

The Highland Council

Minutes of Meeting of the **Skye Committee** held in the Chamber, Tigh na Sgìre, Park Lane, Portree on Monday, 29 February, 2016 at 10.30 am.

Present:

Mr H Fraser
Mr J Gordon

Mr D Millar
Mr I Renwick

In attendance:

Mrs D Ferguson, Senior Ward Manager (Ross, Skye and Lochaber)
Mr W MacKinnon, Ward Manager
Ms C McDiarmid, Head of Policy and Reform, Chief Executive's Office (by Video Conference)
Ms Y Henderson, Operations Manager, Finance Service (by Video Conference)
Mr K Masson, Policy Coordinator – Climate Change (by Video Conference)
Ms T Luxton, Area Community Services Manager, Community Services
Mr J Holden, Assistant Community Services Manager, Community Services
Mr T Stott, Principal Planner, Development & Infrastructure Service
Ms C Pratt, Graduate Planner, Development & Infrastructure Service
Chief Inspector C Gough, Police Scotland
Acting Inspector B Crawford, Police Scotland
Mr A MacInnes, Administrative Assistant, Corporate Development Service

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

Business

The Ward Manager took the Chair at the start of the Meeting.

1. **Apologies for Absence** **Leisgeulan**

There were no apologies for absence.

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

There were no declarations of interest.

3. **Appointment of Chair** **Cur Cathraiche an Dreuchd**

Nominations were invited for the post of Chair Skye Committee.

Having been nominated by Mr H Fraser and seconded by Mr I Renwick, the Committee **AGREED** to appoint Mr D Millar as Chair.

Mr D Millar then took the Chair.

The Chair highlighted some good news in that the contract for the new Gaelic Primary School in Portree had been awarded to Robertson Construction. The contract was part of an overall capital investment programme of £14.8m in Portree, which included the refurbishment of the Elgin Hostel to create a new pupil residence at the Portree High School and the demolition works at the former boys' hostel and the Margaret Carnegie girls' hostel in Portree. The Scottish Government had contributed £4.75m to the project. The new residence for pupils would open after the Easter Holidays and the new Gaelic Primary School would open in late 2017.

Mr H Fraser advised that this was a major step forward for the development of the Gaelic language in the Highlands and Islands and there was no doubt the Gaelic School would prove to be a great success. The team work of local Councillors, Officials and parents was recognised to deliver the new Gaelic Primary School in Portree. Within two years the Highland Council would build two Gaelic primary Schools in Portree and Fort William and these would complement other Gaelic Primary Schools in Inverness, Glasgow and Edinburgh and this was welcomed.

4. Localism Action Plan Update Cunntas às Ùr mu Phlana Gnìomh Ionadaileachd

There was circulated Report No SA/1/16 by the Head of Policy and Reform. The report highlighted the new devolved powers for the Committee and the further powers likely to be devolved in 2016. It provided an up-date of work with partners on local community planning arrangements which Members would be involved in during 2016.

Members requested that consideration be given to a change in name of the Committee to 'Isle of Skye and Raasay Committee' and that this be translated into the Gaelic language. Also, it was requested that consideration be given to referring to the Chair as 'Cathraiche' as was the tradition in the former Skye and Lochalsh Area Committee.

Members welcomed localism, the local delivery of services and the need to engage with communities more. Devolving some budgets to local Committees commencing with Community Services budgets was also welcomed. Engagement with Community Councils was required in order to have their views as to how budgets should be spent. There had been significant work locally on community planning over the last few years as part of the Community Forum and extending this to a Community Planning Partnership was welcomed. In terms of the recommendation at para 6.2 of the report it was requested that the word 'note' should be substituted with 'agreed'.

It was apparent that given the significant reductions in the budget for the Council, services would not continue to be delivered in the way they had been in the past and there was to be a redesign of the Council in order to deliver services in future.

