

**The Highland Council  
Caithness and Sutherland Area Committee**

Minutes of Meeting of the Caithness and Sutherland Area Committee held in the Assembly Rooms, Sinclair Terrace, Wick, on Tuesday, 27 May 2014, at 10.30am.

**Present:**

Mr D Bremner	Mr J McGillivray
Mr G Farlow	Mr H Morrison
Mr B Fernie	Mr G Phillips
Mrs G Coghill	Mr M Reiss
Mrs D Mackay	Mr J Rosie
Mr D Mackay	Mrs G Ross
Mr W MacKay	Mr R Saxon

**Officials in attendance:**

Mr D Haas, Acting Head of Community and Democratic Engagement, Chief Executive's Office  
Ms H Ross, Senior Ward Manager, Chief Executive's Office  
Mr G Nichols, Area Education Manager, Care and Learning Service  
Mr C Stewart, Area Community Services Manager, Community Services  
Mr B Mackinnon, Employability Team Leader, Development and Infrastructure Service  
Mr K Masson, Policy Coordinator (Climate Change), Chief Executive's Office  
Ms S Tarrant, Public Relations Officer, Chief Executive's Office  
Mrs R Moir, Principal Committee Administrator, Corporate Development Service  
Ms A Macrae, Committee Administrator, Corporate Development Service  
Mr S Taylor, Civic and Facilities Team Leader, Finance Service  
Ms F Anderson, Administrative Assistant, Chief Executive's Office  
Mr A Swaile, Clerical Assistant (Business Support), Finance Service

**Also in attendance:**

Mr P Guthrie, Highlands and Islands Enterprise (Item 3)  
Mr K Muir, Highlands and Islands Enterprise (Item 3)

**An asterisk in the margin denotes a recommendation to the Council. All decisions with no marking in the margin are delegated to Committee.**

**Mrs D Mackay in the Chair**

The Chair advised the Committee that the meeting would be filmed and broadcast over the internet on the Highland Council website and would be archived and available for viewing for 12 months.

**Preliminaries**

The Chair reported on a number of preliminary matters, including:-

- Adult Services – NHS Highland would be investing £1.5m over the next four years towards enhanced facilities in North Sutherland, with these likely to include a residential facility; this would require close consultation and

planning with communities along the north coast, to ensure provision of effective and sustainable facilities responsive to local need.

- Land Reform – it was intended that a report be brought to the Committee's September meeting on the recently published report by the Land Reform Review Group.
- Community Land Scotland (CLS) – Mr G Farlow would be attending the CLS Annual Conference in Skye in June; attention was also drawn to the publication of the Bunchrew Land Declaration following a recent CLS Seminar at Bunchrew.

The Committee **NOTED** the updates.

### **1. Apologies for Absence Liesgeulan**

Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of Mrs L Munro.

### **2. Declarations of Interest Foillseachaidhean Com-pàirt**

The Committee **NOTED** the following declarations of interest:-

Item 3 – Mr G Farlow, Mr R Saxon (both non-financial)

Item 4 – Mr G Farlow, Mr J McGillivray, Mr G Phillips (all non-financial)

Item 6 – Mr G Farlow (non-financial)

Item 7 – Mr N MacDonald (non-financial)

Item 8 – Ms G Ross (financial), Mr R Saxon (non-financial)

Item 12 – Mr G Farlow (financial)

### **3. Highlands and Islands Enterprise (HIE) – Presentation Iomairt na Gàidhealtachd agus nan Eilean – Taisbeanadh**

#### **Declarations of Interest:**

**Mr G Farlow, as Chair of North West Highland Geopark, a body in receipt of HIE funding, and Mr R Saxon, as Chair of HomeAid Caithness and Sutherland, a body account-managed by HIE, both declared non-financial interests in this item but, having applied the test outlined in Paragraphs 5.2 and 5.3 of the Councillors' Code of Conduct, concluded that their interests did not preclude them from taking part in the discussion.**

The Chair welcomed to the meeting Mr Peter Guthrie, Head of Strengthening Communities - Caithness and Sutherland, and Mr Keith Muir, Head of Business Growth and Sectoral Teams, both Highlands and Islands Enterprise (HIE).

