

**The Highland Council
Sutherland County Committee**

Minutes of Meeting of the Sutherland County Committee held in the Chamber, Council Offices, Drummuie on Wednesday, 29 November 2017 at 10.30am.

Present:

Ms K Currie

Mr H Morrison

Mr R Gale

Ms L Munro

Mr J McGillivray

Officials in attendance:

Mr G Cameron, Ward Manager, Chief Executive's Office

Mr A Summers, Head of Environmental and Amenity Services, Community Services

Mr G Mackenzie, Roads Operation Manager, Community Services

Ms J Jennett, Area Care and Learning Manager, Care and Learning Service

Ms A Donald, Education Quality Improvement Manager, Care and Learning Service

Ms A Macrae, Committee Administrator, Chief Executive's Office

Also in Attendance:

Group Manager M Loynd, and Station Manager J Gardiner, Scottish Fire and Rescue Service

Appointment of Interim Chair

The Ward Manager advised that Mrs L Munro, Chair and Mr H Morrison had been delayed due to the weather conditions and invited Members to appoint an interim Chair.

The Committee **AGREED** to appoint Mr J McGillivray as interim Chair.

**1. Apologies for Absence
Leisgeulan**

An apology for absence was intimated on behalf of Mrs D Mackay

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

There were no declarations of interest.

**3. Scottish Fire and Rescue Local Performance Report
Aithisg Dèanadais Ionadail na Seirbheis Smàlaidh is Teasairginn**

There had been circulated Report No SCC/20/17 dated 14 November 2017 by the Local Senior Officer for Highland.

In addition to the report, the Local Senior Officer gave a presentation on the consultation that was about to commence on Scottish Fire and Rescue Service Transformation.

Note:- Mr H Morrison and Mrs L Munro arrived in the meeting at this point.

During discussion, Members raised the following issues:-

- confirmation was sought and provided that the transformation process would be undertaken over the period of the next four years;
- concern at the potential impact on retained duty staff in employment/self-employed if they were required to take on new roles and the potential for the Service to lose staff if they could not commit to the additional time required;
- there was a need for Members to have open and robust conversations with senior officers in the Service both in relation to the impact of transformation on employers and communities in Sutherland;
- in addition, it was recognised there were sensitivities in respect of the proposals and therefore it was important that Members and the emergency services and partner organisations involved worked together with communities to deliver the best outcomes for Sutherland;
- concern was expressed at the proposals whereby the Service would assist NHS Highland in responding to incidents involving uninjured falls on the basis there may be an underlying medical reason for the fall. The Local Senior Officer advised that a pilot scheme was being run in Caithness with no issues arising to date and he would be content to share the outcome of the review of the pilot with Members;
- in regard to the above, the Chair requested that Members meet with the Service's representatives to discuss the review prior to the next meeting;
- clarification was sought and provided in regard to the role of the Service in water rescues in rural areas of Sutherland;
- congratulations were extended to Area Manager, John MacDonald who had been promoted to Deputy Chief Fire Officer and it was requested that Mr Macdonald be thanked on behalf of the Committee for his services to the area; and
- clarification was sought and provided in regard to the increase in the number of unwanted alarm activations in the area, it being noted these were generally not malicious.

The Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the attached Area Performance Report;
- ii. **AGREED** that arrangements be made for Members to meet with the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service representatives prior to the next meeting; and
- iii. **AGREED** that Mr John Macdonald, former Area Manager, be thanked on behalf of the Committee for his services to the area.

Note:- At this point Mrs L Munro took the Chair. She recorded her thanks to Mr J McGillivray for acting as interim Chair.

4. Kinlochbervie Associated School Group Overview Sealladh Coitcheann air Buidheann Sgoiltean Co-cheangailte

There had been circulated Report No SCC/21/17 dated 23 November 2017 by the Director of Care and Learning.