Thereafter, the Committee:-

- i **NOTED** the new powers devolved to the Committee and the planned further devolution of powers subject to Council approval in March 2016, and that further changes were likely during 2016;

ii **AGREED** that further work was needed with partners to develop local community planning, and in Skye this can build on the experience of Ward Forums; and

*
iii **AGREED** that The Highland Council be asked to consider a change in name of the Skye Committee to “Isle of Skye and Raasay Committee” (Comataidh an Eilein Sgitheanaich agus Ratharsair) and that the Chair of the Committee be referred to as ‘Cathraiche’.

5. **Local Committees – Webcasting** **Comataidhean Ionadail – Craoladh-lìn**

There was circulated Report No SA/2/16 by the Director of Finance seeking a decision on whether the Skye Committee meetings should be webcast and, if so, the funding source/s of the additional costs that webcasting would incur.

Members were of the view that given the current low demand for webcasting it was felt that there would be little value in spending money on new equipment for webcasting, particularly at a time when there were severe cuts to Council budgets and savings were required. The Isle of Skye was a small enough community for people to be able to attend meetings in person if they wished and the Press would often be in attendance at meetings to report on the business.

The Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the current service demand for webcasting;
- ii. **AGREED** that the Skye Committee should not be webcasted;
- iii. **NOTED** that when the views of all local Committees were obtained then where these views are that webcasting is to be undertaken, then approval for the capital funding would be submitted to Resources Committee at the earliest opportunity; and
- iv. **NOTED** that where webcasting was to be undertaken the annual recurring cost of £4,800 is met by each Ward Discretionary budget providing £218 per annum.

6. **Participatory Budgeting** **Buidseatadh Com-pàirteach**

There was circulated Report No SA/3/16 by the Head of Policy and Reform which highlighted progress in the development of participatory budgeting (PB) in Highland. It set PB in the context of the requirements of the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015 particularly the requirements to develop local democratic structures and involve communities in decision-making around resources.

Members were asked to consider how PB might be piloted in Skye and agree an option for doing this. Members were asked to agree to utilise Scottish Government funding of £15K to support its development and consider adding Ward Discretionary funding to this amount to develop the process.

Members had previously discussed utilising PB in Skye and they were clear that it was a key tool for engaging more effectively with communities. Members were of the view to trial the PB approach in Skye at an event in Spring 2016. This would involve bringing together a partnership group that would involve – Ward Manager,

Third Sector Organisations, a Local Member and specialist support from the Scottish Government. Mr J Gordon was nominated as the Local Member.

It was advised that if Members agreed the PB approach in Skye, a Steering Group meeting would be held on 2 March, 2016 to take this forward with a view to the PB event being held on Saturday, 28 May, 2016.

In particular it was felt that advertising and publicity of the event would be required so as to inform the public of the event and its purpose.

The Committee **AGREED**:-

- i to a PB event in Skye on Saturday, 28 May, 2016;
- ii to utilise Scottish Government funding of £15k to support the development of PB;
- iii to allocate some of their Ward Discretionary budget to the process; and
- iv that Mr J Gordon be appointed as the Local Member on the PB Partnership Group.

7. Carbon CLEVER Community Grant Fund 2015-16 Maoin Tabhartais Coimhearsnachd Càrboin CIALLAICH 2015-16

There was circulated Report No. SA/4/16 by the Head of Policy and Reform which set out proposed amendments to Sleat Community Trust's Community Split Log Project. The Trust were awarded £7,257 of Carbon CLEVER Community Grant funding and £837 of Ward 11 Discretionary funding in August 2015. The Trust had contacted the Council seeking permission to alter details of their project from that outlined in their original application. The report provided Members with details of the revised proposals and sought agreement that funding can be used for these purposes.

Following consideration, the Committee **AGREED** that Sleat Community Trust could use funding previously agreed to purchase the items detailed within the report.

8. Housing Performance Report - 1 April 2015 to 31 December 2015 Aithisg Dèanadais a thaobh Taigheadais – 1 Giblean 2015 gu 31 Dùbhlachd 2015

There was circulated Report No. SA/5/16 by the Director of Community Services which provided information on how the Housing Section performed in relation to the Scottish Social Housing Charter and other performance indicators up to 31 December, 2015.

