

SCOTTISH BORDERS COUNCIL GALASHIELS COMMON GOOD FUND SUB COMMITTEE

MINUTES of Meeting of the GALASHIELS
COMMON GOOD FUND SUB COMMITTEE
held Via Microsoft Teams on Wednesday, 15
December 2021 at 3.00 pm

Present:- Councillors S. Aitchison (Chairman), A. Anderson, E. Jardine and H. Scott
Apologies:- Community Councillor R. Kenney
In Attendance:- Principal Solicitor, Treasury Business Partner (S. Halliday), Managing
Solicitor-People and Court (C. Donald), Estates Surveyor (J. Stewart),
Democratic Services Team Leader, Democratic Services Officer (D. Hall).

1. **MINUTE**

There had been circulated copies of the Minute of 9 September 2021.

DECISION

APPROVED the Minute for signature by the Chairman.

2. **MONITORING REPORT FOR 6 MONTHS TO 30 SEPTEMBER 2021**

There had been circulated copies of a report by Executive Director, Finance & Regulatory that provided details of the income and expenditure for the Galashiels Common Good Fund for the three months to 30 September 2021, a full year projected out-turn for 2021/22, and projected balance sheet values as at 31 March 2022. Appendix 1 to the report provided the projected income and expenditure for 2021/22. This showed a projected surplus of £3,433 for the year. Appendix 2 to the report provided a projected balance sheet as at 31 March 2022 and showed a projected decrease in reserves of £50,876. Appendix 3a to the report provided a breakdown of the property portfolio and a projected rental income and projected net return for 2021/22 together with actual property income to 30 June 2021. Appendix 3b to the report provided a breakdown of the property portfolio and a projected property expenditure for 2021/22 and actual property expenditure to 30 June 2021. Appendix 4 to the report provided a breakdown of the property portfolio detailing projected property valuations at 31 March 2022. Appendix 5 of the report showed the value of the Aegon Investment Management Investment Fund to 30 June 2021. In response to a question regarding depreciation, Ms Halliday advised that the previous revaluation had taken place in 2019 and that a revaluation was not expected for three years.

DECISION

AGREED:-

- (a) to note the actual income and expenditure for 2021/21 in Appendix 1 to the report;
- (b) to note the projected balance sheet value as at 31 March 2022 in Appendix 2 to the report;
- (c) to note the summary of the property portfolio in Appendices 3 and 4 to the report; and
- (d) to note the current position of the Aegon Asset Management Investment Fund in Appendix 5 to the report.

3. **CONSULTATION ON HERITABLE AND MOVEABLE ASSET REGISTERS FOR FORMER BURGH OF GALASHIELS**

There had been circulated copies of a report by the Principal Solicitor seeking approval of the draft Common Good Registers for the former Burgh of Galashiels and advising on the next steps in the process for consultation and publication under the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015. The report explained that under the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015 the Council was required to establish and maintain a register of property which was held by the authority as part of the Common Good ("a Common Good Register"). Before establishing a Common Good Register, the Act required the Council to publish a list of property that it proposed to include in the Register and consult the public on this list. Council approved the process for compliance with the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015 on 31 January 2019, and since that date work had been ongoing in consolidating all information held in respect of heritable and moveable Common Good assets. From the work carried out, a draft list of assets considered to be a complete list of heritable and moveable assets held by the Galashiels Common Good had been prepared, and was appended to the report. Mrs MacLeod advised that although the consultation would commence before Christmas the 12 week period would be counted from January and the consultation would be widely publicised. Mrs Macleod expected that the focus would primarily be on art and artefacts but welcomed the wider community to have an input into the consultation regardless of the asset. With regard to Common Good owned land, Mrs Macleod advised that two areas of land at Netherdale and Church Street had been removed from the register due to ownership having passed from the Common Good several decades earlier. In response to a question on art and furniture located in the Burgh Chambers, Mrs Macleod advised that each item would be considered on an individual basis and researched fully to ascertain ownership.

DECISION

AGREED to:-

- (a) approve the contents of the draft list of heritable and moveable property assets held by the Council within the former Burgh of Galashiels;**
- (b) approve the publishing of the draft list to be made available for public consultation for a period of at least twelve weeks;**
- (c) note that following the period of consultation all comments would be brought to the Common Good Fund Sub-Committee for their consideration; and**
- (d) note that the Section 95 Officer would amend the Common Good accounts to include the additional asset identified as Common Good.**

4. **PROPERTY UPDATE**

4.1 With reference to paragraph 3 of the Minute of the meeting held on 9 September 2021, the Estates Surveyor, Ms Josephine Stewart, gave a verbal update on the proposal to harvest the mature trees at Ladhope. Ms Stewart explained that she had received the draft report on costs from Agriforest, and had held discussions with Tillhill. The discussions had concluded that gaining access over the top of Ladhope hill to harvest the trees was not viable due to cost factors. The indicated solution was to lay either a formal track with stone or a steel based track that was suitable for use by HGVs. Ms Stewart advised that following Storm Arwen the timber market was likely to experience sustained levels of oversupply, with a dampening effect on prices as a result. Following extensive discussions, Ms Stewart undertook to acquire in writing a plan for extraction that could be executed in the following years once the timber market had stabilised.

4.2 Ms Stewart turned to other property matters and explained that following requests from residents for a salt bin, an unused salt bin had been identified in Hawick that could be transferred. It was clarified that the Common Good had a legal responsibility for the road,

and Members agreed to meet the ongoing cost of filling the salt bin following its placement. Regarding the placement of solar panels on Common Good owned land, Ms Stewart advised that conversations were ongoing within the Council and that the process to identify sites had begun.

DECISION

(a) **AGREED** that the Estates Surveyor would instruct Agriforest to prepare a detailed plan for future extraction; and

(b) **NOTED** the verbal property update.

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 Sub-Committee approved the Private Minute of the meeting held on 9 September 2021.

The meeting concluded at 3.50 pm