

SCOTTISH BORDERS COUNCIL
SELKIRK COMMON GOOD FUND SUB COMMITTEE

MINUTE of SPECIAL MEETING of the SELKIRK COMMON GOOD FUND SUB COMMITTEE held in Committee Room 3, Council Headquarters, Newtown St Boswells on Friday, 17 January 2013 at 10.15 am.

Present: Councillors G. Edgar (Chairman), M. Ballantyne (from para 2), V. Davidson;
Community Councillor T. Combe
In attendance: Legal & Licensing Services Manager, Estates Surveyor (J. Morison), Senior
Financial Analyst (A. Mitchell), Democratic Services Officer (F. Walling).

SIR WALTER SCOTT'S COURTROOM

1. The Chairman explained that the special meeting of the Sub Committee had been arranged so that Members could receive a briefing about the scale and scope of a project to undertake interior improvements within the display space at Sir Walter Scott's Courtroom, Selkirk. The Town Hall was owned by the Common Good but the section of building in question was used by the Council's Museum Service. The Cultural Services Manager, Ian Brown, and the Senior Museums Curator, Fiona Colton, were welcomed to the meeting to give the update. Ms Colton explained that a total of £50k had been allocated from Scottish Borders Council's Capital Budget 2013-14 to carry out a refurbishment project within Sir Walter Scott's Courtroom. She circulated at the meeting copies of an internal plan of the venue, a tourist information leaflet and a summary of the work that was planned. The priorities were to install important health and safety improvements; to ensure the venue complied with health and safety and legal requirements for public access; and to refresh displays and interpretation for improved visitor experience. Reports had been obtained on infrastructure, security and electrics in addition to a Health and Safety requirements report from the Wellbeing and Safety section. In a survey carried out of the display needs of the collections, there was evidence of light damage to watercolours and textile banners. A feasibility report on display lighting requirements had also been obtained with a view to installing lighting for period ambience whilst complying with legislation. A recent survey carried out at a Selkirk Conservation Area Regeneration Scheme (CARS) event had produced feedback on what the public would like to see at the venue. This referred to the re-creation of a more period ambience in the courtroom display; important subjects, themes and display items; and the formats of interpretation that people would most enjoy.

MEMBER

Councillor Ballantyne joined the meeting.

2. Ms Colton went on to list the detailed works being carried out as part of the priority improvements to which she had referred. There would also be some refresh painting of walls and ceilings in the Courtroom. The current workplan, as proposed, had an anticipated date for re-opening of Good Friday, 18 April 2014. A private viewing would take place on 17 April. From 2015/16 there would be a rolling programme of improvements to introduce if and when funding was identified. This would include re-decoration of the entrance stairs and bell tower access area; refurbishment of the current reception area; refurbishment of the current staff toilets, store and disabled exit area; a full revamp of display cases and mannequins; and the introduction of audio visuals, touch screen information and interpretation boards.
3. As part of the work in hand Members agreed to the officers' recommendation to dispose of the late 1960s style table and chairs from the centre of the courtroom and the two brass chandeliers to allow for the installation of new period light fittings. The Sub Committee had no objection to the Museum Service organising disposal of these items through public auction with any net profits from the sale proceeds being invested back into more improvements in Scott's Courtroom.

Item No 4(c)

Ms Colton also reported that a member of the public had requested that the Selkirk Provost's Board be moved into the main period Courtroom area following refurbishments, its current position being in the Scott's Courtroom reception area. After discussion Members did not believe that the contemporary Provost's Board could sit appropriately within the reconstruction of an early 19th century Courtroom. It was suggested that if, as proposed, the reception area was improved as part of a rolling capital programme of improvements, the Board could be put in a more prominent position there and linked in display with the Ex-Standard Bearers Roll. The Chairman thanked Mr Brown and Ms Colton for their attendance.

DECISION AGREED:-

- (a) **the proposed health and safety improvements and work to refresh displays and interpretation in Sir Walter Scott's Courtroom;**
- (b) **that the Sub Committee have no objection to the disposal of the table/chairs and two brass chandeliers and the re-investment of any proceeds from that disposal into further improvement works in the Courtroom; and**
- (c) **that it would not be appropriate to move the Selkirk Provost's Board from its current position to be displayed in the period Courtroom.**

URGENT BUSINESS

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

TOWN HALL CLOCK

- 5. The Chairman reported that an urgent problem had arisen in the tower section of the Town Hall where there was water ingress through the spire, the Town Hall Clock having ceased to work since before New Year. Property officers Stuart Mawson and Tom Holmes had hired a cherry-picker to arrange for the spire to be inspected and a stonemason would be consulted, with a view to a solution being found. The Legal and Licensing Services Manager advised that as the Scottish Borders Council Museum Service had the use of part of the building the service should contribute to the cost of the inspection. However as the building was owned by the Common Good any subsequent repair bill would be proportionate between the Council and the Common Good.

DECISION NOTED

The meeting concluded at 11.15 am.