

# **APPROVED MINUTES OF THE FINANCE COMMITTEE MEETING of THE CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY**

**held at Beaton Craigie Room, Albert Halls, Ballater  
on 7<sup>th</sup> February 2014 at 9.00am**

## **PRESENT**

Kate Howie (Convenor)

Eleanor Mackintosh

Angela Douglas

Duncan Bryden

Gregor Rimell

## **In Attendance:**

Grant Moir, Chief Executive

David Cameron, Corporate Services Director

Danie Ralph, Finance Manager

Alix Harkness, Clerk to the Board

**Apologies:** None

## **Welcome and Introduction**

1. The Convenor welcomed everyone to the meeting and the apologies were noted.

## **Minutes of Last Meeting – approval**

2. The Minutes of the last meeting on 8 November 2014 were approved with no amendments.

## **Matters Arising**

3. David Cameron provided the Committee with an update on the LEADER situation. David reminded the Committee that at the last Finance Committee meeting there had been an increase in net expenditure against the budget for the year as at 30 September 2013 due to a shortfall in Operational Plan income contributions against budgets expectations which was wholly attributed to the situation with LEADER Grant Claims to Scottish Government. David reported that all funding granted to date by the Cairngorms LAG had now been reimbursed by Scottish Government bringing estimates back into line for 2013/14 and redressing the outstanding debtor balances from 2012/13.



- The total revenue projections are fairly static for 2014/15 compared with current year total. However, there are no additional capital allocations
- Scottish Government have just confirmed £70,000 to support the admin (staff costs) for the LEADER team, with a further £30,000 has earmarked to develop the Local Development Strategy, including hiring consultants and open days
- The income from commercial and merchandising activity was questioned and suggested that the word 'commercial' should be changed to 'corporate'
- Grant Aid levels and the CNPA's reliance on Government funding more than that of other National Parks
- A discussion session with the Board is required to discuss how the Authority can diversify its income sources by bringing in other sources of funding. In discussion it was highlighted that COAT, LEADER and to a lesser extent CBP levered significant sums of funding into the National Park which was not reflected in these Park Authority focused budget estimates.
- Intention to chat to finance colleagues at other National Park Authorities who are more delivery orientated to develop a clearer understanding of how different funding streams could be tapped into
- In reference to Appendix I of the Paper, members asked if there are other avenues that could be explored regarding Board Elections for example contacting the electoral roll people. David Cameron agreed to look into this.

11. In reference to Table I on page 3 of the Paper, the proposed increase in staff costs was picked up on by a Member. It was explained that:

- Additional staff investment in the planning service had been deemed essential in order to improve services and deliver the objectives of the agreed Planning Service Improvement Plan.
- Additional staff requirements in the Corporate Services department had also been identified to deliver a variety of corporate systems improvements such as Stakeholder Engagement database, Accommodation, IT, GIS, filing system, Organisational Development Strategy. Staff resource available to deliver against these increasing priorities has been extremely limited.
- The work on An Camus Mor was also highlighted as being a huge commitment on staff resources
- The dualling of the A9, the future of the Local Development Plan and developing Housing, and the Caper framework are all large projects which require staff resource
- It is hoped that these pieces of work will be well underway in time for when the next Corporate Plan commences
- Staff costs are likely to reduce over the forthcoming years as staff leaves the organisation their posts will not be refilled and many of the newly created posts are fixed term contracts



## **Capital Investment 2013 / 2014 (Oral Update)**

17. David Cameron presented an update on the main shovel ready projects.

18. In discussion the following points were raised:

- Projects were generally progressing as expected and progress of the projects was noted by members;
- There are risks around the tenders coming in on time and within budget for the Laggan Community Trust Visitor Centre however these are being managed as much as possible
- The lessons learnt from getting shovel ready projects to spend and in future more to be done to check the due diligence of the organisations leading the projects
- A note of thanks to Peter Crane, Head of Visitor Services for all his hard work in getting to the current position
- Onward monitoring of the shovel ready projects will take place annually with the updates being emailed to Finance Committee to keep it out with the public domain

19. David Cameron advised that a small piece of work had been commissioned which would provide an economic analysis of the impact of the shovel ready projects to include the number of jobs created etc which to date totals £3.5 million. He went on to advise that this would be brought before Finance Committee when completed.

**20. The oral update was noted by Members.**

**21. Action: David Cameron to bring commissioned report on impact of capital investment to the Committee Meeting when available, as detailed in paragraph 19**

## **Income Generation (Oral Update)**

22. The Chief Executive presented an oral update on the need of the Cairngorms National Park Authority to generate an income.

23. The following formed part of the discussion:

- The need to find out what other National Park Authorities are doing to generate an income for example the Lake District have been investing in property
- Whether there was evidence to suggest that if an income was being generated could this result in a reduction in grant aid from the Scottish Government

**24. This oral update was noted by Members.**

## **AOCB**

25. There were no other items of business considered.

### **Date of Next Meeting**

26. The next Finance Committee meeting will take place on Friday 9<sup>th</sup> May 2014 in Boat of Garten Community Hall.

27. The meeting concluded at 10.50am.