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Dear Craig

Asset Transfer – Grampian House Fraserburgh

Thank you for your application for a formal asset transfer of Grampian House, Fraserburgh which was received on 03 May 2021. Your application was comprehensive, and it is clear from the supporting information that the Sea Cadets are an excellent organisation that has greatly benefitted young people in the area and the town of Fraserburgh over a number of years. Your aspirations along with partner organisations such as the Men's Shed, Lithuanian School of Language and Fraserburgh Emergency Resilience group are noted.

Notwithstanding the above I can advise that the Banff and Buchan Asset Transfer Group at its meeting on 27 May reviewed and considered the application along with all the supporting documents. Some points for your consideration and a number of additional information requirements were identified which I have noted below for your consideration.

Sea Cadets

- In relation to the sea cadets the OSCR Annual return 2019/2020, the figures do not add up correctly and on Page 5 – number of cadets and volunteers does not appear to correlate with the appendix on the unit's regeneration plan.
- In relation to the membership of the group, increasing this is a key element of the plans submitted. Can you confirm the current capacity at the existing building and what will be the capacity at the new building?
- In terms of the waiting lists, has this figure been constant year on year suggesting that the increased capacity/membership would be sustainable in the longer term?

Community Hub

A significant part of the supporting case is based around the creation of a community hub but the need for such a facility is not evidenced throughout the report.

- In this regard is it the case that Grampian House is meeting an identified need for this type of community hub space in the town, or would it be a case of sharing the burden that the management and maintenance of such a property would bring?
- On Pg. 33 you indicate that interest and support has been overwhelming, but this has not been demonstrated. In the submission there is mention of consultation with various stakeholders within the local communities for the last four years, however no mention of what specifically the consultation was about, results of consultation and how then the proposed transfer of Grampian House will address any issues identified in the consultation.
- The JIC, Albert St and the Fraserburgh Community and Sports Centre as well as other facilities in the town provide substantial space for numerous groups to meet, both sports groups and otherwise but there is no assessment of how the facility at Grampian House would complement or meet unmet demand for these facilities.
- Have the groups identified been actively searching for alternative sites or does Grampian House represent an opportunity for improved facilities?
- It would be useful if there was detail on any plans for collaboration between the groups as part of the community hub or will they continue to be standalone organisations.

In relation to the primary partner, the Men's Shed, previous discussions with this group demonstrated a need for income-generating space. They previously had a very clear brief which included the need for space suitable for lathes and other woodworking equipment.

- Could you clarify how far the discussions with the Men's Shed group have progressed and whether their requirements could be met within Grampian House or indeed within a container located outside the property. Without the space to make products for sale, their income will be substantially reduced potentially impacting upon the business case submitted.
- On Page 32 it states that the Men's Shed will be able to increase their membership – however no evidence that they are at capacity in their current space or of a waiting lists has been provided.

Grampian House

In the event of not securing Grampian House, you have indicated that both Fraserburgh Sea Cadets and Fraserburgh Men's Shed futures will be at significant risk as you consider this the only option for the Sea Cadets identified to date.

- Should alternative options be available would these be considered by the group(s). It is important to ensure that for any asset transfer the property not only meets the needs of the group in terms of the benefits to the group and community but that the group is equipped to cope with the challenges of managing and maintaining any asset. This building and its management will be an additional challenge for the group particularly in context of how the group has operated up until this time in a building provided rent free by the harbour.
- Whilst the primary aim of acquiring Grampian House is to provide a new HQ for the Sea cadets and accommodation for other groups it appears that there would still be significant capacity remaining within the building.

The matter is partly addressed by the proposal to lease out rooms including:

- *Training rooms*
- *Meeting rooms*
- *Conference facilities*
- *Catering Facilities*
- *Emergency accommodation*

It has not been demonstrated that there is demand for these alternative uses and there remains the risk of the building being underutilised. The figures in the business

plan suggest that while they are not essential to the viability of the project, this is based on increasing membership to 50. As noted earlier what is the waiting list standing at? Is this level of membership likely to be sustainable?

Feasibility Studies and SWOT Analysis

In your assessment on Pg. 29 you refer to

Technology:

- *Utilise existing technology which lowers project risk and cost.*
- *This technology is simple to operate and maintain for a relatively low cost.*
- It was unclear what you mean in this section and I'd be grateful if you could confirm.
- Also, in relation to the SWOT analysis on Pg. 27-28 it is unclear from some of the terminology used what the opportunities/issues being identified here are and how these have been considered in order to state on Page 29 that the procurement of the property is both commercially and financially viable.

Planning

It is noted that you are currently or were at time of writing, awaiting feedback from the Planning Service but in principle it is good to see a proposal which would see a new use for a traditional building in the town centre.

- The current permitted planning use is Class 2 offices (for the provision of financial, professional, or other services) so a planning application for change of use will be required
- Using the space at the rear of the building for the siting of a container for use by the Men's Shed would need planning permission. This area is an access for several interested parties and would require further investigation. There doesn't appear to be a lot of space for this, and the siting is unlikely to be supported unless the container could be screened from view from the neighbouring property and the adjacent lane.
- There is a parking area off the adjacent lane, but we are aware that the property title shows 20 servitude rights over this parking area.

I would be grateful if you could consider the issues raised above. Overall, there was a lot of detail within this submission particularly on the organisations involved and the benefits they bring to the community. However, in terms of the asset transfer itself there were a number of general statements, which were not supported by the available evidence. This was particularly the case when discussing the need for a Community Hub, and lack of evidence of engagement and/or demand. It was also noted that some of the financial forecasts also require some attention.

I would suggest that to discuss and hopefully address these issues that a meeting is arranged with officers from the Banff and Buchan Asset Disposal Group. Following this and the receipt of the additional information, the Asset Group will discuss the application again and be in a position to compile a report for the Area Committee for a decision on the asset transfer.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely

David MacLennan
Area Manager Banff and Buchan