, which met with traders on a regular basis. The Common Good Fund had also financed the appointment of the Victorian Market Manager, Joe Murray, who supported marketing, development, and wider communications.

The responsibilities of Members and officials of the Council had to be considered in the wider context of their duty of care and their fiduciary duties regarding Council and Common Good resources. One of the key responsibilities of Members and officials was that they must always act responsibly, consistently and respectfully to all. As always, in making decisions, the question of balancing the various competing issues should be considered in depth. It was critical that the reasoning behind any actions was transparent, justifiable and capable of withstanding scrutiny. Presently, there was a complex array of financial support available with further announcements regarding additional business grants focussing on non-domestic rates having been made as recently as Tuesday of the current week.

During discussion, the following issues were raised:-

- thanks, were expressed to the officers who prepared the reports and those behind the scenes who did so much work in relation to the Common Good Fund, as well as to the Members of the Common Good Fund Sub-Committee for their work throughout the year;
- information was sought, and provided, on the year-to-date underspends on the Victorian Market Maintenance and Operations budgets and how the remainder of the budgets would be spent by the end of the financial year;
- in relation to rental income, the Property Manager having confirmed that most tenants had continued to pay their rent, it was suggested this was because they had no option;
- concern was expressed that the full financial impact of Covid might well not be felt until the following year;
- it was queried what flexibility had been offered to tenants in terms of rent relief;
- relying on national schemes was not sufficient. Food and drink businesses, for example, had so far not been eligible for grants because they had not been required to close, yet some had lost a significant proportion of their business due to hotels and pubs being closed. Whilst the Economy and Infrastructure Committee had, at its most recent

meeting, approved a discretionary grants scheme, a grant of £2k was helpful to a small business but not to a larger employer;

- the proposed impact assessment was welcomed. However, this was not a laborious process and it was hoped that the additional meeting of the Committee would take place in the next few weeks and that there would be a full overview of the operations of the Common Good Fund estate. In addition, it would be helpful to have comments or representations from a range of tenants;
- offering rent relief was not just for social good, it was within the remit of fiduciary duty, and it was in the best interests of the Common Good Fund to do everything possible to retain tenants and protect revenue;
- the statement by the Chair of the City and Area of Inverness Recovery Group was encouraging. However, it was suggested that there were some inaccuracies in terms of the support that the Committee could afford to its commercial tenants. The small businesses in question created the vibrancy that was going to be necessary going forward, and it was asked that Members be open-minded;
- it was important that the Victorian Market project was completed as soon as possible given the effect any delays would have on trading, and the assurance that the project was currently projected to be completed on budget was welcomed. It having been queried when the Committee would next have an opportunity to scrutinise the project to ensure that it was still on track, the Principal Project Manager explained that a status report was presented to every meeting of the Committee and if there were any issues to report he would attend and update Members directly;
- a request having been made for a meeting with the Victorian Market traders, the Chair reiterated that it would not be appropriate to consider any group in isolation and that an additional meeting of the Committee would take place following completion of the necessary impact assessment;
- on the point being raised, it was confirmed that the valuation error which had been reported to the Audit and Scrutiny Committee did not affect Common Good Fund property valuations;
- in response to a question regarding the underspend on the Compensation Payments – Victorian Market budget, it was explained that when the budget had been set it had been unclear how much compensation would be payable to each tenant as it depended when they left and whether they intended to return to the Market. It was added that the purpose of the budget was specifically to compensate tenants who had had their tenancies terminated as a result of the refurbishment contract. The Inverness City Area Manager undertook to provide a detailed breakdown of compensation payments to all Members of the Committee;
- a date for the additional meeting of the Committee having been requested, the Chair confirmed that it would take place as soon as the results of the impact assessment, which was now underway, were available and noting that it was essential that the Committee be fully informed before taking a decision; and
- it was proposed that it be added to the recommendations that the grants offered to Victorian Market tenants be proportionately increased based on the delays to the refurbishment works as a result of Covid. However, the Inverness City Area Manager advised that it would not be appropriate to make such a decision until the financial implications had been assessed, and it was suggested that the proposal be investigated and revisited at the

additional meeting of the Committee. The Executive Chief Officer Resources and Finance assured Members that officers would carry out a full and thorough investigation of the financial implications as quickly as possible. It was added that additional information was coming in daily from government and it was important to ensure best value for any money the Committee expended. The Chair did not accept the proposed additional recommendation.

