

SCOTTISH BORDERS COUNCIL

SELKIRK COMMON GOOD FUND SUB COMMITTEE

MINUTES of Meeting of the SELKIRK
COMMON GOOD FUND SUB COMMITTEE
held via MS Teams on Wednesday, 9
February 2022 at 3.00 pm

Present:- Councillors G. Edgar (Chairman), C. Cochrane and E. Thornton-Nicol and
Community Councillor I. King.

In Attendance:- Estates Surveyor (T. Hill), Property Officer (S. Drummond), Solicitor (J.
Webster), Treasury Business Partner (S. Halliday), Democratic Services
Officers (D. Hall & F. Henderson).

1. **MINUTE**

- 1.1 There had been circulated copies of the Minute of the meeting held on 8 December 2021. Community Councillor King highlighted two points which he had raised and which had been omitted, namely that with reference in paragraph 3, the Principal Solicitor had confirmed that Common Good owned property held by LiveBorders would be covered by Scottish Borders Council's insurance and that Mr King was unhappy with, and disputed the use of the phrase "former burgh" to refer to the legally abolished former royal burgh of Selkirk.
- 1.2 In respect of the Community Councillor representative, the Chairman requested that the Community Council provide confirmation of their designated representative on the Common Good Sub-Committee, prior to the next meeting.

DECISION

AGREED to:-

- (a) **approve the Minute as circulated for signature by the Chairman; and**
- (b) **request that Selkirk Community Council confirm their designated representative on the Common Good Sub-Committee prior to the next meeting.**
2. **MONITORING REPORT FOR 9 MONTHS TO 31 DECEMBER 2021 AND PROPOSED BUDGET FOR FINANCIAL YEAR 2022/23**
- 2.1 There had been circulated copies of a report by the Director Finance & Corporate Governance providing details of income and expenditure for the Selkirk Common Good Fund for the nine months to 31 December 2021, a full year projected out-turn for 2021/22, projected balance sheet values as at 31 March 2022 and proposed budget for 2022/23. Treasury Business Partner, Sara Halliday, highlighted the main points of the report and appendices and provided further information in response to Members' questions. Appendix 1 to the report provided the projected income and expenditure position for 2021/22 and the proposed budget for 2022/23. This showed a projected deficit of £22,067 for the year. Details of grants and donations provided by the Common Good Fund were provided in a table within the report. Appendix 2 of the report provided a projected balance sheet value as at 31 March 2022 showing a projected decrease in the reserves of £124,564. A breakdown of the property portfolio showing projected rental income and net return for 2021/22 and actual property income to 31 December 2021 was shown in Appendix 3a whilst Appendix 3b provided a breakdown of the property portfolio expenditure for 2021/22 and actual property expenditure to 31 December 2021. Appendix 4 provided a breakdown of the property portfolio showing projected property valuations at

31 March 2022. The current position of the Aegon Asset Management Investment Fund was shown in Appendix 5 to the report.

- 2.2 In response to an issue raised regarding the advertised sale of the business at the Court House Coffee Shop, the Solicitor explained that the Council should be notified of any sale or intention to sell given the provisions of the lease for the property, and that any future holder of the lease would have to be suitably vetted by the Council in relation to their financial standing prior to any assignation. The Chairman agreed to investigate the sale with the leaseholder, whilst the Solicitor advised that the lease would have to be assigned by Scottish Borders Council.
- 2.3 In terms of paragraph 5.4 of the report, Community Councillor King enquired about the measures that the Sub Committee were undertaking to try and reach National sustainability levels, in particular with regard to Selkirk Regeneration exploring the installation of solar arrays on Common Good owned land, and whether the Sub-Committee could explore the potential income that could be generated from renewable energy installations placed on Common Good owned land. The Chairman explained that the Common Good did not have the resources to explore such a project on its own, but undertook to investigate the viability of such a project.

