

## The Highland Council

Minutes of Meeting of the **Ross and Cromarty Committee** held in the Chamber, Council Offices, Dingwall on Thursday, 12 January 2017 at 10.30 am.

### Present:

Mrs J Barclay	Mrs M Paterson
Mrs I Campbell	Mr M Rattray
Mr M Finlayson	Mr A Rhind
Mr R Greene	Mrs F Robertson
Mr G MacKenzie	Ms M Smith
Mr A Mackinnon	Mr J Stone
Mrs A MacLean	Mrs C Wilson
Mrs I McCallum	

### Officials in Attendance:

Mr J Holden, Housing Manager (North), Community Services  
Mr D Esson, Quality Improvement Manager (West), Care and Learning Service  
Mr T Stott, Principal Planner, Development and Infrastructure Service  
Ms R Barbour, Graduate Planner  
Mrs H Ross, Senior Ward Manager, Chief Executive's Office  
Dr R Bain, Ward Manager, Chief Executive's Office  
Ms D Agnew, Ward Manager, Chief Executive's Office  
Mrs A MacArthur, Administrative Assistant, Corporate Development Service  
Mr S Taylor, Administrative Assistant, Corporate Development Service

### Also in Attendance:

Chief Inspector I Maclelland, North Highland Area Commander

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

### Mrs M Paterson in the Chair

#### 1. Apologies for Absence Leisgeulan

Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of Dr D Alston, Dr I Cockburn, Mr C Fraser and Dr A Sinclair.

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

There were no declarations of interest.

### **3. Police – Area Performance Summary Poilis – Geàrr-chunntas an Dèanadais Sgìreil**

There had been circulated Report No RC/001/17 by the Area Commander for Police which updated Members on progress with reference to the local priorities within the Highland 2014 - 2017 Policing Plan.

During discussion, Members raised a number of concerns, including:-

- in relation to the safety of vehicles on bridges following a recent high-profile accident on the Forth Road Bridge, it was highlighted that a number of lorry drivers in the area had been ignoring warnings that bridges had been closed to high sided vehicles;
- in highlighting that there were currently no road traffic information signs near the Cromarty and Dornoch Bridges, concern was expressed at the accuracy of information provided through traffic reports in the media, people had become so accustomed to inaccurate information being provided that they were ignoring bridge closure warnings;
- in highlighting the presence of a police camera van near the Kessock Bridge, it was queried whether it would be possible for the operators of camera vans to report incidents of high-sided vehicles ignoring bridge closures;
- whilst there was a perception that speeding offences generally involved motorists driving over 80 mph, the majority of complaints within communities were motorists speeding within 30 mph speed limit areas;
- it was suggested that the decrease in speeding detections could be due to a reduction in police officers on patrol;
- gratitude was expressed at the rapid response by the police and the prompt organisation of a multi-agency meeting to address concerns raised by the Parent Council and local Members regarding drug misuse in Tain Academy;
- the lack of available officers to respond to incidents of shoplifting had undermined the confidence of shop owners to report these to the police and shop owners had now taken it upon themselves to deal with shoplifters;
- it was suggested that having special constables on duty would help alleviate problems regarding police officer availability within towns, it was enquired as to whether special constables counted towards the total police quota figures for the Highland area;
- the perceived reduction in the number of police officers on duty and the lack of a visible police presence in the area had reduced public confidence in the service and concern was expressed that intelligence within communities, which had previously helped to prevent crime, was now not being shared with the police;
- there appeared to have been a lack of available police officers to cover the public reception at Dingwall Police Station during sickness absence due to a reduction in officers on duty;
- the availability of New Psychoactive Substances on the internet was highlighted and the need to educate adults on the dangers of using them was emphasised;
- in welcoming the Abandoned/Uninsured Vehicles Campaign, it was suggested that this should be extended if resources permitted as there had been a high number of complaints regarding abandoned vehicles in the area; and

- Invergordon Police Station had been closed for a number of years and a request was made for further information on what the current situation was with regard to its future use.