Thereafter, the Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the Inverness Common Good Fund final monitoring report for 2019/20 and balance sheet as at 31st March 2020;
- ii. **NOTED** the financial monitoring report to 31 December 2020; and that overall expenditure was within agreed budgets;
- iii. scrutinised and **NOTED** the current status of capital projects;
- iv. **NOTED** that an additional (Special) meeting of the City of Inverness Area Committee would take place following completion of a comprehensive financial, economic and equalities assessment to inform any decisions the Committee might wish to take to assist Common Good business tenants;
- v. **AGREED** that a breakdown of compensation payments in respect of the Victorian Market be circulated to all Members of the Committee; and
- vi. **AGREED** that the proposal that the grants offered to Victorian Market tenants be proportionately increased based on the delays to the refurbishment works as a result of Covid be revisited at the additional meeting of the Committee following completion of the necessary financial assessments.

Mr A Jarvie requested that his dissent be recorded.

b) Grant and Capital Projects Proiseactan Tabhartais agus Calpa

Declarations of Interest: Miss J Campbell and Mr A Jarvie declared non-financial interests in this item as a Member of the Inverness Community Safety Partnership and a Director of High Life Highland respectively but, as Council appointees and in terms of the specific exclusion in Section 5.18 of the Councillors' Code of Conduct, confirmed that they would remain and take part in the discussion.

There had been circulated Report No. CIA/6/21 dated 26 January 2021 by the Executive Chief Officer, Resources and Finance. A copy of supporting documentation had also been circulated as Booklet A.

During discussion, the following issues were raised:-

- in relation to the Inverness Gull Project, gulls remained an issue and, it having been queried what the proposed funding covered and whether awarding a greater amount would lead to a better result, it was suggested that a report on the project be presented to the next meeting of the Inverness Common Good Fund Sub-Committee. Councillor Smith requested that he also be kept informed;
- with regard to the application by Visit Inverness Loch Ness, it was confirmed that, whilst the amount applied for was £30,000 per annum, the

Committee was not being asked to commit any funding beyond the first year. It was further confirmed that the Inverness Common Good Fund was being asked to provide 50% of the total funding required, with Visit Inverness Loch Ness and Inverness BID each providing 25%;

- in relation to the application by Inverness Botanic Gardens/High Life Highland, it was highlighted that Councillor Macpherson was no longer a Director of High Life Highland;
- Velocity Café and Bicycle Workshop did tremendous work and it was hoped that they could be accommodated. It was confirmed that the applications would come back to the Inverness Common Good Fund Sub-Committee for consideration as soon as the additional information requested to ensure there was no duplication across the applications had been received.

Thereafter, the Committee determined the current grant applications as follows:-

- 1) Velocity Café and Bicycle Workshop Ltd – Bespoked Project – **AGREED** to defer for submission of further information;
- 2) Velocity Café and Bicycle Workshop Ltd – Bike-it/Scoot-it Project – **AGREED** to defer for submission of further information;
- 3) Inverness Botanic Gardens/High Life Highland – **APPROVED** a grant of £16,127 towards Apples for All at Bught Apple Park;
- 4) Visit Inverness Loch Ness – **APPROVED** a grant of £30,000 from the Partnership Working Budget towards Inverness City Recovery Marketing;

and **APPROVED** the following applications submitted by Inverness BID:-

- 1) The City of Inverness Annual Floral Displays 2021 - £61,100
- 2) Operation Respect Easter/Summer/Autumn 2021 – £9,113
- 3) Inverness Gull Project - £11,200
- 4) Inverness Community Safety Partnership - £9,700

It was further **AGREED** that a report on the Inverness Gull Project be presented to the next meeting of the Inverness Common Good Fund Sub-Committee, and that information also be provided to Councillor Smith in that regard.

c) ICGF Budget Setting for 2021/22 and Capital Programme Buidseat ICGF – 2021/22

Declaration of Interest: Mrs H Carmichael declared a non-financial interest in this item as a Director of Inverness BID and Inverness Loch Ness BID but, having applied the test outlined in Paragraphs 5.2 and 5.3 of the Councillors’ Code of Conduct, concluded that her interest did not preclude her involvement in the discussion.