DECISION

(a) AGREED:-

- (i) the projected income and expenditure for 2020/21 in Appendix 1 to the report;**
- (ii) the proposed budget for 2022/23 as shown in Appendix 1;**
- (iii) that the Chairman would investigate the listed sale of the business at the Court House Coffee shop; and**
- (iv) to explore the viability of using Common Good owned land to generate income from renewable energy sources to help reach National sustainability levels.**

(b) NOTED:-

- (i) the projected balance sheet value as at 31 March 2022 in Appendix 2 to the report;**
- (ii) the summary of the property portfolio in Appendices 3 and 4; and**
- (iii) the current position of the Aegon Asset Management Investment Fund in Appendix 5.**

3. APPLICATION FOR FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

There had been circulated copies of an application for financial assistance from Interest Link Borders in the sum of £2,500. The application for funding was to help improve the quality of life of 10 people with learning disabilities aged 12-70 who lived in Selkirk. Additionally, the funding would help 10 Selkirk volunteers aged 15+ become more confident in making friends with people with learning disabilities. The group planned to run befriending groups, meeting at Selkirk Cricket Club, with a variety of activities planned. Contingency plans were in place should Covid restrictions have an impact. The group would also run a weekly in-school group at Selkirk High School during the autumn term. One-to-one meetings with members and volunteers were also planned, with activities, including but not limited to, walks, sightseeing and sports expected to take place. Members spoke extremely highly of the application and unanimously agreed to grant the funding in full. Community Councillor King questioned the wording of the

application form under the section which provided background to Common Good Funds, specifically the phrase "Scottish Borders Council is the owner of these Funds". The Solicitor agreed to investigate and provide clarity on the matter. Stefanie Poletylo was present at the meeting to answer Members questions.

**DECISION
AGREED:-**

- (a) to grant £2,500 to Interest Link Borders; and**
- (b) that the Solicitor would investigate the ownership of Common Good Funds.**

4. PROPERTY UPDATE

- 4.1 Ms Tricia Hill, Estates Surveyor, provided a verbal update on Common Good property matters, advising that following the introduction of new residential property fire alarm regulations a programme had been initiated across Council properties to assess the need to upgrade alarm systems. The cost per property was £200, with at least 6 properties to be fitted with new alarm systems. With regard to the farmhouses and properties on the farms owned by the Common Good, discussions were ongoing to determine whether the Common Good or the farmer who sub-let the properties were responsible for the fitting of alarms. Ms Hill undertook to investigate whether the caretaker's flat at Victoria Hall was occupied as a residential property in order to determine whether an alarm system would require to be fitted at that property. Mr Steven Drummond, Property Officer, provided an update on various property matters that had been dealt with. Mr Drummond explained that following delays the windows for the farmhouse at Smedheugh had arrived and were in the process of being fitted. The tin sheets for the outbuilding roof at building 12 had been re-ordered due to the sheets, initially ordered being too small, and would be fitted once they had arrived. Following storm damage to Linglie Farm, the works had been completed to secure the roof and bring the property up to standard.
- 4.2 Ms Hill suggested that funds be set aside for urgent minor repairs to Common Good owned properties. The Members were in agreement with the proposal and following considerable discussion regarding the budget to be set aside, it was agreed that a budget of £5,000 would be available for the current financial year to cover urgent minor repairs, with the upper limit being £500 without approval from Members. Any works exceeding that limit would be subject to the normal process requiring three separate quotes and approval by the Sub-Committee.

DECISION

- (a) NOTED the verbal property update; and**
- (b) AGREED to set aside £5,000 as a budget for urgent minor repairs, costing less than £500 to be used by the Estates Surveyor and the Property Officer that can be used without Sub-Committee approval.**

5. PRIVATE BUSINESS

DECISION

AGREED under Section 50A(4) of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 to exclude the public from the meeting during consideration of the business detailed in the Appendix to this Minute on the grounds that it involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in the appropriate paragraphs of Part I of Schedule 7A to the Act.

SUMMARY OF PRIVATE BUSINESS

6. MINUTE

The Private section of the Minute of the Meeting held on 9 December 2021 was approved.

7. **PROPERTY UPDATE**

The Sub-Committee received an update on private matters relating to Common Good owned property.

The meeting concluded at 3.45 pm