

SCOTTISH BORDERS COUNCIL GALASHIELS COMMON GOOD FUND SUB COMMITTEE

MINUTE of Meeting of the GALASHIELS
COMMON GOOD FUND SUB COMMITTEE
held in Committee Room 1, Council
Headquarters, Newtown St Boswells. TD6
0SA on Thursday, 14 March 2019 at 10.00
am

Present:- Councillors S. Aitchison (Chairman), E. Jardine, H. Scott and Community
Councillor R. Kenney

Apologies:- Councillor A. Anderson

In Attendance:- Treasury Business Partner, Community Services Managing Solicitor, Estates
Surveyor (A. Scott), Democratic Services Officer (F. Walling).

3 members of the public

1. **MINUTE.**

There had been circulated copies of the Minute of 6 December 2018.

DECISION

APPROVED the Minute for signature by the Chairman.

2. **FINANCIAL MONITORING REPORT FOR 9 MONTHS TO 31 DECEMBER 2018**

There had been circulated copies of a report by the Chief Financial Officer providing details of income and expenditure for nine months to 31 December 2018, full year projected out-turn for 2018/19 and projected balance sheet values as at 31 March 2019. Treasury Business Partner, Sara Halliday, highlighted the main points of the report and appendices. The projected income and expenditure position in Appendix 1 to the report showed a projected surplus of £2,487 for the year. Included were dividends from the Common Good Funds investment in Kames Capital Investment Fund amounting to £7,649. Dividends earned to date amounted to £6,171 which was in line with the overall 5% target and the monthly distribution profile projections provided by Kames. The projected Balance Sheet as at 31 March 2019, shown in Appendix 2 to the report, indicated a projected decrease in the reserves of £33,705 due to the depreciation charge. The breakdown of the property portfolio was shown in Appendix 3. The current position of the Kames Capital investment was shown in Appendix 4 to the report. Ms Halliday explained that the unrealised loss in market value since investment, largely due to continued volatility in investment markets, had actually moved into a slight gain by the end of February.

DECISION

(a) **AGREED the projected income and expenditure for 2018/19 in Appendix 1 to the report as the revised budget for 2018/19.**

(b) **NOTED within the appendices to the report:-**

(i) **the projected balance sheet value as at 31 March 2019 in Appendix 2**

(ii) **the summary of the property portfolio in Appendix 3; and**

(iii) **the current position of the Kames Capital Investment Fund in Appendix 4.**

3. **LADHOPE TREE PLANTING SCHEME AND TRAILS**

- 3.1 With reference to paragraph 3 of the Minute of 6 December 2018 and paragraph 2 of the Minute of 14 September 2017, there had been circulated copies of aerial pictures showing the Ladhope Tree Planting Scheme and a series of maps showing a network of possible recreation trails over the land at Ladhope, Glendearg and Langlee. Work had started to plant a new native woodland at Ladhope. Access for all would remain as before, with gates on fences to allow access on foot, bike and horseback. A planting design concept map was included to show the proposed location of blocks of various species of trees. In terms of the proposed recreation trails over the area, a project being driven by Galashiels Community Council, Mr Pete Laing had been commissioned to design a course of recreation trails and was in attendance at the meeting to explain the concept and give further information about the trails outlined on the detailed maps. Mr Laing described the three main pieces of ground over which the trails extended. Ladhope Recreation Ground, owned by the Common Good, was an area of approximately 59 hectares with a highest point of 305m. This was mostly open hill with one strip of woodland and one block of spruce. The Golf Course took up 16 hectares of this area east of the Ladhope Burn. Land which was part of Glendearg Farm formed the central part of the area. With a highest point of 310m, this was approximately 54 hectares of open hill with established and new woodland and one block of spruce. Langlee Woods, an area of approximately 26 hectares, also owned by the Common Good, was almost entirely mature broadleaf woodland and was very steep terrain in places. There was a further area of privately owned woodland which was part of the planned recreation area. Mr Laing explained that part of the plan was to upgrade existing paths and tracks. A further map showed all existing access points to the development zone for pedestrians, cyclists and horse riders, the existing parking area at Langlee Community Centre and a possible car park in the Ladhope recreation area. A low level link route between the proposed car park sites was shown using existing paths and tracks. A map of the proposed Core Path Strategy showed where routes would be for family cycling, trail running and walking on low level trails and fit family loops for the same activities at higher elevation. Keen mountain bikers would use the core paths to reach the high ground and then descend on specific single-track paths. The plan was further developed into ideas for mountain bike specific descents with styles to suit terrain and environment which were suitable for different cycling ability from novice to expert. Also shown on the map was a proposed skills area in the form of a pump track – a series of rolling bumps – near Langlee Community Centre. It was noted that, in Scotland, pedestrians, horse riders and cyclists had the same rights of responsible access to all core paths. The layout left all existing hill tracks untouched so that existing regulars could continue to enjoy their favourite links and circuits.
- 3.2 Mr Laing advised that he had talked to all landowners bordering the area who were quite positive about the proposals to use the land for recreation and for the upgrading of paths. Most comments at an open forum had also been positive although consultation with residents of Langlee Mains had raised concerns about mixed use of the farm access road. Horse riding groups had also voiced concern about being able to safely continue to use existing paths and traditionally used hill tracks. In response to these comments some modifications to the maps had been made. A further issue was the requirement to cross the Golf Course to access the hill at Ladhope. Options for a route were being looked at by the Golf Club. Once completed, the report, including costings, would be given to the Community Council and would be published. Mr Laing emphasised that it would be then up to a Community Group in Galashiels to take the project forward by applying for planning permission, carry out fundraising and take responsibility for maintenance and insurance. In the ensuing discussion Members were generally in favour of the ambitious proposals in principle and welcomed the opportunity presented to promote outdoor activities and fitness, particularly for families. However concerns were expressed about the challenge of managing the finished product in terms of mixed use and the possible

