

SCOTTISH BORDERS COUNCIL LAUDER COMMON GOOD FUND SUB-COMMITTEE

MINUTE of Meeting of the LAUDER
COMMON GOOD FUND SUB-COMMITTEE
held remotely via Microsoft Teams on
Tuesday, 29 September 2020 at 10.00 a.m.

Present:- Councillors D. Parker (Chairman), T. Miers, Community Councillor A. Smith
In Attendance:- Pension & Investment Manager, Principal Solicitor (H. MacLeod), Estates Surveyor (J. Stewart), Democratic Services Team Leader.

1. **MINUTE**

There had been circulated copies of the Minutes of the meeting held on 19 February 2020.

DECISION

NOTED the Minutes for signature by the Chairman.

2. **FINANCIAL MONITORING REPORT FOR 12 MONTHS TO 31 MARCH 2020**

There had been circulated copies of a report by the Executive Director Finance & Regulatory detailing income and expenditure for the Lauder Common Good Fund for the twelve months to 31 March 2020, including balance sheet values as at 31 March 2020 and proposed budget for 2020/21. The Pensions & Investment Manager highlighted the main points of the report and appendices. Appendix 1 to the report provided actual income and expenditure position for 2019/20. This showed a deficit for the year of £7,339. Appendix 2 to the report provided balance sheet values as at 31 March 2020. This showed an increase in reserves of £265,568 due to the revaluation of properties offset slightly by unrealised loss on the Aegon Asset Management (formerly Kames Capital) Investment Fund. Appendix 3 provided a breakdown of the property portfolio which showed the effect of the revaluation. Appendix 4 detailed the value of the funds invested with Aegon Asset Management Investment Fund to 31 March 2020.

DECISION

AGREED:-

- (a) to note the actual income and expenditure for 2019/20 in Appendix 1 to the report;
- (b) the proposed budget for 2020/21 as shown in Appendix 1 to the report;
- (c) to note the final balance sheet value as at 31 March 2020 in Appendix 2 to the report;
- (d) to note the summary of the property portfolio in Appendix 3 to the report; and
- (e) to note the current position of the investment in the Aegon Asset Management Investment Fund in Appendix 4 to the report.

3. **FINANCIAL MONITORING REPORT FOR 3 MONTHS TO 30 JUNE 2020**

There had been circulated copies of a report by the Executive Director Finance & Regulatory, providing the details of the income and expenditure for the Lauder Common Good Fund for the three months to 30 June 2020, a full year projected out-turn for

2020/21, and projected balance sheet values as at 31 March 2021. Appendix 1 provided the projected income and expenditure position for 2020/21. This showed a projected deficit of £4,034 for the year. Appendix 2 provided a projected balance sheet as at 31 March 2021 which showed a projected decrease in reserves of £30,367. Appendix 3 provided a breakdown of the property portfolio showing projected rental income for 2020/21 and actual property expenditure to 30 June 2020. Appendix 4 showed the value of the Aegon Asset Management Investment Fund to 30 June 2020. The Pensions and Investments Manager advised that a slight increase in the income from Aegon was expected. In response to a question from the Chairman, Mrs Robb advised that the grants budget was set using a 3 year average but there was sufficient funds in the reserve to meet a higher level of grants if required.

DECISION

NOTED the:-

- (a) **projected income and expenditure for 2020/21 in Appendix 1 to the report;**
- (b) **projected balance sheet value as at 31 March 2021 in Appendix 2 to the report;**
- (c) **summary of the property portfolio in Appendix 3 to the report; and**
- (d) **current position of the Aegon Asset Management Investment Fund in Appendix 4 to the report.**

4. APPLICATION FOR FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

There had been circulated copies of an application for financial assistance from Lauder Christmas Light Festival seeking a contribution of £15,000 towards the purchase new Christmas lights to be suspended from lighting columns and the Town Hall. Mr. Smith declared an interest in the application as a member of the Christmas Lights Festival Committee and took no part in the decision making. However, at the request of the Chairman he did provide background information regarding how funds were normally raised and the impact of Covid-19 on fund raising activities. Members discussed the application and noted that no funding request had been received from the group for over 15 years. The Chairman commented on other possible funding requests which might come forward during the remainder of the financial year. Members agreed that in light of the problems faced by the group during current Covid-19 situation and that this was a long term investment that the full amount of the grant requested be awarded.

