

## HIGHLAND COUNCIL

Agenda Item	<b>5.</b>
Report No	<b>SCC/22/17</b>

**Committee:** Sutherland County Committee

**Date:** 29 November 2017

**Report Title:** Joint working arrangements in Sutherland – Amenities and Roads Services

**Report By:** Director of Community Services

### **1. Purpose/Executive Summary**

- 1.1 A number of significant service changes for both Roads and Amenity Services have taken place since 2015. These include:
- restructuring of Community Services;
  - separation of the Roads and Amenity Services from the former Community Works; and
  - reduction in the specification for grass cutting to achieve savings of £115,000 (5 Full Time Equivalent).
- 1.2 This report outlines the current arrangements for joint working since the changes have taken place, and highlights the opportunities for future joint working.

### **2. Recommendations**

- 2.1 Members are asked to:
- i. note the implementation of the restructuring of Community Services and reduction in grass cutting as agreed; and
  - ii. note the current arrangements in place for flexible and joint working between Roads and Amenity teams.

### **3. Background**

- 3.1 A restructuring of Community Services took place in 2015. The aim of this was to enable Community Services to prioritise and focus more clearly on key areas that matter most to the public and, where we are under most pressure, to deliver improvements. This was to be achieved by putting key 'families' of staff together to help the Service concentrate on, for example, grounds maintenance, roads maintenance, performance management and community engagement.
- 3.2 A further aim was to maximise the ability of the Service to deliver multi-skilling across similar areas of work. A specific example given was enabling grounds maintenance, street cleaning and waste management employees to work across these disciplines to make more effective use of the total resource and expand (through training and support) the skills base for staff with an improved service delivery outcome for communities.
- 3.3 Since the restructuring took place, Amenity Services has become more autonomous from the former Community Works operation. This has led to a perception with local members and communities in Sutherland that there has been a reduced priority and resource available for grass cutting in the area
- 3.4 In February 2017, the Council agreed to reduce the grass cutting budget by £115,000, equivalent to 5 Full Time Equivalent employees. This was to be achieved by stopping grass cutting on:
1. bankings which are identified as unsafe to cut; and
  2. areas regarded as low amenity by communities, Elected Members or officers. We would regard low amenity areas as those which suffer from flooding or poor drainage, or are remote from residential areas and have low usage

### **4. Current arrangements**

- 4.1 With regards to Amenity Services in Sutherland, there are 9 permanent and 1 seasonal employees available to carry out work ranging from grass cutting and burials, to play area maintenance and weed killing.
- 4.2 The resources available are as follows:  
Dornoch – 2 employees  
Brora – 3 employees  
Ardgay – 2 employees  
Scourie – 1 employee  
Strathy – 2 employees, including 1 seasonal
- 4.3 They maintain 32 cemeteries, 648 hectares of parks and open spaces, and 38 play areas.
- 4.4 Resources available in the Roads Team in Sutherland comprises:
- Helmsdale – 4 operatives, 1 pickup, 2 lorries  
Brora – 4 operatives, 2 pickups, 2 lorries, 1JCB and 1 x 1.5T 360 excavator  
Dornoch – 4 operatives 1 pickup, 2 lorries, 1 JCB  
Ardgay – 4 operatives 2 pickups, 3 lorries, 1 JCB  
Lairg - 4 operatives 2 pickups, 3 lorries, 1 JCB  
Lochinver – 4 operatives, 1 pickup, 2 lorries, 1 JCB  
Kinlochbervie – 3 operatives, 1 pickup, 2 lorries, 1 JCB

Durness – 4 operatives, 2 pickups, 2 lorries, 1 JCB

Tongue – 4 operatives, 1 pickup, 3 lorries, 1 JCB

Strathy – 4 operatives, 1 pickup, 2 lorries, 1 JCB

- 4.5 The Roads Teams provide Roads Maintenance and Winter Maintenance services across 1,336 Kilometres of Roads in Sutherland. The Winter Maintenance Plan is the subject of a separate report to this committee.
- 4.6 Current arrangements for joint working between Roads and Amenity Services mainly relate to burials, and grass cutting on verges out with 30 mph speed limits, and winter maintenance (footpath gritting). The two teams also work collaboratively with colleagues in Housing Services, with particular regard to Housing Estate Environmental Maintenance.
- 4.7 Joint working also applies across all Community Services teams in order to respond to any emergencies, or events, or in times of high demand for particular services or activities.

## **5. Opportunities for future joint working**

- 5.1 The restructuring of Community Services has led to a perception that joint working has reduced between the roads and amenities teams. This is not the case as the above examples illustrate.
- 5.2 In addition, Community Services is keen to pursue new joint working initiatives; either within the Council or with communities and partner organisations, the importance of this for all parties is recognised in times of reducing resources.
- 5.3 This would include working with Wind Farm Development Trusts to help support the aspirations of local communities for improved services. For example joint funding of apprenticeships.
- 5.4 It is proposed that these will deliver improved service outcomes for our communities, as well as contributing to the Council's aims of delivering localism in Sutherland.

## **6. Implications**

- 6.1 There are no resource, legal, community, climate change/CARBON CLEVER, risk or Gaelic implications as a result of this report.

Designation: Director of Community Services

Date: 13 November 2017

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