

**The Highland Council
Sutherland County Committee**

Minutes of Meeting of the Sutherland County Committee held in the Chamber, Council Offices, Drummuie on Wednesday, 22 February 2017 at 10.30am.

Present:

Mr G Farlow

Mr H Morrison

Mrs D Mackay

Ms L Munro

Mr J McGillivray

Mr G Phillips

Officials in attendance:

Mr G Cameron, Ward Manager, Corporate Development Service

Mr D Cowie, Principal Planner, Development & Infrastructure Service

Mr C Baxter, Planner, Development & Infrastructure Service

Mr B Northedge, Education Quality Improvement Manager, Care and Learning Service

Mr G Mackenzie, Roads Operation Manager, Community Services

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

Mrs M Grant, Principal Housing Officer, Community Services

Mr C Sharp, Repairs Manager (North), Community Services

Ms A Macrae, Committee Administrator, Corporate Development Service

Also in Attendance:

Item 4: Mr P Guthrie and Mr N Scroggie, Highlands and Islands Enterprise

Item 5: Mr Graham Humphries, KIMO UK Coordinator

**1. Apologies for Absence
Leisgeulan**

There were no apologies for absence.

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

Item 5: Mr G Farlow (non-financial)

Item 11: Mr G Farlow and Ms L Munro (financial)

**3. BT Openreach Update
Fios às Ùr mu BT Openreach**

The Chair advised that the BT Openreach representatives were unable to attend the meeting and therefore this item would be deferred. He advised that at the previous meeting of the Committee, the Senior Operations Manager had confirmed he would report back on specific issues, details of which were included in the minutes of that meeting, but to date no response had been received. He therefore proposed to write to Mr B Dick, BT Openreach requesting an urgent response in writing and requesting an action plan.

Members expressed their support for this course of action and suggested that a copy of the letter also be sent to Ofcom and Highlands and Islands Enterprise.

The Committee **NOTED** the presentation had been deferred and that the Chair would write to BT Openreach senior management in relation to a number of issues of concern and requesting an urgent response and an action plan, with a copy of the letter being sent to Ofcom and Highland and Islands Enterprise.

**4. Presentation - Community Broadband Scotland
Taisbeanadh – Bann-leathainn Coimhearsnachd**

Mr P Guthrie and Mr N Scroggie, Highlands and Islands Enterprise, gave a presentation on this item during which an update was provided on the roll out of Superfast Broadband across the Highlands in partnership with BT. Information was also provided in relation to Community Broadband Scotland and the support it provided to remote and rural communities across Scotland to gain access to faster broadband by assisting them to create and manage their own infrastructure, particularly in those areas least likely to benefit from the superfast broadband rollouts. In this regard Members were provided with a map which provided information on those live and in procurement projects in 2017. Further details were also provided on specific ongoing projects including West Coast Backbone, Open Market Review and Scottish R100 Programme.

During discussion, Members raised the following issues:-

- a point in regard to the need for more joined up working and a partnership approach to be taken to improve connectivity across the area;
- reference to difficulties around reporting a Wi-Fi fault when customers had no internet access and the need for this issue to be addressed;
- it would be helpful if a copy of the presentation could be circulated to all Members to allow the information to be disseminated to community councils and community groups;
- advice was sought on the best way forward for the Kinlochbervie Community Company in respect those areas of the village which did not benefit from broadband coverage and reference was made to the opportunities under the R100 Programme and Open Market Review schemes in this regard;
- clarification was sought and received that there was no requirement for customers to be registered to benefit from a broadband solution; and
- the potential assistance that could be provided to Rogart and Edderton Community Councils who were to embark on their own wireless schemes.

The Committee **NOTED** the presentation and **AGREED** that a copy be circulated to Members.

**5. Presentation – Local Authorities International Environmental Organisation
(KIMO)
Taisbeanadh – Buidheann Àrainneachd Eadar-nàiseanta nan Ùghdarrasan
Ionadail (KIMO)**

Declaration of Interest:- Mr G Farlow declared a non-financial interest in this item as the Highland Council's representative on KIMO, 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

Mr Graham Humphries, KIMO UK Coordinator gave a presentation on the work of KIMO during which he summarised the organisations main activities with reference to the Fishing for Litter Scotland and Net Recycling projects and its work around Emergency Towing Vessels. In addition he provided more information on the 'Pick up Three Pieces' initiative which aimed to to encourage visitors to beaches to collect three pieces of litter each time they visited. He advised that an important focus of the initiative was to engage with schools and provide interactive lessons on marine litter and he provided further information on this work and on the opportunities to involve more schools in Sutherland.

