

The Highland Council

Minutes of Meeting of the **Isle of Skye and Raasay Committee (Comataidh an Eilein Sgitheanaich agus Ratharsair)** held in the Chamber, Tigh na Sgìre, Park Lane, Portree on Monday, 19 June, 2017 at 10.30 am.

Present:

Mr J Finlayson
Mr J Gordon

Mr R MacDonald
Mr C MacLeod

In attendance:

Mr W MacKinnon, Ward Manager
Station Manager, G Nicholl, Scottish Fire and Rescue Service
Ms L Williams, Principal Housing Officer, Community Services
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 for the start of the meeting.

1. **Appointment of Cathraiche (Chair)** **Cur Cathraiche an Dreuchd**

The Committee **AGREED** to appoint Mr J Gordon to the position of Cathraiche of the Isle of Skye and Raasay Committee (**Comataidh an Eilein Sgitheanaich agus Ratharsair**).

Mr Gordon then took the Chair.

At this point, the Cathraiche, on behalf of the Committee, expressed the commitment of Members to work hard together and deliver for the whole of the Isle of Skye and Raasay area. There was a significant amount of work to be done but with the ambition shared by all Members, they would strive to do all they could to deliver and achieve the goals to ensure the area was a great place to live, work and visit. It was a priority for Members to see more decision making made at a local level, for the area to have a fair share of resources to improve infrastructure and to commit to look at new ways to involve communities in the decisions that affected them.

2. **Apologies for Absence** **Leisgeulan**

There were no apologies for absence.

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

There were no declarations of interest.

4. Minutes Geàrr-chunntas

There had been circulated for information the Minutes of Meeting of the Isle of Skye and Raasay Committee (Comataidh an Eilein Sgitheanaich agus Ratharsair) held on 27 February, 2017, which had been approved by the Highland Council at their meeting held on 9 March, 2017 – the terms of which were **NOTED**.

Arising from the minutes, the following matters were raised:-

Item 6 – Decriminalised Parking Enforcement – it was **NOTED** that a part time Council Parking Enforcement Officer post for Skye had now been increased to full time (37 hours) and would be an all year round position and this was welcomed. It was advised that the closing date for applications was 19 June, 2017.

Item 7 – In Sourcing of Grass Cutting Services Progress Report – it was **NOTED** that since the grass cutting service had been taken in-house there had been recruitment problems but it was hoped that vacant posts would be filled soon with interviews having been held recently. These would be full year positions which was encouraging.

5. Scottish Fire and Rescue Service Local Committee Performance Report for 2016-17 Aithisg Dèanadais Comataidh Ionadail Seirbheis Smàlaidh agus Teasairginn na h-Alba airson 2016-17

There had been circulated Report No. SR/9/17 by the Local Senior Officer for Highland which provided an update on the progress against the priorities outlined in the Area Plan for the Isle of Skye and Raasay 2016 - 2017. Priority areas had been identified through a range of Intervention, Prevention and Protection activities delivered in partnership to reduce risk to the communities of the Isle of Skye and Raasay.

The report also contained previously agreed information and performance as requested by Committee Members.

In discussion, the following points were raised:-

- the Cathraiche, on behalf of the Committee, wished to honour and pay tribute to the bravery and hard work of the Emergency Services who often faced extremely challenging and traumatic circumstances as had been evidenced by the recent very tragic Grenfell Tower fire in London. This incident reminded everyone of the danger faced and the bravery of Emergency Services personnel in the line of duty when they tackled fires, saved lives and looked after the injured. They risked their lives to save others and everyone owed them a tremendous amount of gratitude for the service they provided to their communities;
- the process for the delivery of free home fire safety visits in conjunction with partner agencies was explained and it was confirmed that this service was open to all households. The Fire Service and partner agencies routinely shared data identifying residents that would benefit from this free service. However, more work was required with partner agencies on a referral system

for home safety fire visits in order to ensure that information was available to all agencies so that there could be a more co-ordinated approach to producing a plan to safeguard residents.

