

## The Highland Council

Minutes of the **Special Meeting** of the **Nairnshire Committee** held Remotely on 24 June 2024 at 10.30am.

### **Present:**

Mr M Green  
Ms B Jarvie  
Mr P Oldham

### **In Attendance:**

Mr D Haas, Senior Community Development Manager, Communities and Place  
Mr M Greig, Community Development Manager, Communities and Place  
Ms P Burns, Projects Officer, Planning, Infrastructure Environment & Economy  
Mrs L Dunn, Joint Democratic Services Manager, Performance and Governance  
Ms M Nixon, Committee Officer, Performance and Governance

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

### **Mr M Green in the Chair**

#### **Business**

#### **1. Apologies for Absence Leisgeulan**

An apology for absence was intimated on behalf of Mr L Fraser.

#### **2. Declarations of Interest Foillseachaidhean Com-pàirt**

There were no declarations of interest.

#### **3. Nairn Common Good Fund Grant Fund Iarrtas Tabhartais Maoin Math Coitcheann Inbhir Narann**

There had been circulated Report No NC/09/24 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Place.

The Senior Community Development Manager introduced the report during which he explained that a competent application for funding from the Nairn Common Good Fund (NCGF) had been received from the Nairn Community and Arts Centre (NCAC). He advised that there were sufficient funds in the NCGF budget (Appendix 2 to the report) to support the grant. However, in the event that Members were minded to support the application for funding, he explained the need for the grant to be subject to a number of conditions, the details of which had been tabled at the meeting, to ensure best value for the NCGF. The conditions of the grant were as follows:

1. The Grant award is agreed in principle subject to the applicant providing financial statements to a standard that meet with the satisfaction of the Council, which inter-alia clearly evidence the requirement for the release of grant funding to ensure the continuance of essential service provision. The release of funds only being actioned after being agreed by officers in consultation with the Chair of the Nairnshire Area Committee.
2. The release of funds also being dependent on the NCAC Management Board, agreeing in writing to commission a feasibility study (the Study) regarding establishing a sustainable management model for the NCAC the terms of which will be subject to the prior written approval of the Council. Compliance of any recommendations made by the Study, will be on a timescale at the discretion of the Council, the Council also reserving all its powers in respect of its ability to manage and control the premises occupied, being the Nairn Community and Arts Centre, and managed by the NCAC Management Board.
3. The Feasibility Study to be completed by 31 December 2024 and an Evaluation report provided to the Council.

#### General Conditions of grant:

1. Satisfactory evidence of accounts and receipts for expenses;
2. Evidence of funding from other sources;
3. Acknowledgement of the Nairn Common Good Fund in accordance with the
4. Promotional Guidelines below;
5. Completion of the project within six months unless the application originally advised of a specific timescale;
6. Submission of completed Evaluation Form; and
7. Grantees to be available to attend (and where appropriate to perform) upon
8. reasonable request being made by the Council at Promotional/Civic Events.

#### Promotional Guidelines:

1. The Grantee agrees to any promotion of the award the Council may undertake;
2. The Grantee will acknowledge the Nairn Common Good Fund in all promotional material;
3. To use hashtag #NCGF when tweeting about awards and activities.

#### During discussion, Members raised the following main points:-

- the need for financial support was brought to the attention of the Council at very short notice and officers were commended for their prompt response in preparation of the report including the community consultation. Although it would have been preferable for feedback to have been sought from the Nairnshire Common Good Engagement Group it was recognised that there was not sufficient time for this given the urgent need for financial support;
- it was not feasible for The Highland Council to provide short term funding but there would be an opportunity for discussions on longer term support;
- the views received from the community consultation had been welcomed and it was considered that the overall feedback towards the application from the public had been very positive;
- this was one-off emergency funding to prevent insolvency for NCAC, which was a high value asset for Nairn, but there was a need for the applicant to put their financial affairs and governance in order;

- it was queried how the applicant could ensure the long-term sustainability of operation, given that NCAC considered that it required an external subsidy to continue to run and it would not be feasible for NCGF to provide this. However, it was indicated that a number of financial measures of support could be put in place such as third sector recovery support from the Highlands and Islands Enterprise; fundraising; reducing costs; and income generating initiatives such as implementing a Friends of NCAC scheme. Ultimately, cultural change would be required to ensure the long-term financial viability and best practice of NCAC. Although, it was indicated that there was a need for further discussions with the Council on longer term support for NCAC noting that other community centres received financial support, such as with payment of utility bills;
- it was queried if the Business Plan that was presented in the report would be redrafted to include the applicant's plans for income generation;
- the staff of NCAC were commended for their efforts;
- concern was expressed at the financial difficulties now being experienced given that that NCAC had been in a financially sound position when they undertook the community asset transfer only two years ago;
- it was discussed whether the funding could be given in the form of a loan but it was indicated that this would not be feasible due to the technical challenges associated with this;
- the funding, if granted, would provide a sum to ensure that the Community Centre could continue to operate until a feasibility study had been completed;
- clarification was sought and provided about whether the applicant had seen the grant conditions which were brought before the Committee. It was suggested that Condition 1 should be amended to read "*in consultation with the Nairnshire Committee*";
- clarification was sought and provided about the type of evaluation that would be undertaken and it was confirmed that a copy of the Evaluation Form would be circulated to Members;
- communication was vital to the success of the grant and Members and the Nairn Common Good Fund Engagement Group would continue to be kept up to date as the process progressed with further meetings being scheduled if required. The importance of openness and transparency and collaborative working was stressed to ensure the success of NCAC; and
- overall, the Committee was fully behind NCAC and wished their work to continue.

Following a brief adjournment to consider the conditions of the grant as tabled, the Committee:-

- i. **APPROVED** the application for one-off emergency funding up to a maximum of £50,000 based on the significant importance for Nairn subject to the following:-
  - a. the aforementioned conditions as tabled at the meeting subject to Condition 1 being amended to read "*in consultation with the Nairnshire Committee*";
  - b. that the Members and the Nairnshire Common Good Fund Engagement Group be regularly updated on the progress being made by the applicant to attain financial sustainability;
- ii. **NOTED** the budget agreed at the Nairnshire Committee held on 4 March 2024 attached as Appendix 2 of the report; and
- iii. **NOTED** that a copy of the Evaluation Form would be circulated to Members.

The meeting concluded at 11:10am.