

**The Highland Council
Sutherland County Committee**

Minutes of Meeting of the Sutherland County Committee held in the Chamber, Council Offices, Drumbuie on Tuesday, 30 August 2016 at 10.30am.

Present:

Mr G Farlow

Mr H Morrison

Mrs D Mackay

Mr G Phillips

Mr J McGillivray

Non Members also Present:

Mr A Rhind

Officials in attendance:

Mr G Cameron, Ward Manager, Corporate Development Service

Ms A Clark, Acting Head of Policy, Chief Executive's Office

Mr D Cowie, Principal Planner, Development & Infrastructure Service

Mr J Holden, Housing Manager (North), Community Services

Mr K MacInnes, Principal Economy Officer, Development & Infrastructure Service

Mr D Knight, Senior Area Business Manager, Development & Infrastructure Service

Ms J A Bain, Planner, Development & Infrastructure Service

Mr C Baxter, Planner, Development & Infrastructure Service

Ms A Macrae, Committee Administrator, Corporate Development Service

Also in Attendance:

Chief Inspector I MacLelland, Police Scotland

**1. Apologies for Absence
Leisgeulan**

An apology for absence was intimated on behalf of Ms L Munro.

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

Items 7 and 9: Mr G Farlow (financial and non-financial)

**3. Developing Local Priorities for Sutherland (A voice for Sutherland and its People)
Prìomhachasan Sgìre**

There had been circulated Report No SCC/16/16 dated 17 August 2016 by the Depute Chief Executive/Director of Corporate Development which provided an update on the local strategic priorities for Sutherland.

The Depute Leader of the Council was in attendance at the meeting to discuss with the Committee their key issues and whether the Administration could help progress these issues.

In discussion it was reported that a second workshop was to be held on 12 September 2016 to further develop and refine the priorities. Members then raised the following issues:-

- it was important the emphasis in terms of the local priorities was on sustainable development and in particular capacity building; encouraging inward migration and achieving prosperity for the people of Sutherland; protecting the environment; and working in partnership;
- the document would form a central part of the work of the new community partnership and would help avoid duplication by a partnership approach being taken in relation to the key issues for Sutherland;
- it was noted the document was currently a first draft and built on the work of the Sutherland Summit; it was suggested that once finalised the next step would be to develop and assign actions in terms of the identified local priorities; and
- a point in regard to businesses which required accommodation to house their staff, specific reference being made to an establishment in Kylesku and the link into the CaSPlan.

During further discussion, Members welcomed the popularity of and visitor numbers being generated by the North Coast 500. In this regard a point was raised that improvements to the infrastructure in Sutherland were required in response to the volume of traffic and tourists using the route, specific reference being made to capacity issues around litter bins and public conveniences. It was suggested there was a need to undertake a significant amount of work over the next few months in this regard. The Chair requested that issues around the capacity of litter bins/public conveniences be considered at the next ward business meeting.

In response, the Depute Leader advised that he would seek to ensure the issues around litter bins/public conveniences were addressed. He also expressed concern at the condition of the public convenience in Dornoch and advised he would raise this matter with the Council Leader.

Following on from the above, it was suggested there was a need to conduct a review of the condition of public conveniences across Sutherland and the Chair requested that this matter be considered at a ward business meeting. In addition reference was made to the need for a Highland wide approach to be taken on this matter recognising the importance of strategically placed public toilets for example in relation to demand from cruise liners. The Depute Leader confirmed that he would raise this matter with the Council Leader and Director of Community Services.

The Committee **AGREED**:-

- i. the draft priorities for Sutherland as detailed in the report;
- ii. that the priorities would be further refined taking Members comments into account and following discussion;
- iii. that capacity issues in relation to litter bins/public conveniences on the North Coast 500 route be considered at the next ward business meeting; and

- iv. the need to conduct a review of public conveniences be discussed at a ward business meeting.

4. Taking Forward Community Partnerships Com-pàirteachasan Coimhearsnachd

There had been circulated Report No SCC/17/16 dated 19 August 2016 by the Acting Head of Policy which provided Members with an update on the next steps for establishing a community partnership within Sutherland.

During discussion, Members raised the following comments:-

- it had been recognised by Members at their first workshop that there was a need to develop a framework and methodology for locality planning for the fragile areas in Ward 1 which might not be recognised as being vulnerable in the data analysis currently available;
- in regard to the above and in terms of identifying the hidden vulnerable communities which existed in Sutherland, it was noted that NHS Highland held a wealth of information which could assist in this regard;
- further consideration was required in regard to how consultation with the community was to be undertaken within the required legislative timescales for delivering the partnership priorities;
- it was suggested that further clarification was required around the arrangements for involving community councils in the new local community planning arrangements;
- reference was made to the engagement with communities undertaken by the current District Partnership which the new partnership could build on going forward;
- it was crucial in the transition to the new partnership that the energy, focus and momentum of the current District Partnership was maintained and developed going forward;
- the key issue was to ensure the new community partnership was action focused and that this point continue to be emphasised going forward; and
- reference was made to the 'Sparsely Populated Areas Committee' comprising local Members and community councils representatives which had been set up in North and West Sutherland as a partnership at a more local level and a focus for engagement and consultation.