There had been circulated Report No. CIA/7/21 dated 2 February 2021 by the Executive Chief Officer, Resources and Finance and Executive Chief Officer, Communities and Place.

During discussion, the following issues were raised:-

- information was sought, and provided, on how much of the projected deficit was in addition to what it would otherwise have been and the impact of liquidating assets to fund it, particularly whether a higher percentage of the portfolio would have to be liquidated now than pre-Covid to achieve the same revenue;
- whilst it was appreciated that the investment strategy was delegated to the Pensions Committee, it would be helpful to see more detail on how the Common Good Fund was performing and it was suggested that there should be an item on the next Committee agenda looking at the investment strategy and the overall expenditure of the Fund in future years. The interest had previously been generous but as the total volume of assets had decreased so had the interest and it was necessary to change from a passive strategy to a longer-term income focussed strategy to rebuild the Fund's reserves. The Chair responded that the reason for a passive strategy was to ensure a safe return. However, other Members commented that, coming out of a recession, remaining passive was a missed opportunity;
- information on the Fund's investments would be valuable when considering what could be done to support business tenants; and
- an update was sought on the review of the city's CCTV system and it was queried whether the budget allocation of £90,000 needed to be increased to provide a fit for purpose system that would protect citizens and stakeholders in the city centre. The Inverness City Area Manager explained that officers were working closely with Police Scotland and it was intended to report to the next meeting of the Community Safety Partnership and, in due course, the City Committee. He undertook to ensure Councillor Macpherson received an invitation to the Community Safety Partnership and confirmed that there was no requirement to increase the budget allocation at this stage.

In responding to the points raised, the Head of Corporate Finance and Commercialism confirmed that further information on the make-up of the Common Good Fund's assets, how the Fund was performing, and potential investment approaches could be included in future monitoring reports. In relation to potentially changing the investment strategy, it was explained that Members first needed to decide what they wanted the Fund's long-term investment outcomes to be. Investment could then be tailored accordingly.

Thereafter, the Committee **AGREED**:-

- i. the Common Good Fund budget for 2021/22 as detailed within the report and appendices; and
- ii. that further information on the make-up of the Common Good Fund's assets, how the Fund was performing, and potential investment approaches be included in future monitoring reports.

8. Minutes Geàrr-chunntas

There had been circulated various Minutes for noting or approval as appropriate.

It was questioned how Members who did not sit on a particular Sub-Committee/Working Group could carry out their scrutiny role when they were not invited to the meetings and the discussions took place in private, the Minutes of the Inverness City Arts Working Group and the discussions regarding the My Ness Project being cited as an example. Discussion ensued, during which it was reiterated that any Member could attend any Sub-Committee/Working Group as an observer and going forward, as agreed under item 5, all Members of the Committee would receive the electronic invites to the Committee's Sub-Committees/Working Groups so they could choose whether or not they wished to attend.

The Committee otherwise:-

- i. **NOTED** the Minutes of the City of Inverness Area Committee held on 19 November 2020 and 18 January 2021 (Special);
- ii. **APPROVED** the Minutes of the Inverness City Arts Working Group held on 10 December 2020;
- iii. **APPROVED** the Minutes of the Inverness Common Good Fund Grants Sub-Committee held on 27 November 2020 and 25 January 2021;
- iv. **NOTED** the Minutes of the Victorian Market Stakeholders Group held on 10 November 2020, 8 December 2020 and 12 January 2021; and
- v. **NOTED** the Minutes of the City and Area of Inverness Economic Recovery Sub-Group held on 9 December 2020 and 21 January 2021.

The meeting ended at 3.35 pm.