In discussion the following points were raised by Members:-

- It was confirmed that when a tenant was leaving a property, the Council upgraded the houses to a reasonable standard before they were re-let or if the property was already in a reasonable condition, the new tenants were given assistance with redecoration;
- In relation to welfare benefit reforms and an increase in fuel poverty, it was queried if there were more cases of damp in properties as a result of people not being able to heat their homes properly. In response, it was difficult to suggest a direct link between benefit reforms and damp in homes, but people

did tend to prioritise their spending on food, clothes and electricity when there was a reduction in the overall household income, but the Council had no control on what households spent their money on.

- In relation to the increase in rent arrears in 2014/15 it was queried if this was due to the impact of universal credit. It was advised that this was not the case, as Universal Credit was just being introduced for new claims. The area team were commended for their high performance in managing rent arrears.
- In relation to rent arrears, sometimes bankruptcy and sequestration proceedings were taken against tenants. The amount of arrears could be quite substantial and it was queried what action was taken to stop arrears accumulating at an early stage to avoid the Council having to take Court action against tenants. It was confirmed that early intervention was key and the area team worked hard on managing rent arrears. It was advised that when legal action was taken against tenants, the legal process did take time, a minimum of four months to get to Court, which was outwith the control of the Council, and during this period rent arrears would continue to accumulate. Further, in terms of a target for reducing rent arrears it was doubtful if the target could be reduced further, as the Skye area already had high performance reducing rent arrears, and was out performing other areas of the Council in this respect.
- Reference was made to instances where tenants had not been satisfied with repairs carried out on their properties and the time this process had taken. The Council should take more responsibility to ensure that Contractors were dealing properly with tenants.
- New housing in the area was welcomed, but when it came to allocating the properties it was hoped that some consideration was taken of people's personal problems, as some may have had previous problems with eviction or rent arrears which made it difficult for them to get back into social housing;
- a summary of the housing allocations policy was requested and provided;
- the number of homeless presentations had reduced which was welcomed;
- there was a perception over the last twelve months of the lack of Council contracts going to local contractors and it was queried if there would be more work available to them in future. It was advised that there should not be any reduction in routine maintenance work for local contractors. In terms of capital projects, consideration was being to the packaging of contracts to take account of logistical considerations, as when remote areas were included in large contracts, the costs of the contract tended to increase. Therefore, subject to complying with procurement rules, consideration was being given to the packaging of contracts which would be more preferable to local contractors. This was an important economic tool in small communities.

The Committee **NOTED** the information provided on housing performance in the period 1 April 2015 to 31 December 2015.

9. Police – Area Performance Summary

Poilis – Geàrr-chunntas Dèanadais Sgìre

There was circulated Report No SA/6/16 by the South Highland Area Commander for Police Scotland which updated Members on progress with reference to the local priorities within the Highland 2014-2017 Policing Plan.

In discussion, Members raised the following points:-

- Members welcomed the positive report and the local information that it provided. Efforts would be made through the Community Planning Partnership to support local community policing.
- The four Conveners of Councils in the North Area would have a meeting in March, 2016 with representatives of the Scottish Police Authority to discuss the issue of the closure of Police call centres. In particular, there were concerns about centralising the call centres as there was little resilience if something went wrong. Also, statistics in relation to responses from call centres located in central Scotland were not good. Therefore it was felt that there should be a call centre in the North, if only to have more resilience in this vital service. It was advised that what was important in terms of contacting the call centre, was that the correct response was given, and this element would still continue to be dealt with by local policing.
- Reference was made to recent drug seizures by Police which had been highlighted by the Police on social media which was welcomed as reporting of such instances through social media allowed for better engagement with the public.
- In terms of road safety issues at Sconser and Skeabost it was asked what could be done to improve road safety through education, enforcement and engineering solutions. It was advised that Partnership working was key to identify ways to prevent speeding in certain areas, such as road redesign and the use of media to highlight the problem.
- it was queried if work could be done to make Portree more accessible to get around for people with a disability as in particular, cars parked on pavements was a significant problem for people with mobility scooters. It was advised that the Disability Access Panel would hopefully be already engaged with the local Police in this respect. The removal of a seasonal traffic warden may have an impact on parking which was a matter for the Council. The Police would still act on blue badge misuse and on instances of dangerous parking and obstruction. However as a result of the introduction of decriminalised parking enforcement in the near future, the Police would no longer be able to issue parking tickets. The Police would continue to use other measures such as fixed penalty tickets, reports to the Crown office or seizure of vehicles to deal with motoring offences.
- Work was still needed to see if a seasonal traffic warden could be appointed in Skye for the summer period and Police Scotland would engage in any consultation the Council wished to have on this.
- It was queried if Police Officer numbers in Skye were at full strength and this was confirmed. However, there were only two Sergeants, when the establishment for the area was five. Despite efforts to recruit, there had been no applications for Sergeant posts in Skye. There might be promotion prospects locally that could resolve the recruitment problem and changes to shift patterns that could be made to encourage Officers to apply.
- Reference was made to potential changes in Trading Standards Services which the Police liaised closely with and the potential impact this could have locally if Trading Standards Services were centralised.
- The Highland Alcohol and Drugs Partnership were holding an event in Portree and all the members of the local Drug and Alcohol Forum were invited.