In response, the Area Commander confirmed as follows:-

- reassurance was provided that in retaining police officers numbers, the Area Commander would continue to lobby for more police officers and to ensure that support would be available from other specialist departments such as roads policing;
- whilst speeding detections had reduced, he confirmed that this had not arisen from a cutback in the number of speed checks undertaken and attributed the reduction to increased police visibility and targeted speed checks at accident hotspots;
- it was his intention to increase the number of officers on foot patrol during the year;
- an undertaking to speak to the local Member regarding shoplifting to address concerns raised regarding the lack of engagement between officers and retailers to reports of crime;
- in highlighting the pool of Special Constables available and the work undertaken by them to build up links with local communities, he advised that Special Constables were separate from the quota of allocated police officers in the area and encouraged Members to recommend anyone interested in joining the Force as a Special Constable to apply;
- in acknowledging concerns that Invergordon Police Station had been closed for a number of years, reassurance was given that the property would be included within a wider review by the Estates Department with regard to the change of use of buildings not currently in use, and the potential for the building to be used by the community under the Community Empowerment Act; and
- a fully documented plan had been drawn up with regard to the extension and regrading of Alness Police Station and that whilst progression of this would be taken forward by the Estates Department, this would be dependent on the financial viability of the proposals.

The Committee **NOTED**, following scrutiny:-

- i. the progress report and updates in relation to the 4 Priorities; and
- ii. that copies of “Your View Counts” information leaflets would be distributed to Members of the Committee.

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

There had been circulated Report No RC/002/17 by the Director of Community Services which provided Members with information on how the Housing Section performed in relation to the Scottish Social Housing Charter and other performance indicators during the period up to 30 September 2016.

During discussion, Members raised the following issues:-

- concern over the condition of the houses handed back to the Council and the turn-around time for re-let, this appeared to be very dependent on private contractors and it was anticipated that the new post of Contracts Manager would have a direct effect on the timescale for work undertaken by the Council's sub-contractors;
- detail on why a private house let to the Council had been empty for four months for reinstatement works;
- the Council had agreed that on an annual basis the properties be checked for their condition and that a Maintenance Officer could check the condition of the house and advise of work required prior to the tenant handing the keys back, it was understood that this was difficult to resource;
- clarity on the length of time the next of kin had to return the keys on the death of a tenant;
- statistics had been requested by Cllr F Robertson on recovered charges for non-emergency repairs to recently vacated properties; and
- pictures of the condition of some Council properties requiring repairs would be beneficial for Members to see the scope of work the Council had to undertake before a re-let.

The Committee **NOTED**, following scrutiny, the information provided on housing performance in the period 1 April 2016 to 30 September 2016.

#### **5. Street Naming – New Housing Developments Ainmeachadh Sràide - Leasachaidhean Ùra Taigheadais**

There had been circulated Report No RC/003/17 by the Depute Chief Executive/Director of Corporate Development concerning the creation of addresses, following consultation with the respective Community Councils and Local Members, for new housing developments at Invergordon, Muir of Ord, Dingwall and Conon Bridge.

The Committee **HOMOLOGATED** the naming of:-

- i. the new development off Cromlet Drive, Invergordon as Flora Gardens;
- ii. the former Urray House development, Muir of Ord as Drovers Court;
- iii. the new flatted development at Craig Road, Dingwall as Gilbert Court;
- iv. the site East of 1 School Road, Conon Bridge as Elder Lane.

#### **6. Tain Common Good Fund – Tain Mussels Maoin Math Coitcheann Bhaile Dhubhthaich – Feusgain Bhaile Dhubhthaich**

There had been circulated Report No RC/004/17 by the Director of Development and Infrastructure inviting Members to note the advice received from Herriot Watt in relation to the mussel fisheries.

During discussion, Members raised the following issues:-

- the sale of the boat was backed by the local Members and Tain Community Council following some lean years in the mussel fishings;

- an additional recommendation be added to relinquish the lease of the pier as suggested at 4.2 of the Report; and
- the mussel fishings had provided well for the Tain Common Good fund in previous years and the money earned had been spent wisely.

The Committee **AGREED** that:

- i. the mussel fishery be rested in accordance with the associated professional advice and the position reviewed to recommence the fishings as soon as practical in 2017;
- \* ii. the Highland Council be asked to approve the sale of the mussel boat by open advertisement;
- \* iii. monies generated from the sale of the mussel boat be ring-fenced for the mussel fishery;
- \* iv. the lease of the pier at Meikleferry be terminated; and
- v. the fishing licence be retained for the purpose of benefitting the Royal Burgh of Tain Common Good.