During discussion, Members raised the following issues:-

- the 'Pick up Three Pieces' initiative was welcomed and it was requested that the potential for more schools throughout Sutherland to be involved in the project and any assistance the Council could provide in this regard be investigated;
- a point that a large proportion of the litter picked up locally in beach cleans was recycle and the opportunities to locate or re-locate recycling bins to accommodate this material at key locations on the coast;
- the potential for KIMO to link in with the Highland Youth Parliament and the Youth Convener in terms of the approach to be adopted in involving secondary schools; in this regard it was confirmed that arrangements would be made for the Ward Manager to provide the relevant contact details to the UK Coordinator;
- the potential for harbours in Sutherland to be involved in the Net Recycling Scheme, on the basis that in the main fishing nets in the area were disposed of as landfill waste, and a request that a report be submitted to the next Harbours Board on the action that could be taken to support the scheme in the area;
- the need for further consideration to be given to highlighting the work of KIMO to the relevant Service Directors in accordance with the Committee's decision at its meeting on 30 November 2016; and
- the potential to undertake a beach clean at Loch Clash, Kinlochbervie be investigated and discussions held with the Director of Community Services and Harbours Manager on this matter.

The Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the presentation;
- ii. **AGREED** that the opportunity to involve more schools throughout Sutherland in the 'Pick up Three Pieces' Initiative be investigated;
- iii. **AGREED** to request that a report be submitted to the next Harbours Board on the action that could be taken to support the Net Recycling Scheme; and
- iv. **AGREED** that the potential to undertake a beach clean at Loch Clash, Kinlochbervie be investigated.

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

There had been circulated Report No SCC/01/17 dated 9 February 2017 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 the following issues:-

- the overall trends in relation to the statistics outlined in the report was welcomed; however disappointment was expressed in regard to figures shown in respect of the festive drink driving campaign;
- it was important that Members continued to be involved in the Driving Ambitions initiative, disappointment being expressed that they had not been notified of events during the previous year; reference was also made to the opportunities to identify additional resources to allow the initiative to be revamped to make it more attractive to young people;
- clarification was sought and received in regard to the figures provided in relation to domestic abuse, concern being expressed at the number of incidents recorded;
- the campaign to address the antisocial behaviour associated with the number of abandoned/uninsured end of life vehicles in communities was welcomed; in response to a question the Chief Inspector referred to the opportunities to target specific problem areas in Sutherland; and
- clarification was sought and received in regard to the correlation between the decrease shown in domestic abuse crimes and the increase in sexual crimes, it being noted that in accordance with the Scottish crime recording rules the reporting of historic crimes had to be included within the current year's figures.

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

7. Roads Structural Maintenance 2017/18 Càradh Structarail Rathaidean 2017/18

There had been circulated Report No SCC/03/17 dated 7 February 2017 by the Director of Community Services which invited Members to approve the prioritised Structural Maintenance Programmes for Roads for the Sutherland Area for 2017/18 and 2018/19.

During discussion, Members raised the following issues:-

- a point in regard to the outcome of recycle works at West Shinness; in response it was explained that the process was experimental and if it proved not to be successful then the road may require to be resurfaced and the implications for the other priority schemes in the Programme discussed at a Ward Business Meeting;
- clarification was sought and received that in terms of logistics the priority schemes would be grouped by area to ensure the most efficient use of plant, equipment and staff; and
- in the interests of safety it was important that white lining works were undertaken as soon as possible after schemes had been completed.

Thereafter, the Roads Operation Manger explained that work was ongoing to develop an overall programme for roads maintenance for Caithness and Sutherland in 2017/18 which included details and a timeline for all works including

white lining, and that it was hoped to bring a report on this item to the next meeting.

Following on from the above, the Chair advised that approaches were being received from a number of community councils on the potential for blanket 20 mph speed limits to be introduced within their areas. He suggested that on the basis of the interest being expressed and in terms of the Community Empowerment Act, Members should as a first step discuss the issue with their individual community councils to gauge their views on this issue, without giving any prior commitment that proposals would be progressed.

During further discussion on the above, it was suggested as a way forward that the use of speed limits in Sutherland be reviewed; to investigate the 20mph model in Inverness; and to listen to those community councils in relation to their concerns and thereafter and in terms of the Committee's delegated powers to liaise with Community Services. In addition reference was made to the importance of working in partnership with the Police on this matter on the basis that issues of road safety were involved.

