

SCOTTISH BORDERS COUNCIL LAUDER COMMON GOOD FUND SUB-COMMITTEE

MINUTE of Meeting of the LAUDER
COMMON GOOD FUND SUB-COMMITTEE
held in Lauder Primary School (following site
visit) on Wednesday, 13 December 2017 at
10.30 am

Present:- Councillors D. Parker (Chairman), K. Drum, T. Miers and Community
Councillor A. Smith

In Attendance:- Capital and Investments Manager (K. Robb), Principal Solicitor (H. MacLeod),
Estates Surveyor (A. Phipps), Democratic Services Officer (F. Walling).

1. **MINUTE.**

There had been circulated copies of the Minute of 22 November 2017.

DECISION

NOTED for signature by the Chairman.

2. **FINANCIAL MONITORING REPORT FOR PERIOD TO 30 SEPTEMBER 2017**

2.1 There had been circulated copies of a report by the Chief Financial Officer indicating the income and expenditure for the six months to 30 September 2017, including the full year projected outturn for 2017/18 and projected balance sheet values as at 31 March 2018. Mrs Robb highlighted the main points of the report and appendices. Appendix 1 to the report provided the projected Income and Expenditure position for 2017/18, showing a projected deficit of £3,355. Appendix 2 to the report detailed the projected Balance Sheet value as at 31 March 2018 and showed a decrease in the reserves of £14,848. The breakdown of the property portfolio showing the actual rental income and property expenditure to 30 September 2017 was shown in Appendix 3. Appendix 4 provided details of investments externally managed in the Newton Fund and the value of the Fund to 30 June 2017. The first of two annual Dividends (£3,447) was received in October 2017, therefore not shown in the actuals in Appendix 1. The proposed budget for 2017/18 was based on a distribution of 2.4% which would be subject to the overall performance of the fund. The receipt of £3,447 was in line with the annual proposed budget.

2.2 Mrs Robb gave an update on the current position with regard to the Newton Investment. The Fund had delivered a negative return once more (-0.6% against benchmark of +1.1) in the quarter to 30 September 2017. Importantly, this negative quarterly return had resulted in a 5 year rolling return that was below the 5 year benchmark, which the fund was ultimately measured against (3.6% against benchmark of 4.4%). The Fund had delivered below benchmark performance for the last 5 quarters. Scottish Borders Council approved the commencement of a procurement exercise to ensure the funds were managed by the Fund Manager best aligned to the Common Good and Trust Investment Strategy. The outcome of the procurement exercise would be reported to Scottish Borders Council on 21 December 2017 for final approval.

DECISION

(a) **NOTED:-**

(i) **the projected balance sheet value as at 31 March 2018 in Appendix 2;**

- (ii) **the summary of the property portfolio as contained in Appendix 3;**
 - (iii) **the current position of the investment in the Newton Fund in Appendix 4;**
- (b) **AGREED the projected income and expenditure for 2017/18 in Appendix 1 to the report.**

3. **LAUDER WOODLAND/PLANTING**

With reference to paragraph 3 of the Minute of 22 November 2017, Mr Hugh Chalmers of Tweed Forum, was in attendance to give details of a proposed woodland planting scheme for Lauder Common. He provided copies of a map with proposed areas of planting totalling 28.72 ha. This included 5 areas of native broadleaved woodland and 3 of conifer (75% scots pine, 10% Birch, 15% Norway Spruce). Mr Chalmers had walked the sites with a representative of the tenant, Lauder Sheep Company, who he believed were happy with the proposals, but who he thought would be looking for a return due to the resulting reduction in grazing land. In respect of Area 4 on the map, the Council's officers had confirmed that planting would not interfere with the ridge and furrow landscape which was of archaeological interest. With regard to grants available, Mr Chalmers explained that the Penmanshiel Compensatory Replanting Grant Scheme was not suitable for the proposed planting as it would mean a loss of basic farm payment for the tenant. The table of payments presented to Members related to those available under the Rural Development Programme Forestry Grant Scheme. Also included were estimated costs of the scheme. Taking into account annual maintenance and capital grants available alongside cost estimates, the initial outcome was a loss of £8,630.13. However with the potential carbon offer the initial outcome was £11,473.87, the 10-year maintenance surplus being £19,381. It was confirmed that this would not affect any areas eligible for basic farm payments, which would continue. After a lengthy discussion on the way forward it was agreed that the Common Good as landlord should approach the tenant with a view to working in partnership to carry out a tree planting scheme which would improve and increase the value of the land, in the form of fencing waterways, providing shelter belts etc and provide a return to the benefit of both parties. It was noted that once firm proposals were in place the scheme would be made available for public consultation.

**DECISION
AGREED;-**

- (a) **that the Common Good work in partnership with the tenant of Lauder Common, to take forward a tree planting scheme which would improve and increase the value of the land and provide a return to the benefit of both parties; and**
- (b) **that an initial approach to the tenant be made by the Chairman to initiate discussions.**

4. **PROPOSAL OF WORKS TO PATH FROM PIGGERY FIELD**

With reference to paragraph 4 of the Minute of 22 November 2017, a site meeting had been held prior to the formal meeting to discuss proposed improvements to the path from the Piggery Field to the A68. The site meeting had also been attended by Mr Craig Blackie, Neighbourhood Area Manager. After discussion Members agreed that the path should be surfaced with hard-core for its total length to a width of 1.5m. It was noted that the path passed over land belonging to two other parties in addition to the section owned by the Common Good. Agreement from the other parties would be sought but it was proposed to commence work on the section on Common Good land as soon as possible. Further options had been discussed on site all relating to the section owned by the Common Good. This included suggestions to fence-off the burn, plant trees along the side of the burn and suggested changes to the fence lines which divided the fields. It was noted that, to continue to let the grazing on the same basis, a water trough and pump may be required to provide a water source for livestock if the waterway was fenced off. Ms

Phipps agreed to get a quote for this work and to look at any implications to the rental value of the land subsequent to the changes suggested. Mr Chalmers offered to investigate whether there would be a grant available for tree planting that may cover the cost of fencing-off the burn and provision of an alternative water supply.

DECISION

AGREED that:-

- (a) **the path from the Piggery Field to the A68 be surfaced with hard-core for its whole length to a width of 1.5m, subject to the agreement of the other landowners concerned;**
- (b) **the Principal Solicitor seek agreement from the landowners for the work to be carried out on the sections of path not owned by the Common Good but that work be commenced as soon as practicable on the section on Common Good land;**
- (c) **the Estates Surveyor obtain a quote for the provision of a water trough and solar pump and investigate any implications to the rental value of the grazing land subsequent to the changes proposed; and**
- (d) **Mr Chalmers investigate whether a grant would be available for tree planting that would cover the cost of fencing along the burn and the provision of a water trough.**

5. **URGENT BUSINESS**

Under Section 50B(4)(b) of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973, the Chairman was of the opinion that the items dealt with in the following paragraphs should be considered at the meeting as a matter of urgency, in view of the need to make an early decision and to keep Members informed.

6. **TOWN HALL**

In response to a question from Mr Smith about the hire of the Town Hall as a venue for a marriage ceremony, Members agreed that this would be acceptable and that there would be a charge of £50.

DECISION

AGREED to a charge of £50 for the hire of the Town Hall as a venue for a marriage ceremony.

7. **WORKING TRIALS**

Mrs MacLeod advised that she had emailed consent to the Kennel Club for Working Trials to be held on Lauder Common in 2018. Ms Phipps would keep the tenants informed about dates.

DECISION

NOTED

The meeting concluded at 11.10 am