The Committee **Scrutinised** the progress report in relation to the 3 priorities, Road Safety, Drug & Alcohol Abuse, Dishonesty.

10. West Highland and Islands Local Development Plan Main Issues Prìomh Chùisean Plana Leasachaidh Ionadail na Gàidhealtachd an Iar is nan Eilean

There was circulated Report No. SA/7/16 by the Director of Development and Infrastructure setting out the content of the Main Issues Report for the West Highlands and Islands Local Development Plan.

In discussion, Members raised the following points:-

- There were aspirations for the new School in Dunvegan to be on the Lonemore site, adjacent to the proposed community sports field proposal and other community development opportunities and the Plan should be amended to include this;
- In terms of the area identified as non preferred site PTLT2, it was requested that any plans for housing for example on this site, should have the proper infrastructure in place prior to building on the site. It was confirmed that the next draft of the Plan would have a list of actions that potential Developers would require to do as part of any development.
- In terms of the Ashaig Cemetery (Breakish) it was requested that the search for a more suitable site be checked with Community Services and that the Plan should reflect the latest position;
- In relation to Uig, text reference should be added to the Plan to support the principle of the need for upgraded pier facilities;
- In relation to Portree, text reference should be added to the Plan to support in principle the longer term possibility of a road around the Lump to serve a much expanded harbour.
- The issue of fuel storage facilities in Uig for new Ferries had been discussed at a recent meeting of the Harbours Management Board and it had been suggested that perhaps it was time to talk to the oil companies with storage facilities at the Lump, in Portree and consider moving them to Uig.

Thereafter, the Committee:-

i **NOTED** that the Main Issues Report had been shaped by a series of appraisals, suggestions and discussions outlined in paragraphs 1.3 and 2.1 of the report;

ii **APPROVED** the Main Issues Report, accepting that a number of minor presentational and typographical changes will be made prior to publication, and amendments as follows:-

- Uig – add text reference to need for upgraded pier facilities;
- Portree – add text reference to longer term possibility of road around the Lump to serve a much expanded harbour;
- Dunvegan (Lonemore) site to be amended to include reference to the community's sports field proposal and other community development opportunities; and
- Ashaig Cemetery (Breakish) – that the search for a more suitable site be checked with Community Services and that the Plan should reflect the latest position.

iii **AGREED** the approach to consultation outlined in paragraph 3.1 of the report.

**11. Street Naming – Development at Broadford, Skye
Ainmeachadh Sràide**

There was circulated Report No. SA/8/16 by the Head of Policy and Reform which invited the Committee to determine the name for a new development of 11 flats and 1 retail unit in Broadford, Skye as 'Strath House'.

The Committee **AGREED** the naming of the development in Broadford as proposed by Broadford & Strath Community Council as 'Strath House' and that the name would also be translated into the Gaelic language.

The meeting concluded at 1.40 p.m.