The Committee:-

- i. **APPROVED** the prioritised programme of Maintenance for Roads for the Sutherland Local Committee Area commencing in 2017/18 and the proposal for changes to be agreed at Ward Business Meetings;
- ii. **AGREED**:- (i) that the use of speed limits in Sutherland be reviewed; (ii) to investigate the 20mph model in Inverness; and (iii) to listen to those community councils with concerns and thereafter to liaise with Community Services and Police Scotland

8. Road Maintenance on the A839 Mound to Rogart Càradh rathaidean air Meall an A839 gu Sgìre Raoird

There had been circulated Report No SCC/04/17 dated 6 February 2017 by the Director of Community Services which detailed the investigations and conclusions carried out on the surface dressing operations over the A839 Mound to Rogart Road.

In discussion, Members welcomed the report and asked that a copy be made available to both Rogart and Lairg Community Councils. It was also noted that the Roads Operation Manager was content to discuss the report with both community councils if required.

The Committee **NOTED** the content of the report and **AGREED** that a copy be made available to Rogart and Lairg Community Councils.

9. Caithness and Sutherland Local Development Plan Plana Leasachaidh Ionadail Ghallaibh agus Chataibh

There had been circulated Report No SCC/02/17 dated 2 February 2017 by the Director of Development and Infrastructure which presented the outcome of consultation on the Modified Proposed CaSPlan, in order that each of the Local Committees could agree the Council's position on certain outstanding issues to enable progression to the Examination of all the outstanding issues.

Arising from the report, the Principal Planner clarified that the suggestion to the Reporter in respect of the hinterland boundary at Spinningdale related only to that part of the Creich Community Council area and not to the part west of Acharry Moor.

The Chair requested that, if possible, an additional point be included in response to the comments of HITRANS, supporting the extraction of timber by rail at Kinbrace and welcoming the recent announcement by the Scottish Government of a boost to the Timber Transport Fund.

The Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the comments received on the Modified Proposed Plan and updated Proposed Action Programme and **AGREED** to take the joint submission of NDA and DSRL into consideration and, likewise, to ask the Reporter(s) holding the subsequent Examination to consider it;
- ii. **NOTED** the issues raised through representations on the Plan and **AGREED** the Council position as set out in Section 2 of the report and Appendices 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 also noting the decisions made previously by the Council's Committees on the proposed content for CaSPlan, subject to clarification that the suggestion to the Reporter in respect of the hinterland boundary related only to that part of the Creich Community Council area at Spinningdale and not to the part west of Acharry Moor and subject to the inclusion of an additional point in response to the comments of HITRANS, supporting the extraction of timber by rail at Kinbrace and welcoming the recent announcement by Scottish Government of a boost to the Timber Transport Fund;
- iii. **AGREED** to authorise officers to undertake the statutory procedures required to progress the Modified Proposed Plan to Examination, including the submission of all Schedule 4s for 'unresolved issues' to Scottish Ministers; and
- iv. **AGREED** to authorise the Director of Development and Infrastructure, 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.

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

There had been circulated Report No SCC/06/17 dated 6 February 2017 by the Director of Care and Learning which provided an update of key information in relation to the schools within the Farr Associated School Group (ASG), and provided useful updated links to further information in relation to these schools.

The Education Quality Improvement Manager reported on the Scottish Government's Pupil Equity Fund which provided additional funding to schools and in respect of which one of the main criteria was the number of pupils registered for free school meals. He provided details of the sums involved for some schools in the area. He also explained there was flexibility in terms of how schools used this additional funding including the potential for joined up working across ASGs in respect of attainment levels.

During discussion, Members raised the following issues:-

- it was requested that Members be provided with further information on the additional funding awarded to schools in Sutherland and Highland through the Pupil Equity Fund;
- it was suggested that the Fund represented a fair method of allocating uplifts to schools in respect of measures to close the attainment gap;
- concern that Tongue Primary School had not received an additional allocation through the Fund despite having two pupils registered for free school meals and that local Members would make representations in relation to this discrepancy;
- the opportunity for schools to work together to combine the additional funding to deliver improvements in attainment across the ASG be encouraged and welcomed;
- it was important that the Committee was provided with reports on Lochinver and Gledfield Primary Schools albeit they were included in the Ullapool and Tain ASGs respectively; and
- concern at the figures shown in relation to exclusions rates at Farr Primary School and the opportunity for this matter to be discussed at a Ward Business Meeting.