The Committee **NOTED** the next steps to taking forward local community partnerships within the Sutherland Committee area.

5. Police – Area Performance Summary Poileas – Geàrr-chunntas air Coileanadh Sgìreil

There had been circulated Report No SCC/18/16 dated 22 August 2016 by the North Area Commander which provided a local summary update to Committee Members on progress with reference to the local priorities within the Highland 2014-2017 Policing Plan.

During discussion, Members raised a number of issues as follows:-

- road safety issues in regard to vehicles which had been observed parking on both sides of the road west of Inchnadamph causing the road to be blocked, and the action that could be taken by the Police;
- clarification was sought on Police Scotland's policy in regard online safety and aggressive and insulting behaviour on social media; in this regard it was suggested there was a role for Safer Highlander in highlighting this issue to young people;
- the proactive activity being undertaken locally by Police Scotland in Sutherland in relation to counter terrorism be welcomed;
- a point in regard to the potential to use devices to track vulnerable people who potentially might go missing where this was in the persons interest; in this regard it would be helpful if the presentation given at the recent conference held in Inverness in regard to this issue could be made available to NHS Highland staff where appropriate;
- issues around the potential for the Police to monitor the flow of traffic on the North Coast 500 at peak times, reference being made to the frustration caused by slow moving traffic, particularly for local people;
- concern that the use of mobile phones when driving continued to be an issue in terms of road safety;
- an assurance was sought and provided that the 'Driving in Scotland' leaflet was being widely distributed to hotels and bed and breakfast and other establishments; it was also noted that the leaflet was also in the process of being made available on-line;
- the opportunity for partners to update and refresh the Driving Ambitions initiative to make it more relevant to young people, specific reference being made to the DVD; in this regard it was suggested that more realistic footage of road traffic accidents was available which had the potential to be an effective tool in terms of prevention; and
- Police Scotland be commended on their approach in relation to domestic abuse and it was requested the Committee's appreciation of this work be conveyed to the local officers.

The Committee **NOTED** the progress report and updates in relation to the 4 Priorities; Road Safety, Substance Abuse/Misuse, Antisocial Behaviour and Public Protection.

6. Caithness and Sutherland Local Development Plan Plana Leasachaidh Sgìreil Ghallaibh agus Chataibh

There had been circulated Report No SCC/19/16 dated 22 August 2016 by the Director of Development and Infrastructure which presented a summary of issues raised in comments received on the Proposed Caithness and Sutherland Local Development Plan (CaSPlan) and sought approval for the Council's response to these issues and next steps. In accordance with the Council's Scheme of Delegation, the Committee was asked to consider the report and decide on these matters.

During the presentation of the report it was noted that the same report was to be considered by the Caithness Committee on 31 August 2016.

In discussion Members welcomed the document and commended the officials on their work in developing the Plan. Thereafter, clarification was sought and provided in regard to the fact that if the Plan was adopted in 2017 then it was expected to be

an active planning document until 2022, there being a requirement under current law that it be reviewed no less frequently than every five years. In addition clarification was also sought around the definition of wild land in the Plan and it was explained this referred to the Scottish Natural Heritage identified wild land areas. In response to a question it was also reported SNH were expected to publish for consultation a revised assessment method for considering development proposals in respect of their impact on wild land areas.

Thereafter, the Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the comments received on the Proposed Plan;
- ii. **AGREED** to take the comments of Hitrans into consideration and to ask the Reporter(s) holding the subsequent Examination to likewise consider them;
- iii. **NOTED** the issues raised through representations on the Plan and **AGREED** the Council position as set out in **Appendix A** (the 'Schedule 4s') and highlighted in Section 3 of the report;
- iv. **AGREED** officers be authorised to proceed with the statutory procedures required to progress the Proposed Plan to Examination, including the submission of all Schedule 4s for 'unresolved issues' to Scottish Ministers; and
- v. **AGREED** the Director of Development and Infrastructure be authorised, in consultation with the Chairs and Vice Chairs of the Local Committees, to make non-material changes to the Schedule 4s prior to their submission to the Directorate for Planning and Environmental Appeals.

7. Housing Performance Report – 1 April 2016 to 30 June 2016 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 SCC/21/16 dated 30 August 2016 by the Director of Community Services which provided information on how the Housing Section performed in relation to Scottish Social Housing Charter and other performance indicators up to 30 June 2016.