Mr Guthrie and Mr Muir tabled copies of HIE's Operating Plan 2014-17, and also its Caithness and Sutherland Area Plan 2014-15, and gave a presentation updating Members on their work within Caithness and Sutherland, with a particular focus on business growth and community capacity building. Citing examples of particular projects, they outlined the role of HIE local development officers, through individual account management, in assisting local businesses, social enterprises and communities to generate income and achieve self-sufficiency. This might involve initial financial support, but could also involve broader assistance such as helping to identify business opportunities or address barriers to growth. They also drew attention to the variation in the pattern of economic activity

across the area, with, for example, energy projects being prominent in Caithness, and tourism, food and drink to the fore in Sutherland.

In response to a number of points raised by Members, the speakers clarified some of the terminology used in their presentation. Other clarifications included:

- HIE would continue to fund Local Development Officers in the fragile areas during the transition period to implementation of the new LEADER programme.
- HIE support for growing local businesses, and for connectivity improvement through broadband rollout, was all designed to assist in creating local employment opportunities.

In discussion, Members commented on the benefits of partnership working and the importance of robust data in developing and taking forward an economic development strategy for the north Highlands to increase jobs, improve connectivity, build community capacity and retain population, with attention drawn to the experience of other peripheral areas such as Scandinavia. Appreciation was expressed for various examples of specific HIE intervention to date and suggestions put forward for other areas/issues/projects worthy of support, such as harbours and transport infrastructure.

The Chair having thanked Mr Guthrie and Mr Muir for their attendance, the Committee **NOTED** the presentation.

#### **4. Workskills and Development – Update Sgilean-obrach agus Leasachadh – Fios Às Ùr**

##### **Declarations of Interest:**

**Mr J McGillivray, as Chair of the Sutherland Partnership, and Mr G Farlow and Mr G Phillips, as members of the Sutherland Partnership, each declared non-financial interests in this item but, having applied the test outlined in Paragraphs 5.2 and 5.3 of the Councillors' Code of Conduct, concluded that their interests did not preclude them from taking part in the discussion.**

There had been circulated Report No. CS/12/14 dated 13 May 2014 by the Director of Development and Infrastructure summarising recent employability-related activity in Caithness and Sutherland and asking Members to comment on the priorities identified for development in the current year.

The report drew attention to an overall increase in the number of Job Seekers Allowance (JSA) claimants in the area, while acknowledging that this might be attributable in part to Government activity in transferring claimants from Employment Support Allowance to JSA. It also highlighted an overall reduction in the number of young people claiming JSA; levels of youth unemployment, however, remained high.

The report outlined the activities of the Council's Employability Team and also of the local employability partnerships for Caithness and Sutherland respectively, which included officers from Job Centre Plus, Skills Development Scotland and the Council, together with partners from Colleges and Learning Centres as appropriate, and, in Sutherland, New Futures Sutherland. The report also summarised some key issues for the coming year, including re-procurement of

services, the new EU funding programme, management of the Deprived Area Fund, and developing the range and extent of local transport provision.

During discussion, emphasis was placed on the creation and safeguarding of future employment opportunities in the area and concern expressed on a range of issues including:

- the ongoing viability of important support organisations such as New Futures Sutherland and the difficulty of securing future funding support in the current economic climate
- the role of public transport in employment mobility and the need to address inadequate transport facilities
- the importance of working with the further and higher education sector to secure provision of appropriate courses and qualifications to align with employment opportunities/demand and provide local opportunities and positive career pathways.

Attention was also drawn to the positive aspects of the area, in terms such as its clean environment, community safety record, positive local public agency partnerships and good schools.

Having welcomed the contribution of the Council's Employability Service, the Committee **NOTED** the work priorities for the year identified in the report.