- in relation to recruitment problems in certain areas, it was advised that the Skye and Lochalsh Council for Voluntary Services were currently undertaking work on community aspirations and meetings were being held in various communities. It was suggested that the Fire Service should engage in these meetings in order to promote recruitment opportunities in the Service.
- it was queried if there was any feedback from participants at recruitment open days, of why they felt they could not join the Retained Fire Service. It was advised that there were various reasons such as work commitments or health issues that people felt they could not join at the moment. People from the age of 18 onwards could join and the Fire Service would be attending High School career events to promote recruitment opportunities to young people. While financial incentives for joining the Retained Fire Service were consistent across Scotland, Retained Fire staff could earn additional money, by for example, undertaking more home safety fire visits.
- in relation to the Grenfell Tower fire, and the changes to building regulations over time, it was queried to what extent the Fire Service were involved in the building standards process and if there were any issues in the housing stock in the Skye and Raasay area that required to be addressed. It was advised that, in light of what happened to the Grenfell Tower, the Scottish Fire and Rescue had issued awareness briefings to all Fire Stations, and instructed staff to check that there were no similar issues in their area. An initial review suggested that there were no issues in the Isle of Skye and Raasay area. However, a more comprehensive review would be undertaken to confirm this and the Station Manager would be meeting with Principal Building Standards Surveyor on this matter.

Thereafter, and having scrutinised the report, the Committee **NOTED** the Local Performance Report as circulated.

6. Housing Performance Report – 1 April 2016 to 31 March 2017 Aithisg Dèanadais Taigheadais – 1 Giblean 2016 gu 31 Màrt 2017

There had been circulated Report No. SR/10/17 by the Director of Community Services which provided information on how the Housing Section had performed in relation to the Scottish Social Housing Charter and other performance indicators up to 31 March, 2017.

In discussion, the following points were raised:-

- it was noted that the current Highland wide rent arrears amounted to £1.5m, although rent arrears in Skye and fallen in the last quarter. However, it was advised that the full rollout of Universal Credit would take place in Skye from the beginning of July 2017 and therefore the rent arrears figure for Skye would inevitably increase;
- it was advised that if people already had rent arrears, and then they went onto Universal Credit, the problem become more difficult for them as there would be a few weeks gap before they received their first payment under Universal Credit. Providing the Housing Service knew that people were on Universal Credit, then measures could be put in place in order to mitigate the impact of Universal Credit on their rent arrears;

- in terms of the increase in homeless presentations on Skye over the last 2 years, it was advised that most of these were from local people. There was less private accommodation now available in the area due to private landlords and temporary accommodation providers (i.e. bed and breakfast providers) choosing to rent their properties or let out rooms to tourists in order to make more money;
- there had been recent social housing developments completed and more were planned which was welcomed. The housing stock completed recently was a mixture of houses/flats in order to meet demand;
- it was rare for any rough sleeping to occur in the area as in most cases some temporary housing solution could be found;
- it was queried if there was any evidence of an increase in the use of sub-standard accommodation, such as caravans, due to the shortage of accommodation in the area. It was advised that there was no evidence of an increase;
- there were still people using self-catering properties over the winter for temporary accommodation but when the summer tourist season began and their tenancy ended, there were problems finding accommodation for them all at the same time.

The Committee, having scrutinised the information provided on housing performance in the period 1 April 2016 to 31 March 2017, otherwise **NOTED** the report.

7. Skye and Lochalsh Local Access Forum Fòram Inntriageadh Ionadail an Eilein Sgitheanaich agus Loch Aillse

It was noted that the Council had a statutory duty under Section 25 of the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003 to establish Local Access Forums for its area. In this regard, there were currently six Local Access Forums in the Highland area which advised on matters in relation to the exercise of access rights, the existence of delineation of rights of way or the drawing up and adoption of the Core Path Plan. In addition, they also offered and gave assistance to parties in terms of the resolution of any disputes.

The Committee were invited to appoint one Member to the Skye and Lochalsh Local Access Forum and one reserve Member.

The Committee **AGREED** to appoint Mr C MacLeod to the Skye and Lochalsh Local Access Forum.

It was also **AGREED** to appoint Mr J Gordon as reserve Member.

The meeting ended at 11.40am.