In presenting the report, the Housing Manager (North) advised that he would seek clarification and report back to Members on the reasons why the SPI for anti-social behaviour cases reported and resolved was ragged as 'red' in Appendix 1 to the report.

During discussion, a number of issues were raised in relation to the reasons why tenants abandoned properties and the action being taken by staff to pick up on early warning signs in this regard such as rising rent arrears. In addition clarification was sought and provided on the impact of abandonments on the void figures and also in regard to the information which was available from other local authorities in regard to tenants who might have abandoned properties and moved elsewhere.

Thereafter, the Committee **NOTED** the information provided on housing performance in the period 1 April 2016 to 30 June 2016.

8. Dornoch Common Good Quarterly Monitoring Report - 1 April 2016 to 30 June 2016
Sgrùdadh Math Coitcheann Dhòrnaich

There had been circulated Report No SCC/22/16 dated 17 August 2016 by the Depute Chief Executive/Director of Corporate Development which invited Members to consider and note the position of the Dornoch Common Good Fund as shown in the Quarter 1 Monitoring Statement.

The Committee **NOTED** the Quarter 1 monitoring as set out in Appendix 1 to the report.

ADDITIONAL ITEM

The Chair **AGREED** to consider the following item as an additional item to allow Members to be updated on business development activity in Sutherland during the first quarter of 2016/17.

9. BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT: SUTHERLAND UPDATE

Declaration of Interest:- Mr G Farlow declared a non-financial interest in this item as Chair of the North West Highlands Geopark, 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. CC/19/16 by the Director of Development and Infrastructure which updated Members on the performance of the Council's business development services in Sutherland. It summarised the delivery of the Business Gateway over the first quarter of 2016, and informed Members on progress with Council involvement in local business development activity in Sutherland during the first quarter of 2016/17.

During discussion, Members raised the following issues:-

- in terms of business start-up activity over the financial year it was clarified these had been in the creative industries, food and drink and hospitality sectors;
- in terms of localism the continued presence of Business Gateway in Bonar Bridge was welcomed and it was suggested that there was a need for consideration to be given to the opportunities and business case for locating offices around Sutherland;
- the report be welcomed on the basis it provided Members with a deeper insight and understanding of activity in the area;
- it would be helpful particularly in terms of the issues raised in regard to the North Coast 500 route for Members to meet with representatives of Venture North at a ward business meeting; and

- reference was made to the assistance Business Gateway could provide in terms of the Committee's key aim to ensure as many businesses in Sutherland as possible were on the Council's procurement framework.

The Committee:-

- NOTED** the Business Development Service performance in Sutherland for the 1st Quarter of 2016/17; and
- AGREED** that the opportunity for Members to meet with representatives of Venture North be investigated.

10. Associated School Group Overviews Sealladh Coitcheann air Buidheann Sgoiltean Co-cheangailte

There had been circulated Report No SCC/20/16 dated 19 August 2016 by the Director of Care and Learning which provided an update of key information in relation to the schools within the Kinlochbervie Associated School Group (ASG), and provided useful updated links to further information in relation to these schools.

The Education Quality Improvement Manager also circulated information and provided an update in regard to the management of schools project in respect of the ASG.

During discussion, Members raised the following issues:-

- concern was expressed that Members did not have the opportunity to scrutinise the information in regard to those Sutherland schools included within the Tain and Ullapool ASGs on the basis the reports on those ASGs were submitted to the Ross and Cromarty Committee; Members therefore requested that arrangements be made for the above ASG reports to also be presented to the Sutherland County Committee in future;
- the opportunities to bring in teachers from other schools by video link or other forms of technology so that pupils in rural schools were not missing out on subjects and activities due to staffing issues and also had the opportunity to access certain subjects in respect of which there might not be a great demand;
- in regard to the above an update was provided on the proposals for the roll out of distance learning to schools in the area and in response Members requested that regular updates be provided to the Committee on progress going forward;
- a point that the playing field in Kinlochbervie was not fit for purpose and that consideration be given how an improved facility could be provided, it being noted that pupils had to travel a considerable distance to Scourie for their school sports; the Education Quality Improvement Manager advised that he would raise this matter with the Service's Head of Resources; and
- the positive report received from the HMIE following its inspection of Bonar Bridge Primary School be welcomed.

The Committee:-

- NOTED** the content of the report;

- ii. **AGREED** that reports presented to the Ross and Cromarty Committee in respect of Tain and Ullapool ASGs also be brought to the Committee to allow Members to scrutinise the information in relation to those schools located in Sutherland; and
- iii. **AGREED** that regular updates be provided to the Committee in relation to progress with distance learning.

11. Minutes
Geàrr-chunntas

There were circulated Minutes of the Sutherland County Committee held on 24 May 2016 which were approved by the Council on 29 June 2016, the terms of which were **NOTED**.

The meeting ended at 1.00pm.