## **5. Rural Poverty – Research Briefing Bochdainn Dùthchail**

There had been circulated Report No. CS/13/14 dated 10 May 2014 by the Head of Policy and Reform advising that two papers considering rural poverty had been published in 2013: *A Minimum Income Standard for Remote Rural Scotland* and *Local Incomes and Poverty in Scotland*. The report provided Members with a summary of the methodology and findings of both these research studies.

The studies showed that living costs in rural towns and locations in Scotland were higher than in urban areas for food, durable goods, transport, and home energy. Overall, the level of income required to meet Minimum Living Standards in remote rural Scotland was 10-40% higher than the equivalent in urban UK. The findings also highlighted the limitations of using the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation to measure poverty in places where population was sparse and where people did not take up the benefits to which they were entitled. The need to use a range of data when assessing levels of poverty in rural areas, therefore, had been brought to the attention of the Scottish Government.

The studies' findings would inform actions which supported Council commitments relating to service provision in remote and rural areas, and Single Outcome Agreements relating to health. In this regard, a "rural-proofing" tool had been developed that would assess the impact of all new policies on remote and rural populations, to ensure this was taken into consideration. It was anticipated that this would be used in a manner similar to the existing Equality Impact Assessment process. The Council had agreed that all future Council/Committee reports would include in the Implications section a category evidencing that an assessment of the impact on rural areas had been undertaken.

Points raised during discussion included:

- It was shameful that there should be any need to address the issue of poverty in an affluent 21<sup>st</sup> century country; it was essential that income distribution and growing wealth inequality were tackled at a national level.
- Poverty of facilities and infrastructure in the remote and rural areas should be addressed, together with land reform, to help transform the economic backdrop contributing to individual poverty.
- The Council had an important direct role in maintaining employment opportunities and therefore sustainability in the rural areas.
- Consideration should be given to using windfall monies from lower interest charges to trial innovative ways of supporting rural employment, including the potential of home working in the context of digital connectivity.
- It was important to align different data/research sources to ensure the availability of robust data underpinning decision-making.

After discussion, the Committee **NOTED:-**

- i. the findings of both research papers;
- ii. that a rural proofing tool had been drafted, assisted by the findings of these research studies, and that there would be opportunities to use the tool in 2014, including in the consultation exercise being carried out on Service Point closures; and
- iii. that consideration would be given to organising an area event, in conjunction with the Head of Public Health Intelligence, NHS Highland, to examine rural poverty data and take forward discussion on priorities and strategies.

## **6. Community Challenge Fund – Area Update Maoin Dùbhlán Coimhearsnachd - Fios Às Ùr**

**Declaration of Interest: - Mr G Farlow, as Chair of the Highland Fisheries Local Action Group, which had been instrumental in the award of European Fisheries Fund Axis 4 funding to the Kyle and Lochalsh Community Trust, which had also been awarded Community Challenge funding, declared a non-financial interest in this item but, having applied the test outlined in Paragraphs 5.2 and 5.3 of the Councillors' Code of Conduct, concluded that his interest did not preclude him from taking part in the discussion.**

At its meeting held on 13 March 2013, the Highland Council had considered a report reviewing the operation of the Community Challenge Fund, launched in January 2013, and proposing ways to take the Fund forward. At that meeting, the Council had agreed that reports on the Fund be taken to each Area Committee.

There had been circulated Report No. CS/14/14 dated 10 May 2014 by the Depute Chief Executive/Director of Corporate Development advising that the Community Challenge Fund had been launched in January 2013. The Fund had been set up with the aim of allowing local communities to take direct control of services currently provided by the Council, or take ownership of buildings or other assets owned by the Council, where there was worthwhile community benefit to be achieved by the transfer. Where services were transferred from the Council to a community, an appropriate budget would also be transferred.

