

Common Good information session for Community Councils

Tuesday 15th September 2026

What is Common Good?

- A fund of money and assets formerly owned by a burgh
- Land, buildings, structures and moveable items (paintings, furniture etc.)
- In some towns/villages, the Common Good includes cash funds.
- Burghs were abolished through local government reorganisation in the 1970s.
- Common Good is now owned and administered by the Local Authority.

What's the role of Community Councils?

- Statutory consultees on a proposed change of use or 'disposal' of Common Good properties
- Invited to provide views on applications for Common Good grants (unless they are the applicant)

Important features of Common Good

- Common Good is owned by Fife Council, and there are important legal requirements around how Common Good assets have to be managed and administered.
- It is not owned by or held in trust for the community.
- Legal basis - Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015
- Local Government in Scotland Act 2003 imposes 'Best Value' duty.
- Accounts Commission and Controller of Audit oversee this area.

Who makes the decisions?

Cabinet Committee:

- oversees management and use of all Council assets and resources, including Common Good

Area Committees:

- make decisions on expenditure from Common Good Funds (where not delegated to officers)
- consider annual reports on the management of Common Good
- provide views to Cabinet on proposed changes of use and disposal of Common Good assets in their area

West Fife Area Common Good Sub-Committee:

- decides on applications to the consolidated Common Good Fund, covering Dunfermline (including Rosyth), Culross and Inverkeithing (where not delegated to officers)

How do we know what is and isn't Common Good?

- Not all land in a former burgh owned by the Council is Common Good.
- It can be difficult to establish whether or not property is Common Good - it may not be obvious from the titles what property was acquired for.

How do we know what is and isn't Common Good?

- Bought by, or gifted to, the burgh on or before 15 May 1975 and meets these criteria:
 - used by the general public for a long time
 - dedicated for a specific public purpose
 - title conditions ensuring public use agreed in the original charter
- There can be other factors, such as statutory reasons for owning a property, how it was acquired or if it is held by a separate trust.

Is there a list of Common Good assets?

- A Register of Common Good land, buildings/structures and moveable assets is maintained and published on the council's website – www.fife.gov.uk/commongood
- An OS map, list of disposals and FAQs are also available.
- Amendments to the Common Good Asset Register can be requested and investigated at any time.
- An inventory of art and artefacts is currently being carried out.

How are Common Good properties different?

- Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015
- The Council must carry out a consultation before:
 - disposing of Common Good property; or
 - changing the use of Common Good property
- Disposal = a sale or lease

What does consultation involve?

- Fife Council must:
 - publish the details of the proposed disposal / change of use
 - notify relevant Community Councils / community bodies and invite representations
 - have regard to any representations received before making its decision
- Some assets are 'inalienable' - i.e. their disposal / change of use cannot happen without consent from the Sheriff.

Who maintains Common Good assets?

- Local authorities have no specific legal duties to maintain Common Good land and buildings.
- Fife Council's Common Good Policy states that Common Good assets should be maintained along with the rest of the Council's assets (not to a higher standard).
- The first call on the relevant Common Good Fund is to maintain the assets.
- Practice varies, but in many cases occupiers/tenants pay for ongoing maintenance.

How are Common Good Funds managed?

- Each Common Good Fund is kept separate from the Council's main budget.
- Every former burgh with a Common Good Fund has its own account.
- The Council reports annually on how Common Good money and assets are managed.
- Financial information is included in the Council's annual accounts.

Where does the money come from?