## 7. Common Good Funds Maoin Maith Choitchinn

There had been circulated Report No RC/005/17 – RC/009/17 by the Depute Chief Executive/Director of Corporate Development and the Director of Finance which provide information on the following Common Good Funds:-

- a. Cromarty Common Good Fund RC/005/17
- b. Dingwall Common Good Fund RC/006/17
- c. Fortrose and Rosemarkie Common Good Fund RC/007/17
- d. Invergordon Common Good Fund RC/008/17
- e. Tain Common Good Fund RC/009/17

The Committee:-

- i. **APPROVED** the Common Good Fund budgets for 2017/18 as shown in Appendix 1 of each report; and

in relation to the Tain Common Good Fund:-

- ii. **AGREED** that when the grazings are advertised the highest bids received be accepted.

## 8. Education Scotland Reports – Shieldaig Primary School and Nursery Class Sgrùdaidhean le Foghlam Alba

There had been circulated Report No RC/010/17 by the Area Care and Learning Manager (West) which provided details of Education Scotland's inspections in Shieldaig Primary School and Nursery Class of 23 August 2016.

Members' comments included the following:-

- this was a very positive report, the school was to be commended with a letter of congratulation from the Committee;

The Committee:-

- i. **NOTED**, following scrutiny, the Education Scotland reports on Shieldaig Primary School and Nursery Class of 23 August 2016; and
- ii. **AGREED** that the Committee write to Shieldaig Primary School and Nursery commending them for their achievements and excellent Education Reports.

**9. West Highlands and Islands Development Plan  
Plana Leasachaidh Ionadail na Gàidhealtachd an Iar is nan Eilean**

There had been circulated Report No RC/011/17 by the Director of Development and Infrastructure which set out the key elements of the West Highland and Islands Proposed Local Development Plan, following consultation on a Main Issues Report and an Additional Sites consultation held in 2016.

The Principal Planner gave a presentation, during which he provided background detail to the proposed plan and highlighted the main changes to sites and policies proposed within the Wester Ross and Lochalsh area. He explained that it was recommended that the Plan be subject to an 8 week public consultation period and that a publication date after the local government elections in May for the Plan was proposed. He also proposed that, in addition to the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Committee, any material changes recommended would also be subject to agreement in consultation with the Ward Members for Wester Ross, Strathpeffer and Lochalsh (Ward 6) prior to publication.

Members' comments included the following:-

- the Plan had been extensively discussed at the local Ward Business Meetings; and
- the Development Plan Team were to be congratulated on a superb consultation where cards advising people of the Development Plan consultation had been distributed throughout the whole community.

The Committee:-

- i. **AGREED** the approach to public consultation on the Plan as outlined in paragraph 3.1 of this report.
- ii. **NOTED** the issues raised on place-based issues, and **AGREED** the recommended Council responses, as set out in Appendix 1A and 1B, to form the Settlement sections of the Proposed Plan;
- iii. **NOTED** the issues raised on the plan outcomes, spatial strategy, general policies and other non-spatial plan content, and **AGREED** the recommended Council response, as set out in Appendix 2, and **AGREED** the resultant outcomes, spatial strategy and general policies for the Proposed Plan set out in Appendix 3;
- iv. **NOTED** that minor presentational, typographical and factual updates and changes will be made by officers, with any material changes to be agreed in consultation and agreement with the Chair, Vice Chair of the Ross and Cromarty Committee and Ward Members for Wester Ross, Strathpeffer and Lochalsh (Ward 6) prior to publication;

- v. **NOTED** that additional supporting documents will accompany the publication of the Plan, specifically an action programme, a revised environmental report, a Habitats Regulations Appraisal record and a schedule of land owned by the Highland Council;
- vi. in line with government guidance, **AGREED** that the published West Highland and Islands Proposed Local Development Plan be treated as a material planning consideration in making planning decisions and providing advice; and
- vii. **AGREED** the approach to public consultation on the Plan as outlined in paragraph 4.1 of the report.

## 10. Minutes Geàrr-chunntas

The Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the Minutes of the Ross and Cromarty Committee meeting held on 25 October 2016, which were approved by the Council on 15 December 2016; and
- ii. **AGREED** that the Chair and Vice Chair would work with Ward Managers to provide a structure to address requests and concerns raised at meetings and recorded in the Minutes.

## 11. Any Other Business

The Committee **NOTED** concerns raised regarding the inadequate wi-fi connection and microphone system within the Chamber in Dingwall.

The meeting ended at 12.45 pm.