The report also outlined the relevant eligibility criteria and the operation of the Fund to date, with particular reference to the Caithness and Sutherland area, and summarised the various changes agreed by the Council to make the Fund more

accessible and applicants and staff more supported. The report invited Members to discuss how the Fund could best be promoted and utilised within the local area.

Points raised during discussion included:

- The limited number of successful applications Highland-wide was disappointing; it was vital that the revised criteria lead to early improvements in take-up; otherwise, consideration should be given to finding an alternative use for the earmarked funds.
- Improved dialogue with communities was needed, including greater clarity on the kinds of projects that could be eligible, together with proactive encouragement and information on opportunities that might be pending.
- Rather than limiting the Fund to projects involving full transfer of / substitution for current Council services, consideration should be given to partnership working with communities, cost-neutral projects and projects offering additionality.
- Consideration should also be given to a greater role for the voluntary sector and for social enterprises.
- Preventative projects could include development of local food networks.
- Increased community land ownership would support community capacity building.

The Committee **NOTED:-**

- i. the take-up of the Fund to date in Caithness and Sutherland;
- ii. the changes made to the Fund and the approach to promoting the Fund agreed at Council in March 2014; and
- iii. the suggestions made as to how the Community Challenge Fund could be promoted and used to best effect within Caithness and Sutherland.

## **7. Carbon CLEVER in Caithness and Sutherland Càrbon Ciallach ann an Gallaibh agus Cataibh**

**Declaration of Interest: - Mr N MacDonald, as a member of the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, lead partner in relation to the Flow to the Future project, declared a non-financial interest in this item but, having applied the test outlined in Paragraphs 5.2 and 5.3 of the Councillors' Code of Conduct, concluded that his interest did not preclude him from taking part in the discussion.**

At its meeting held on 27 June 2013, the Council had agreed to implement and realise the ambition of a Carbon Neutral Inverness in a Low Carbon Highlands by 2025, to be known as the Carbon CLEVER Highlands initiative.

There had been circulated Report No. CS/15/14 dated 6 May 2014 by the Head of Policy and Reform providing an update on the Carbon CLEVER initiative and asking Members to consider how the initiative could be developed in Caithness and Sutherland.

The report clarified that Carbon CLEVER aimed to capture, co-ordinate and promote the good work being conducted across Highland to reduce carbon emissions and to identify a programme of work to meet the ambitions of the initiative. Doing this would attract investment to the region, accelerating the transition to a low carbon economy. Achieving such an ambitious target would

require strong engagement from a wide range of stakeholders across the private, public and third sectors, and the residents and communities of Highland.

The report highlighted many of the particular local challenges faced in Caithness and Sutherland, such as travel distances, infrastructure, nature of the housing stock, lack of gas grid and limited supply chain for alternative fuels. It also suggested a range of opportunities, including tourism, rollout of high speed broadband, inward investment on renewables, growth of micro-renewables, increased recycling and increased local food sourcing.

The report outlined a number of specific projects in hand, such as:

- the Carbon CLEVER Declaration, formerly the Highland Climate Change Declaration, aimed at businesses, community groups and public sector organisations interested in making financial and resource savings by becoming more efficient and reducing their carbon emissions
- Flow to the Future, a project being developed in the Flow Country by the Peatlands Partnership, of which the Highland Council was a member, with the aim of restoring a large area of peatland and increasing awareness and understanding of the Flow Country; a decision was shortly due on a Heritage Lottery Fund application, which, if successful, would support a five-year project from late summer 2014
- Carbon CLEVER Commuting, a new initiative to promote sustainable travel throughout the Highlands as part of Transport Scotland's Smarter Choices, Smarter Places programme.

Points raised during discussion included:

- Businesses, in particular Carbon CLEVER Declaration signatories, should be encouraged to promote car sharing by their employees.
- The forestry sector should be encouraged to make greater use of rail and/or sea freight, potentially following increased on-site processing.
- Public transport schedules should be reviewed to prioritise the interests of rural communities.
- Recognition was needed of the implications of peat disturbance from renewable energy developments.
- Options for future replacement of landfill needed examination, including the possibility of having a waste incinerator in Caithness.
- Cycling, electric and hydrogen cell vehicles, flexible working patterns and local food growing should all be encouraged.