During discussion, Members raised the following issues:-

- concern was expressed that Kinlochbervie Primary School had not been inspected since 2008; the Area Care and Learning Manager advised that the Council had no influence or control in relation to HMIE inspection dates but that she would check its current status in this regard;
- in response to a question, it was confirmed that Kinlochbervie ASG was functioning well and there were no issues in relation to recruitment and retention;
- the figure of 100% for positive destinations in respect of Kinlochbervie High School be welcomed;
- as a general point, the potential going forward for Head Teachers to meet with Members to discuss any issues of concern;
- it was important to be mindful of the geography of the ASG and the significant travel distances involved for some pupils;
- an explanation was sought in relation to the level of additional support need within the ASG particularly at levels 2 and 3, and it was noted that more detailed information could be provided to Members if required; and
- in regard to the above, it was suggested that Members discuss at a future Ward Business Meeting any additional information they would wish to be included in future ASG reports

The Committee:-

- NOTED** the content of the report; and
- AGREED** to discuss at a Ward Business Meeting any additional information requirements in terms of future ASG Overview reports.

5. Joint working arrangements in Sutherland – Amenities and Roads Services Ullachaidhean co-obrachaidh ann an Cataibh – Seirbheisean Ghoireasan is Rathaidean

There had been circulated Report No SCC/22/17 dated 13 November 2017 by the Director of Community Services.

During discussion, Members raised the following issues:-

- concern was expressed at the lack of grass cutting undertaken in some villages in North and West Sutherland over the past year and clarification was sought and provided in regard to the new working arrangements for the coming year;
- reference in the report to joint working with communities be welcomed as being progressive;
- clarification was sought in regard to the Service responsible for grass cutting at the foreshore in Golspie. The Head of Environmental and Amenity Services reported that he would clarify this matter and report back to Mr R Gale;
- concern that the standard of grass cutting in some burial grounds had not been to an acceptable standard and it was important appropriate equipment be used. In response, it was explained that an assessment of the machinery to be deployed next year had been carried out in consultation with staff in response to the concerns raised; and
- it was suggested that staff resources in some areas had not been sufficient to cover the range of work which had to be carried out and it was hoped the new working arrangements would help address this issue.

Thereafter, concern was expressed that grass cuttings were not being lifted in schools, communities and particularly in burial grounds which was proving contentious in some communities. It was explained there was significant additional cost and time associated with lifting the grass and if this was to be carried out in burial grounds then, in terms of the budget, work would have to cease or be reduced elsewhere.

Discussion then followed on the opportunities to increase community involvement in the lifting and disposal of grass cuttings and on how this could be funded. The Chair suggested that Members consult with their communities on this matter and that the issue be discussed further at a Ward Business Meeting.

Thereafter, discussion focused on the opportunities to recruit staff through the Council's Modern Apprenticeship programme. It was noted that work was ongoing with the Council's Modern Apprentice Coordinator to develop a course for apprentice road workers. In addition, it was explained this approach was important given current recruitment difficulties and the age profile of the workforce.

Following on from the above, it was suggested that a partnership approach with communities who had access to funds or community benefit should be developed to facilitate the creation of modern apprenticeships and employment opportunities locally. The aim should be not just to fill vacancies but to create additional jobs and to recruit and retain young people in the area. It was suggested consideration be given to pilot schemes being developed in Sutherland and to involve other partner organisations. It was proposed this matter be explored in more detail at a Ward Business Meeting with the appropriate officials in attendance. As part of those discussions, it would also be helpful if Members be provided with supporting information on the current age profile of staff. There was also a need to consider how to grow the skills base in Sutherland.

Thereafter, it was suggested that it would be helpful to have discussions with Police Scotland in regard to the potential to have officers stationed in the area in which they live, particularly in the more remote and rural areas of Sutherland.

The Committee **NOTED** the:-

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

The Committee **AGREED** to discuss at a Ward Business Meeting:-

- i. the potential for joint working with communities in relation to the lifting and disposal of grass cuttings;
- ii. the opportunities to develop a partnership approach with communities to facilitate the creation of modern apprenticeships in the area; and
- iii. issues in relation to the stationing of Police officers in the area, with Police Scotland representatives being invited to attend.

6. Winter Maintenance Plan 2017-18 Obair-gleidhidh Geamhraidh 2017-18

There had been circulated Report No SCC/23/17 dated 3 November 2017 by the Director of Community Services.

Arising from the report, reference was made to the need to replenish and refresh salt heaps/bins in specific areas. The Manager confirmed that he would arrange for this matter to be progressed.