Thereafter, the Manager provided an update on the management of schools and reported that the recommendation in respect of the Farr Associated School Group to the Education, Children and Adult Services Committee on 1 March 2017 would be that Option 1 for a full cluster arrangement be approved.

In discussion, a point of concern was expressed in relation to fact that while consultation meetings had been held with the Chairs of the relevant Parent Councils the previous week, there had not been wider consultation with the communities involved.

The Committee:-

- NOTED** the content of the report;
- AGREED** that Members be circulated with information on the additional funding awarded to schools in Sutherland and Highland through the Pupil Equity Fund; and
- AGREED** that the figures in respect of exclusions rates at Farr Primary School be discussed at a Ward Business Meeting.

11. Housing Performance Report –1 April 2016 to 31 December 2016 Aithisg Dèanadais Taigheadais – 1 Giblean 2016 gu 31 Dùbhlachd 2016

Declaration of Interest: Mr G Farlow and Ms L Munro both declared a financial interest in this item as Council house tenants but, in terms of the general dispensation granted by the Standards Commission for Scotland, remained to participate in the discussion.

There had been circulated Report No SCC/05/17 dated 8 February 2017 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 31 December 2016.

During discussion, Members raised the following issues:-

- issues around those areas where particular problems were being experienced in regard to re-let times, particularly in North and West Sutherland;
- in regard to the above the opportunity to circulate local Members and community councils with details of vacant properties in those areas;
- a point in regard to the housing needs of NHS Highland staff in Sutherland;
- clarification was sought and received in relation to those SPIs ragged as 'Red' in Appendix 1 to the report;
- in regard to the indicator for tenancy offers refused, the opportunities to encourage prospective tenants to view properties after works had been carried out or in those cases where this was not possible to have accompanied visits, while recognising the need to minimise re-let times;
- clarification was sought and received that in cases where tenants did not wish upgrades to their properties, efforts were made to reallocate the monies to other works in an area before the end of the financial year;
- a point in regard to the problems which had been experienced with air source heating and the action being taken to resolve any issues; in response it was confirmed that an annual servicing programme was being introduced which should alleviate any problems in future;
- concern at the potential impact a major Council housing development in Ullapool may have in regard to the displacement of tenants from communities in Sutherland, for example Lochinver, and how this could be managed; and
- issues around cases where poorly installed heating systems were having to be replaced and the challenges around pursuing a claim against the contractor if the defects period had expired; it was also noted that in some cases the technical problems experienced had been due to fuel poverty issues.

The Committee **NOTED** the information provided on housing performance in the period 1 April 2016 to 31 December 2016.

**12. Dornoch Common Good Fund – Annual Report 2015/16, Q3 Monitoring 2016/17 and Budget Report 2017/18
Maoin Math Coitcheann Dhòrnaich – Aithisg Bhliadhnail 2015/16, Sgrùdadh Q3 2016/17 agus Aithisg Buidseit 2017/18**

There had been circulated Joint Report No SCC/07/17 dated 8 February 2017 by the Depute Chief Executive/Director of Corporate Development and Director of Finance which invited Members to scrutinise and note both the Dornoch Common Good Annual Report and Accounts for 2015/16 and consider the Dornoch Common Good Fund Annual Budget for 2017/18 along with the five year strategy.

In discussion, Members were provided with further information in regard to the revaluation gains figure set out in Appendix 1 to the report. It was also noted there were rent reviews ongoing in relation to the Scottish Water depot and Dornoch Caravan Site, and that the outcome would be reported back to Members in due course. In addition, it was highlighted that some expenditure may be required in future in respect of tree maintenance works, with reference to the Dornoch Tree Survey which had been carried out previously.

The Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the Dornoch Common Good Fund – Annual Report and Accounts for 2015/16;
- ii. **NOTED** the Dornoch Common Good Fund – Third Quarter, 2016/17 Monitoring Report;
- iii. **APPROVED** the Dornoch Common Good Fund – Annual Budget for 2017/18; and
- iv. **NOTED** the financial strategy outlined.

13. Minutes
Geàrr-chunntas

There were circulated for noting Minutes of the Sutherland County Committee held on 30 November 2016, which were approved by the Council on 15 December 2016.

The meeting ended at 1.30pm.
