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THE FIFE COUNCIL - COWDENBEATH AREA COMMITTEE – REMOTE MEETING

8th December, 2021

2.00 p.m. – 2.50 p.m.

PRESENT: Councillors Rosemary Liewald (Convener), Alistair Bain, Alex Campbell, Gary Guichan, Mary Lockhart, Lea McLelland and Darren Watt.

ATTENDING: Sarah Roxburgh, Community Manager (Cowdenbeath Area), Communities and Neighbourhoods; Andrew Walker, Economic Adviser, Town Centre Development Unit, Bill Lindsay, Service Manager, Economy, Planning & Employability Services; Craig Brown, Lead Officer - Area Housing Management, Russell Gray, Housing Manager - Cowdenbeath, Housing Services and Michelle Hyslop, Committee Officer, Legal & Democratic Services.

APOLOGY FOR ABSENCE: Councillor Linda Erskine.

254. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were submitted in terms of Standing Order No. 7.1.

255. MINUTE

The Committee considered the minute of the meeting of the Cowdenbeath Area Committee of 6th October, 2021.

Decision

The Committee agreed to approve the minute.

256. COMMON GOOD AND SETTLEMENT TRUST FUNDS ANNUAL REPORT 2020-2021

The Committee considered a report by the Executive Director, Finance and Corporate Services advising members of the current status of the Common Good Funds in the Cowdenbeath Area and relevant fund activities over the financial year 2020-21.

Decision

The Committee noted the information contained in the report and relevant appendices for the various Common Good Funds in the Cowdenbeath Area.

257./

257. AREA HOUSING PLAN UPDATE

The Committee considered a report by the Head of Housing Services providing an update on progress in delivering service priorities and performance information for the financial year 2021/22, where figures were available at area level, relating to the Cowdenbeath Area Housing Plan, approved by this Committee in December 2017. A revised Plan for 2022/24 would be presented to the Committee once there had been an opportunity to consult on future priorities for the Cowdenbeath Area.

Decision

The Committee: -

- (1) scrutinised and commented on the work progressed through previous housing plans for quarters 1-2 of the financial year 2021/22;
- (2) commented on Cowdenbeath Area performance for quarters 1-2 of the financial year 2021/22 as detailed in Appendix 1 of the report; and
- (3) noted the expenditure for the HRA locality managed budget for quarters 1-2 of the financial year 2021/22 as detailed in Appendix 2 of the report.

258. COWDENBEATH AREA COMMITTEE FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME

Decision

The Committee noted the draft Forward Work Programme for the Cowdenbeath Area Committee.

259. PUBLIC QUESTIONS

Questions were submitted (in terms of Standing Order No. 6.1) by Mr Tom Kinnaird, resident of Benarty.

Question 1

Following the change of boundary between Benarty and Lochgelly from the Loch Fitty Burn to the Farm Road north of Lochgelly High School, I note this has implications with regard to the Benarty settlement boundary. At present the settlement boundary stops at the southern edge of Clune Terrace, Glenraig.

Does the committee agree that as soon as the new planning legislation takes effect, which is coming into force from the Scottish Government, (Q3 2021), the settlement boundary for Glenraig should be examined and redrawn to include the homes and businesses in the south of Glenraig, the most southerly being Longview House and the Fife Cycle Park, and that the current road signs should be relocated to reflect the position of the new boundary line, and should the Lochgelly settlement boundary currently extending into the Lomond Hills Regional Park be moved south to reflect the actual settlement of Lochgelly, in line with the settlement boundaries around the other towns and villages of Fife?

Response./

Response

Identifying community boundaries is a topic which comes to the fore from time to time for reasons which can vary from a community wishing to establish whether a boundary line published on a map reflects the community's own understanding of its extent, to settling a dispute over areas of responsibility where some form of regulatory action is needed.

Since local government reorganisation in the 1970s and the abolition of former burgh and town boundaries, local government boundaries, do not lend themselves to defining individual community boundaries at town or village level. Ward or constituency boundaries are too large and ward boundaries are not always good fits and are based on having some equity in their population. Many other boundaries exist, which can to some degree reflect how our community functions, school catchment areas, travel to work areas, retail catchment areas, for example, although even those have changed or become less relevant given the way society now operates through digital communication, online shopping, and so on.

In the absence of anything else, the planning system in the form of development plan proposals maps, have become the default source of information for many in identifying settlement boundaries. However, it is important to remember that settlement boundaries are there to define and delineate different planning policy areas for the use and development of land. It is therefore a boundary defined for planning purposes not for any other reason such as defining community interests or spheres of influence.

The public question in this case relates to reviewing where Glenraig's southern boundary should be and suggests using the development plan to do this. This is a reasonable and sensible suggestion for planning purposes. The forthcoming FIFEplan Local Development Plan (LDP) review in 2022 offers the chance to review that boundary. The proposed boundary will be subject to public consultation and Area Committee input and will reflect the planning intentions such as restricting the area within which there will be a presumption in favour of development (where policies allow) or setting wider boundaries for longer term future development (the Lochgelly example cited in the question reflects the strategic development proposal in the adopted LDP).

The LDP review will not be able to recommend a boundary until Planning Services' Policy & Place team has carried out its preparatory work or before public consultation and community engagement next year.

Question 2

Shopkeepers in Benarty have watched with keen interest as the shops in Cowdenbeath and Lochgelly have had regeneration grant payments towards both internal and external works to improve their premises and give their shopfronts much needed facelifts.

Can./

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Can the committee reveal what criteria had to be met in order to receive these payments and what formula is being used to determine the amount of grant each premises receives, and what is the total amount spent in both Cowdenbeath and Lochgelly to date? Also, will the other towns and villages in the Cowdenbeath Area be offered this much needed assistance?

Response

In Lochgelly, as part of the Charrette, a shop front improvement scheme was made available for small scale improvements to shop fronts including painting, security, signage and lighting. A fixtures and fittings grant scheme was also made available for fixed and fitted internal improvements such as slat walling, lighting and new flooring.

Both grants covered 75% of eligible costs (excluding VAT) up to a maximum of £1,000. The grants were designed and funded by the Council's Enterprise and Protective Services and were open to all types of commercial premises within Main Street, Bank Street and Auchterderran Road.

To be eligible to apply businesses need to:

- be located within Main Street, Bank Street or Auchterderran Road
- have an annual turnover of less than £1 million
- have no more than 3 outlets in their business chain

More recently and, as part of the economic development funding for Cowdenbeath, a shop front improvement scheme (£10,000 in total) was offered. This amounted to grants of up to £1000 being allocated to businesses and was specifically targeted at Cowdenbeath as one of the 7 key town centres in Fife.

In the last year, £400k of shop grants from the Scottish Government Capital Fund was available and was open to businesses across Fife. In addition to this funding, covid grants were also available to all businesses across Fife to help with PPE, social distancing measures etc.

Decision

The Committee noted the questions submitted by Mr Tom Kinnaird and the respective responses provided.