Thereafter, reference was made to the issues around the lack of uptake of the Council's 'Winter Resilience' scheme by community councils in the area and clarification was sought and provided in regard to the criteria for the scheme. It was suggested that a press release be issued to raise awareness of the 'Winter Resilience' scheme in Sutherland, and that Members be circulated with details of the scheme.

The Committee:-

- i. **APPROVED** the Winter Maintenance Plan for the Sutherland Area, which includes the priority road lists and maps presented in Appendices B & C; and
- ii. **AGREED** that a press release be issued to raise awareness of the 'Winter Resilience' scheme in Sutherland, and that Members be circulated with details of the scheme.

7. Edderton Speed Limit Cuingalachadh Astair Ailbhinn

There had been circulated Report No SCC/24/17 dated 3 November 2017 by the Director of Community Services.

In discussion, it was noted that Edderton Community Council had been informed of the position, and it was requested the focus now should be on the provision of flashing warning speed signs in accordance with local views.

The Committee **AGREED** to:-

- i. reject the request for a 30 mph Speed Limit on the A836 through Edderton; and
- ii. the introduction of standardised 40mph repeater signs through the village.

8. Dornoch Common Good Quarterly Monitoring Report - 1 April 2017 to 30 September 2017 Sgrùdadh Math Coitcheann Dhòrnaich - 1 An Giblean 2017 to 30 An t-Sultainn 2017

There had been circulated Joint Report No SCC/25/17 dated 17 November 2017 by the Depute Chief Executive/Director of Corporate Resources and Head of Policy and Reform.

In discussion, reference was made to a long standing agreement to commit £100,000 from the Fund to the new build Dornoch Sports Centre. It was reported this commitment had been originally agreed by Dornoch Area Community Council

in 2011, and that the Community Council had reaffirmed its commitment to this decision at its last meeting.

In discussion, the Committee unanimously expressed their support for the sum of £100,000 from the Dornoch Common Good Fund to be committed to the Dornoch Sports Centre project.

* In relation to the specific project CAL15131: Dornoch Sports Centre, the Committee unanimously requested that the Council proceed with urgency to legally commit to the project before the closing date for acceptance in view of the following:-

- the extensive and costly work undertaken by both Highland Council project staff and in particular the qualifying group of companies tendering for the project, over an extended timescale;
- the final preferred bid as submitted by the contractor being only 2.5% over the original budget figure of £3m as confirmed in December 2015;
- the closing date for acceptance of this bid, being 5 January 2018;
- the match funding of £100,000 from the Dornoch Common Good Fund;
- the opportunity to draw down £75,000 from Sutherland Leader as match funding with an expression of interest already have been submitted by the Council's design team;
- the potential for at least £200,000 from SportScotland with the further consideration of a private offer to make up any shortfall to their maximum award of £400,000;
- the opportunity to draw down significant sums from the under-drawn Strategic Leader and Inter-LAP Leader funds, monies which must be utilised by March 2019;
- the fact this was the only Council capital project of any significance in Sutherland for a number of years and potentially for many years ahead; and
- the project had been the top priority in the Council's Capital Plan since December 2015.

In addition to the above, the Chair advised that she and the local Member, Mr J McGillivray would arrange to make representations to and meet with the Council Leader on this matter.

Thereafter, the Committee **NOTED** the position of the Dornoch Common Good Fund, as shown in the Quarter 2 monitoring statement.

9. Minutes Geàrr-chunntas

There were circulated and **NOTED** the Minutes of the Sutherland County Committee held on 13 September 2017, which were approved by the Council on 26 October 2017.

10. Exclusion of the Public Às-dùnadh a' Phobail

The Committee **RESOLVED**, under Section 50A(4) of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973, that the public be excluded from the meeting during discussion of the following item on the grounds that it involved the likely disclosure

of exempt information as defined in Paragraphs 6 and 9 of Part 1 of Schedule 7A of the Act.

11. Ground Lease of Dornoch Common Good Land
Aonta-màil Fearainn airson Talamh Maoin Math Choitcheann Dhòrnaich

There had been circulated Joint Report No SCC/26/17 dated 23 November 2017 by the Director of Development and Infrastructure and Head of Policy and Reform.

The Committee **AGREED** the recommendations set out in the report.

The meeting closed at 12.35pm.