DECISION

AGREED that a sum of £15,000 be granted to Lauder Christmas Lights Festival.

5. PROPERTY

The Estates Surveyor, Ms Stewart raised a number of property items as follows:-

- (a) A number of fences on the land leased by the Lauderhill Sheep Company required replacement due to damage. The total cost to the Common Good was £1,365 plus VAT. The Common Good were responsible for 50% of the costs of repair shared with the Lauderhill Sheep Company or 25% of the costs where there was a neighbouring boundary.
- (b) The Lauderhill Sheep Company has requested a discussions regarding sheep handling facilities and Ms Stewart would arrange a meeting with them to discuss and report back to a future meeting of the Sub-Committee.
- (c) The Estates Manager was considering a proposal for a cycling track on land leased by the Lauderhill Sheep Company and was about to enter into discussions with them. If this was agreed it would result in a small rent reduction and the outcome would be reported back to the Sub-Committee.

- (d) It was understood that the Annual Sheep Dog Trails would still be held in November on Common Good land with the permission of the Lauderhill Sheep Company and the Council. However, the Council would check that these were Covid compliant before they would be allowed to proceed.
- (e) The British Ornithological Society had requested permission to tag grouse on Lauder Common and this had been cleared with the Lauderhill Sheep Company.
- (f) With reference to paragraph 5.1 of the Minute of 19 February 2020, Ms Stewart advised that as part of the Lauder Burn woodland planting scheme the required fencing of the burn would proceed shortly with planting in December/January. As previously agreed it is necessary to provide solar water pumps once the burn is fenced off. The Penmanshiel Grant would fund one solar pump and the Sub-Committee were asked to agree to fund the second at a cost of £1,500 plus VAT. The type of fence running along the burn had been agreed with the tenant of Calfward Park. It had also been agreed that the Calfward Park grazing would be split into two parts to allow grazing over the whole year. The cost of this fencing would be approximately £750 plus VAT which would be funded by the Lauder Common Good. With regard to the lease of the grazings known as Refuse Tips 1 and 2, Ms Stewart was to meet with the potential tenant next week to discuss the lease and improvements to the land. A report on the outcome would be provided to a future meeting of the Sub-Committee.
- (g) With reference to paragraph 5.2 of the Minute of 19 February 2020, Ms Stewart advised that the report on the condition of the poplar trees had recommended that up to 14 are to be removed. However, before this work could be done a bat survey was required at an approximate cost of £750 plus VAT. Once this had been completed a felling / tree works pruning plan would be drawn up and quotations and recommendations would be brought back to the Sub-Committee.
- (h) Ms Stewart advised that Scottish Power had notified that they intended to carry out works off the Muircleuch Road. The first works would be carried out in November with further upgrading works in February next year. Although they had powers to carry out these works it was necessary to protect the position of the Common Good Fund to ensure proper reinstatement works so a wayleave would be entered into.

Members discussed the funding of the works detailed at (a), (f) and (g) above and in response to a question on budget, Mrs Robb advised that the Common Good Fund did have a responsibility to maintain its assets and budgeted for property costs although grant funding was always sought where possible.

DECISION

- (a) **AGREED** that to approve the expenditure detailed at (a), (f) and (g) above.
- (b) **NOTED** the other items and that further reports would be provided where appropriate.

6. 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 Paragraph 8 of Part I of Schedule 7A to the Act.

SUMMARY OF PRIVATE BUSINESS

7. **LAUDER COMMON WOODLAND PLANTING SCHEME**

Members approved a report by the Service Director Assets and Infrastructure to carry out a formal public consultation on a proposed woodland planting scheme on Lauder Common.

The meeting concluded at 11.00 a.m.