need to segregate different types of use for safety reasons. Councillor Scott expressed concern in particular about mixed use of paths in Langlee Woods, which he believed were currently more popular with walkers than cyclists and agreed that the access road to Langlee Mains was not suitable for cyclists. He would not want to see parking at that access point nor at the Ladhope Golf Course. On being invited by the Chairman to speak, the residents of Langlee Mains who were present at the meeting said that although there was a right of way along the access road to Langlee Mains this was a privately maintained road and its inclusion in the trail network was presumptuous. The road, which was narrow and twisty and used by pedestrians, was unsuitable for use by cyclists travelling at speed. There was a question about who would be liable in the event of an accident on that road. In terms of the continued safe use of the area by horse riders there were concerns about clashes where the proposed specific mountain bike paths joined the existing paths and the possible occurrence of 'off-piste' mountain bike riding. In further discussion Members agreed that, as far as the Common Good-owned land was concerned, they were in support of the plans going forward for wider consultation. It was also noted that the public would get an additional opportunity to comment when a planning application for the scheme was submitted. The Chairman thanked Mr Laing for his attendance.

DECISION

- (a) **NOTED the concept design for a network of recreation trails over land owned by Galashiels Common Good Fund at Ladhope and Langlee Woods.**
- (b) **AGREED to support the project going forward for wider public consultation on the basis of the maps presented at the meeting.**

4. PROPERTY

With reference to paragraph 3 of the Minute of 6 December 2018, the Estates Surveyor, Annabelle Scott, had obtained quotes for the repair of boundary dykes at Ladhope Golf Course, the lowest of which was £1,500. As Ms Scott would be approaching the adjoining landowner to share the cost of these repairs, the cost to the Common Good Fund was likely to be £750 which would come from next year's budget. With reference to paragraph 5.2 of the private minute of 6 December 2018, Ms Scott confirmed that the repairs to the access road to Ladhope Golf course had now been carried out.

DECISION

AGREED that the necessary repairs be carried out to the boundary dykes at Ladhope Golf Course on the basis of the quote received.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillors Jardine and Scott declared an interest in the following item of business in terms of Section 5 of the Councillors Code of Conduct.

5. APPLICATION FOR FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE FROM THE FOCUS CENTRE, GALASHIELS

Due to the above noted declarations of interest and the required quorum of two elected Members to make decisions, this application could not be considered and the item was deferred to a future meeting.

6. ITEMS LIKELY TO BE TAKEN IN PRIVATE

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 this involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 8 of part 1 of Schedule 7A to the Act.

7. **MINUTE**

The private Minute of 6 December 2018 was approved.

The meeting concluded at 11.10 am