

SCOTTISH BORDERS COUNCIL GALASHIELS COMMON GOOD FUND SUB COMMITTEE

MINUTE of Meeting of the GALASHIELS
COMMON GOOD FUND SUB COMMITTEE
conducted remotely by Microsoft Teams on
Thursday 3 December 2020 at 10.00 am.

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

In Attendance:- Treasury Business Partner (S. Halliday), Community Services Managing
Solicitor (C. Donald), Estates Surveyor (J. Stewart), Democratic Services
Officer (F. Walling).

1. **MINUTE.**

There had been circulated copies of the Minute of 10 September 2020.

DECISION

APPROVED the Minute for signature by the Chairman.

2. **FINANCIAL MONITORING REPORT FOR 6 MONTHS TO 30 SEPTEMBER 2020**

There had been circulated copies of a report by the Executive Director, Finance & Regulatory providing details of income and expenditure for the six months to 30 September 2020, a full year projected out-turn for 2020/21 and projected balance sheet values as at 31 March 2021. The Treasury Business Partner, Sara Halliday, highlighted the main points of the report and appendices. Appendix 1 to the report provided the projected income and expenditure position for 2020/21. This showed a projected deficit of £2,923 for the year which was less than previously reported due to the proposed increase in the budget for Property Expenditure. Appendix 2 provided a projected balance sheet as at 31 March 2020. It showed a projected decrease in the reserves of £45,681. A breakdown of the property portfolio showing actual property expenditure to 30 September 2020 was shown in Appendix 3 and the value of the Aegon Asset Management Fund to 31 March 2020 was detailed in Appendix 4. In terms of the Investment Fund Ms Halliday referred to the 7.91% unrealised loss in market value since investment, largely due to continued volatility in investment markets. Overall, taking account of the income received the fund had achieved a return of 4.83% since investment in February 2018. In response to a question about the proposed increase in the budget for property expenditure, Ms Stewart explained that this related to the repair to the fence alongside Heatherlyett Drive, as approved at the last meeting, and an amount to cover a small maintenance issue fed in by the caretaker of Old Gala House.

DECISION

(a) **AGREED the projected income and expenditure for 2020/21 in Appendix 1 as the revised budget for 2020/21**

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

(i) **the projected balance sheet value as at 31 March 2021 in Appendix 2**

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

(iv) the current position of the Aegon Asset Management Investment Fund in Appendix 4.

3. PROPERTY

3.1 The Estates Surveyor, Jo Stewart, gave a verbal update on property matters. With reference to paragraph 7.3 of the private minute of 10 September 2020, she confirmed that a quote had been accepted for the repair of the fence along Hetheryett Drive and that this work was scheduled to be completed within the coming week. Attention had been drawn by the caretaker to a small issue of maintenance required at Old Gala House. This was being attended to.

3.2 Ms Stewart also brought to the attention of Members a matter relating to the woodland at Ladhope. In a consultation with an Agrarian specialist she had been advised that the Sitka Spruce next to the Golf Course at Ladhope had reached maturity. However there would be practicalities to consider if harvesting was carried out as access for extraction would be required to be over the Golf Course. As the preferred time for harvesting would be between July and November the Golf Course would need to be closed for around a month within that time period to allow for extraction and replanting. Ms Stewart had been advised that the net position for the Common Good Fund was estimated to be £14k-£20k. Members discussed the proposal but expressed concern about the significant impact on the viability of the Golf Club if the course was closed for any length of time during the summer months. They did however note the long term environmental benefit of replanting the wooded area with native species. As there were several questions raised in the ensuing discussion Members agreed that the proposal should be investigated in more depth. They asked officers to obtain a view on the viable lifetime of the existing trees and clarify the implications of leaving them and to confirm that there was no alternative means of access for their extraction. They also asked the solicitor to provide information about the level of consultation that would be required ahead of any harvesting and extraction. In the meantime Members agreed to moot the proposal with the Golf Club and also to liaise with Energise Galashiels who were hoping to take forward long term plans for expanding leisure use of the Ladhope area.

DECISION

AGREED:-

(a) to request officers to investigate further the proposal to harvest the mature Sitka Spruce at Ladhope, and to clarify:-

(i) the viable lifetime of the trees and the implications of not removing them; and

(ii) the consultation requirements ahead of harvesting, extraction and replanting.

(b) that Members informally raise the proposal with the Golf Club and with Energise Galashiels.

(c) that the proposal be brought back for discussion at the next meeting.

4. 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 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

5. **MINUTE**

Members approved the private section of the Minute of 10 September 2020.

The meeting concluded at 10.35 am