After discussion, the Committee **AGREED** that the Climate Change Team work with local organisations, stakeholders and community groups to gain an insight into local opportunities and priorities to inform the Carbon CLEVER Action Plan.

## **8. Thurso High School Associated School Group Overview Sealladh Coitcheann air Buidhnean Sgoiltean Co-cheangailte Àrd-sgoil Inbhir Theòrsa**

**Declarations of Interest:**

**Ms G Ross, her husband being a Head of Faculty at Thurso High School, declared a financial interest and left the room for the duration of this item.**

**Mr R Saxon, as Chair of Thurso Youth Club and a member of the Youth Forum, declared a non-financial interest in this item but, having applied the test outlined in Paragraphs 5.2 and 5.3 of the Councillors' Code of Conduct, concluded that his interest did not preclude him from taking part in the discussion.**

There had been circulated Report No. CS/16/14 dated 8 May 2014 by the Director of Education, Culture and Sport providing an update of key information in relation to the schools within the Thurso High School Associated School Group (ASG) and providing useful updated links to further information in relation to the schools.

The report contained detailed information on attainment and the findings of the most recent Education Scotland inspection and Standards and Quality Report. Details of wider achievement and notable successes were provided for all schools within the ASG. In addition, the report contained statistics on school leavers, school rolls, attendance/absence/exclusions, staffing and funding. With regard to school buildings, information was provided on suitability, condition and occupancy, as well as current/future investment.

Points raised in discussion included:

- Members commended the staff within the Thurso High School ASG on their commitment to providing the highest standard of education for all pupils.
- The high standards recorded in the Education Scotland reports for nurseries within the ASG in Landward Caithness were welcomed, reference being made to the importance of early years provision to a child's development and in achieving positive destinations in the future.
- Officers would investigate and provide more detailed clarification to Mrs G Coghill as to the why the number of leaver destinations from Thurso High School into higher education had decreased in comparison to previous years and was below the Scotland average.
- The high percentage of leaver destinations from Thurso High School into employment was welcomed, as was the level of youth work being undertaken within the ASG and the associated educational benefits.

The Committee **NOTED** the content of the report.

**9. Education Scotland Reports – 22 January 2014 to 14 May 2014  
Sgrùdaidhean le Foghlam Alba – 22 Am Faoilleach gu 14 An Cèitean 2014**

There had been circulated Report No. CS/17/14 dated 12 May 2014 by the Director of Education, Culture and Sport providing details on Education Scotland's inspections of schools in the Area during the period 22 January 2014 to 14 May 2014, for Members' scrutiny and monitoring. The report specifically related to Education Scotland's inspection of Golspie Primary School and Golspie Nursery Class, which had taken place in February 2014.

In discussion, Members were referred to the report on the current position in relation to the Wick Community Campus project submitted to the Education, Children and Adult Services Committee on 21 May 2014, which had provided a full update on the current status of the project. Other requests for further information made during discussion included:

- further information on the improvement proposals and follow-up activity proposed for Golspie Primary School
- a further report on the process for implementing quality improvements consistently across schools in Highland
- more detailed information on self-evaluation within schools, it being noted that Education Scotland's gradings in this regard varied considerably between individual schools within the ASG
- information on progress towards achieving a consistently high grading for all schools in the Area.

The Committee **NOTED** the content of the report.

## **10. Maintenance Programme for Roads and Bridges Prògram Gleidhidh – Rathaidean agus Drochaidean**

There had been circulated Report No. CS/18/14 dated 6 May 2014 by the Director of Community Services inviting Members to approve the Maintenance Programmes for Roads and Bridges for the Caithness and Sutherland Area for 2014/15. The report reminded Members that the budget for roads maintenance was set by the Community Services Committee and was devolved to Area level for operational purposes. Maintenance programmes were prepared by the Area Community Services Managers in accordance with the principles set out in the Road Asset Management Plan and presented to Members for approval.