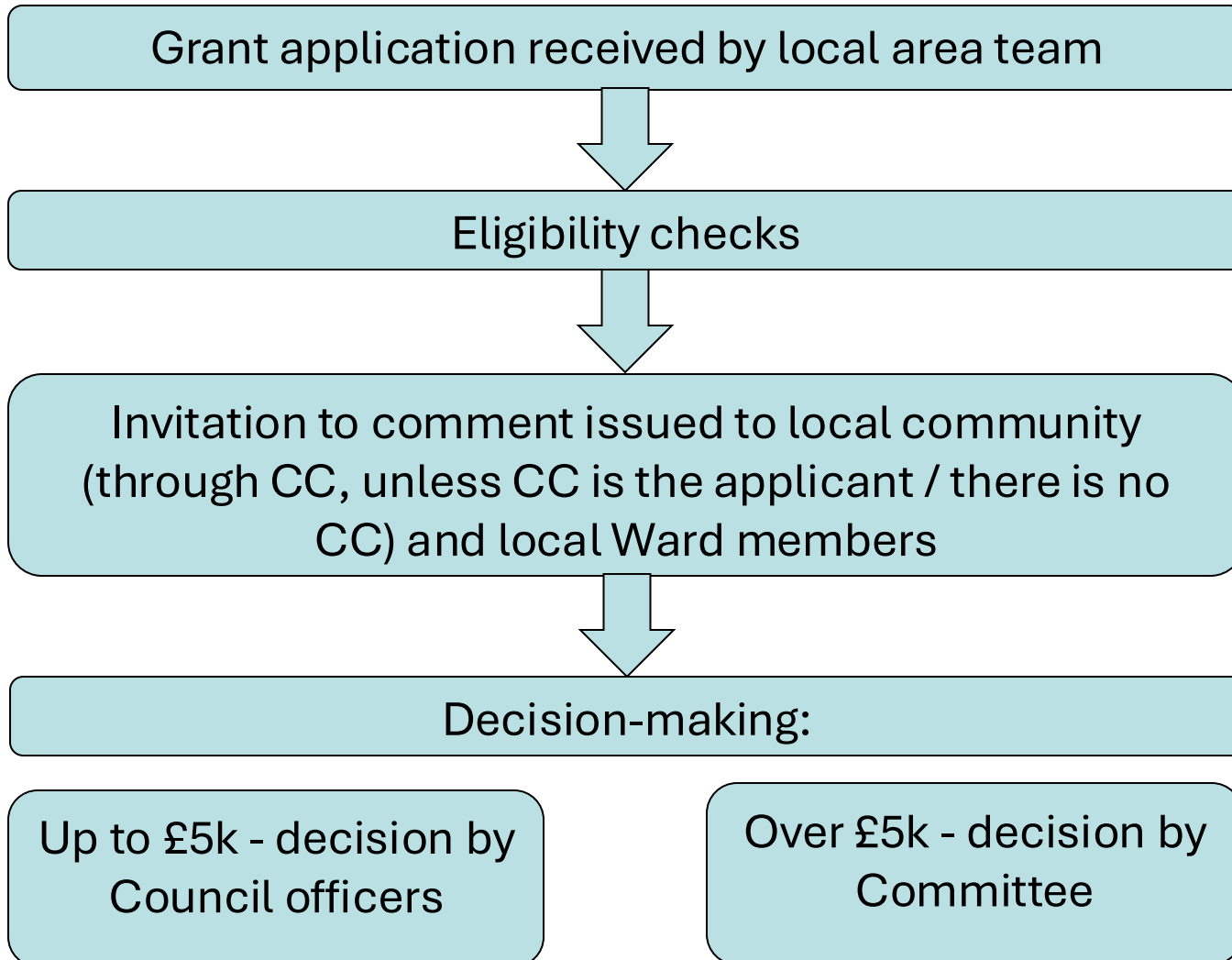
- Investments
 - some Common Good Funds have money invested to generate income
 - investments are managed by professional investment managers on behalf of the Council
 - performance is monitored and reported regularly
- Rental income from Common Good properties
- Interest on cash balances

How's the money used?

- Must be used for the public benefit of the former burgh
- Maintaining Common Good buildings and land
- Supporting local community projects and activities
- Surplus funds are invested to help generate future income and support long-term sustainability.
- Annual accounts are reported to local Area Committees.

How are Common Good grants distributed?

- Administered by local area teams
- Applications can be submitted at any time.
- Applications must show how projects will benefit inhabitants of the former burgh.
- Common Good Funds vary significantly in size – seek advice from your local area team.



Useful links

- General information, FAQs, Common Good Asset Register, OS map, policy, consultations: www.fife.gov.uk/commongood
- Information on Common Good grants and local area team contact details: www.fife.gov.uk/commongoodfunds
- Email address for other queries or requests to amend the Register: CommonGoodEnquiries@fife.gov.uk

Questions?