It was confirmed that, at the Community Services Committee on 15 May 2014, the Director of Community Services had reported that a total combined pressure for 2014/15 of £1.966m had to be accommodated within the overall budget for the Service. That sum had been deducted from the roads maintenance budget, as this was the main part of uncommitted spend in the overall budget. This drop in road maintenance expenditure had been approved by the above Committee on 15 May 2104. It was, however, largely mitigated by the Roads Innovation Fund (£1.250m), with a range of initiatives that would put the Council in a much stronger position going forward. In addition, a request would be made to Council for an additional £0.500m, funded from the winter salt underspend achieved during the winter of 2013/14. This £0.500m was already included in the allocations to Areas for road maintenance.

Responses to points raised during discussion included:

- While cautioning that the Council's budgets were subject to pressure across all Services, the Chair undertook to raise with the Council Administration a request to review the decision taken to reduce budget allocation for roads and bridge maintenance on the basis that the sum allocated to the Area was inadequate in terms of the level of repairs which were required.
- The status of Wick Service Bridge was being monitored annually.
- Officers would reply directly to Mr D Mackay on concerns raised as to progress on surface dressing at Heathfield Road, Thurso.

Other points raised during discussion included:

- the importance of having the different elements involved in bridge and roads repairs progressed more quickly, to allow works to be completed as timeously as possible

- the need for the location of closed bridges be correctly identified, so that the public were not given an erroneous impression of road closure
- the high priority placed by the public on the repair of potholes and the need for further information as to the cost to the Council arising from insurance claims submitted by motorists for damage to their cars due to potholes.

The Committee **APPROVED** the Maintenance Programmes for Roads and Bridges for the Caithness and Sutherland Area for 2014/15.

## 11. **Grounds Maintenance Programme** **Prògram Gleidhidh Thalmhainn**

There had been circulated Report No. CS/19/14 dated 10 May 2014 by the Director of Community Services detailing the arrangements for delivering Grounds Maintenance Services and the resources and budgets available for managing the service in the Caithness and Sutherland Area.

At its meeting on 18 November 2010, the former Transport, Environmental and Community Services Committee had considered a report for the tender of Grass Cutting across the Highlands in nine areas for 2011/12 to 2013/14 and had agreed the award for the Caithness and Sutherland Area to the Council's in-house Direct Labour Organisation. This contract had been extended for season 2014/15 by making use of the extension clause included in the original contract award.

Arising from the report, the Area Community Services Manager reported on progress with the proposal to use existing DLO roads staff to undertake grounds maintenance duties, as reported to Members at their ward business meetings. He explained that the Service was currently consulting with staff and negotiating with the relevant trade unions, and hoped to be in a position to proceed with the new arrangements in early course.

Points raised during discussion included:

- Members expressed their appreciation for the work undertaken by the grounds maintenance staff.
- Opportunities for overtime to be offered to the Council's staff should be investigated, to avoid using external contractors.
- The potential for grass clippings to be lifted should continue to be explored, noting that grounds maintenance was an important issue for residents and visitors to the Area, and also the particular problems created by clippings left on the grounds at Thurso High School.
- The Service was commended on the work the staff undertook to prepare towns and villages ahead of special events such as galas; officers would provide direct clarification to Mr D Bremner as to whether a path from Harbour Road in Lybster could be strimmed prior to the annual gala, as in previous years.
- The type of machinery the staff were required to use should be reviewed, to ensure its suitability for the type of job involved, particularly in sensitive areas such as cemeteries.
- The Criminal Justice Service and village wardens should also be commended for undertaking grass cutting, particularly at times of heavy growth.

The Committee **APPROVED** the Grounds Maintenance Service for 2014/15, as set out in the report; and **NOTED** the on-going arrangements for managing the Grounds Maintenance Service for the Caithness and Sutherland Area and future engagement with Ward Members in relation to identifying the appropriate standards at specific sites.

## **12. Housing Performance Report Aithisg Dèanadais a thaobh Taigheadais**

**Declaration of Interest: Mr G Farlow declared a financial interest in this item as a Council house tenant but, in terms of the dispensation granted by the Standards Commission for Scotland, remained to participate in the discussion.**

There had been circulated Report No. CS/20/14 dated 14 May 2014 by the Director of Community Services providing information on housing performance in relation to Scottish Social Housing Charter and other performance indicators during the year 2013/2014.

New performance indicators set by the Scottish Housing Regulator had been introduced in April 2013. A number of these differed from performance indicators previously used by the Council, and it was therefore not possible to report trends in these instances. Statistics were provided on repairs, tenancy management, rent arrears and homelessness/homeless prevention. Information on other housing management performance was provided in Appendix 1 to the report.

Points raised during discussion included:

- Members expressed their appreciation for the work undertaken and congratulated the housing management team for their performance over the year.
- Re-letting delays and thus voids could be due to the condition in which properties were left at the end of a tenancy; if properties were not brought up to standard following a pre-inspection towards the end of the lease, tenants would be recharged for the cost of repairs; this applied to the entire property including its garden.
- Tenants were made fully aware of their responsibilities in looking after a property and, whilst introducing incentives might encourage tenants to maintain properties in a suitable condition, tenant groups did not favour these and had expressed the view that the Council should take a firm stance when dealing with properties left in need of repair.
- Tenants were also advised that refusal of a pre-inspection of the property in the event of a request to move would prevent their registration on the property transfer list.
- Measures were being taken to bring all properties up to a suitable standard for rent; however, it was acknowledged that both the Council and its housing partners experienced low demand in particular areas.
- The average rent arrear figures in Sutherland and Caithness were low compared to other areas in the Highlands and the debt recovery team continued its efforts to reclaim outstanding debt.

The Committee **NOTED** the information provided.

**13. Dornoch Common Good Fund – 2013/14 Quarterly Monitoring Report and Budget Setting 2014/15**  
**Maoin Maith Choitcinn Dhòrnaich**

There had been circulated Report No. CS/21/14 dated 13 May 2014 by the Acting Head of Community and Democratic Engagement providing a monitoring statement for the Dornoch Common Good Fund to the end of March 2014; setting out the anticipated income and expenditure for the following year; and inviting Members to set a revenue budget for the Fund for the financial year 2014/15.

The Committee **NOTED** the income and expenditure on Dornoch Common Good to the end of Quarter 4, 2013/14; and **AGREED** the Dornoch Common Good Fund budget for 2014/15 detailed within the report.

**14. Minutes**  
**Geàrr-chunntas**

There had been circulated and were **NOTED** the Minutes of Meeting of the Caithness and Sutherland Area Committee held on 11 February 2014, as previously approved by the Highland Council at its meeting held on 13 March 2014.

**15. Exclusion of The Public**  
**Às-dùnadh a' Phobail**

The Committee **RESOLVED** that, under Section 50A(4) of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973, the public be excluded from the meeting during discussion of the following item on the grounds that it involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraphs 6 & 9 of Part 1 of Schedule 7A of the Act.

**16. Lease of Dornoch Common Good Ground Land**  
**Aonta Màil airson Talamh Maoin Maith Choitcinn Dhòrnaich**

There had been circulated to Members only Joint Report No. CS/22/14 dated 13 May 2014 by the Director of Development and Infrastructure and Acting Head of Community and Democratic Engagement in relation to the proposed lease of ground belonging to the Dornoch Common Good.

Having received confirmation that both leases would include appropriate rent review clauses, the Committee **APPROVED** the leasing arrangements proposed in the report.

The meeting ended at 3.15 p.m., having adjourned for lunch between 1.15 p.m. and 1.50p.m.