

The Highland Council

Minutes of Meeting of the **Badenoch and Strathspey Area Committee** held in Talla nan Ros, King Street, Kingussie on 13 February 2018 at 10.30 am

Present:

Mrs M Cockburn
Ms P Hadley

Mr B Lobban

In attendance:

Ms L Cowie, Ward Manager (Nairn, Badenoch and Strathspey), Chief Executive's Office
Mr O Bray, Head Teacher, Kingussie High School (Item 3)
Mr R MacLeod, Principal Housing Officer, Community Services
Mr R Porteous, Roads Operations Manager, Community Services
Mr R Gerring, Transport Planning Manager, Development and Infrastructure Service
Mrs L Dunn, Principal Administrator, Chief Executive's Office

Also in attendance:

Mr G Miles, Head of Planning and Communities, Cairngorms National Park Authority (Item 4)
Insp M Middlehurst, Police Scotland (Item 5)

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

Mr B Lobban in the Chair

Business

1. Apologies for Absence Leisgeulan

An apology for absence was intimated on behalf of Mr J Bruce.

2. Declarations of Interest Foillseachaidhean Com-pàirt

The Committee **NOTED** the following declarations of interest:-

Items 4 and 6 – Ms P Hadley (financial)

3. Presentations – Head Teachers – Kingussie High School and Grantown Grammar School Taisbeanaidhean – Ceannardan-sgoile – Àrd-Sgoil Cheann a' Ghiùthsaidh agus Sgoil Ghràmair Bhaile nan Grandach

Due to the bad weather, the Head Teacher of Grantown Grammar School had been unable to attend the meeting and it was requested that this presentation be made to a future meeting.

A presentation was then undertaken at the meeting by the Head Teacher of Kingussie High School on the local delivery and outcomes from Curriculum for Excellence, including performance of the school, and also on the drive to enhance links with other educational establishments to progress pathways to further education, training and employment.

The presentation also included an overview of general school statistics; outlined the approach to learning which was a technology rich environment blended with traditional learning methods; information and data comparators on Improving Attainment for all; and concluded by setting out future plans.

During discussion, the following main points were raised:-

- The Chairman expressed appreciation for the presentation which demonstrated the school's significant improvements which was beneficial for the community as well as the school and he credited this to the staff, pupils and parents;
- Further information was sought, and provided, on how the Council could support and facilitate improvement of the lowest attainment;
- Additional information was sought and provided on the impact that a reduction in teaching could have on the school, pupils and the feasibility to grow the Curriculum for Excellence;
- Assurance was sought, and provided, that potential employment and training opportunities for young people were being capitalised upon in view of the major construction works, i.e. the dualling of the A9, that were being undertaken locally;
- Confirmation was provided that the school had established positive links with the University of the Highlands and Islands and a number of projects had been established to facilitate different types of learning opportunities; and
- This was an excellent school model, which fitted with the Getting It Right for Every Child model, and was very progressive for the Highlands.

Thereafter, the Committee **NOTED** the presentation on Kingussie High School and **AGREED** that the presentation on Grantown Grammar School be undertaken at a future meeting of the Committee.

4. Presentation – Local Development Plan 2020 – Main Issues Report Taisbeanadh – Plana Leasachaidh Ionadail 2020 – Aithisg Phrìomh Chùisean

Declaration of Interest – Ms P Hadley declared a financial interest in this item as a Member of the Cairngorms National Park Authority Board but in terms of the dispensation granted by the Standards Commission remained in the room to participate in the discussion.

A Presentation was undertaken at the meeting by Mr Gavin Miles, Head of Planning and Communities, Cairngorms National Park Authority, on the consultation currently underway on the Cairngorms National Park Authority Local Development Plan 2020 Main Issues Report.

During discussion, the following main points were raised:-

- It was highlighted that Badenoch and Strathspey was a straightforward commute to Inverness which would be further improved following the new construction improvements to the A9. There was a requirement to build where there was demand and houses were affordable, and in view of this, concern was expressed that not enough weight was being allocated to the Housing Needs Demands Assessment;
- A number of concerns were raised in regard to affordability. It was stressed that the homes that were currently being designated as affordable were too expensive in comparison to the local employment economy, which in Badenoch and Strathspey was a low wage economy, and further information/advice was sought as to whether there was scope for the definition of “*affordable*” to be better defined to be more realistic and reflect the local employment market;
- It was acknowledged that affordability was a difficult issue to resolve, particularly in Badenoch and Strathspey, and it was highlighted that if the statutory percentage of affordable homes was increased then this could discourage developers from building houses. However, if the UK Government was to write-off Highland Council’s housing debt then the Council would be able to build more truly affordable homes;
- It was highlighted that affordable housing was being purchased and then put on the open market for rental and the need for an affordable housing rental market was also highlighted. It was further explained that there was no control over Registered Social Landlords to retain the houses as affordable homes. Therefore, there were a number of cases whereby affordable houses were being sold by Social Landlords on the open market rather than being retained as an affordable home and consequently the number of affordable homes were reducing which was disappointing;
- Concern was expressed that insufficient land was being allocated for housing, particularly if one of the major sites which had already been granted planning permission failed to be developed and in order to mitigate against this more smaller flexible sites were also needed; and
- It was confirmed that there was still time for communities to contribute to the consultation process and they were encouraged to do so.

The Committee thanked Mr Miles for his attendance and **NOTED** the presentation.

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

There had been circulated Report No BSAC/1/18 dated 30 January 2018 by the Area Commander.

During discussion, the following points were made:-

- Appreciation was expressed for the improved attendance at Community Council meetings. The Committee was informed that Police Scotland would be conducting a pilot project with Police surgeries being held in Kingussie and Grantown on Spey, the dates and times for which would be circulated, and if successful at the end of the three month trial period these would be continued;

- Clarity was sought and provided in regard to how robberies were categorised and the associated data recorded;
- Concern was expressed at the increase in vandalism and it was queried whether any trend had been identified in regard to this;
- Disappointment was expressed at the increase in the number of people detected for drink/drug driving offences and it was queried whether there were any trends/explanations for this e.g. a reduction in policing. It was further queried as to whether any trend existed in regard to offenders and it was suggested it might be helpful to see a breakdown of this statistic by locals and tourists. However, it was felt that this level of information was immaterial and that focus should not be on who committed the offence but instead directed at reducing this statistic; and
- Concern was expressed at the increase in fatalities on the A9 within Badenoch and Strathspey and further information was requested in order to determine if there was a route cause.

Following discussion, the Committee:-

- NOTED** progress made against the objectives set within the Highlands and Islands Local Policing Plan 2017-20 Year 1 (attached as Annex A to the report) for the period covering 1 April to 31 December 2017;
- NOTED** the forthcoming pilot project whereby Police surgeries would be held in Kingussie and Grantown on Spey, the dates and times for which would be circulated; and
- AGREED** that further information be sought from the Road Traffic Police to establish if there was a route cause for the increase in fatalities on the A9 within the Badenoch and Strathspey area.

6. Housing Performance Report – 1 April to 31 December 2017

Aithisg Dèanadais a thaobh Taigheadais – 1 Giblean gu 31 Dùbhlachd 2017

Declaration of Interest – Ms P Hadley declared a financial interest in this item as a Council house tenant but in terms of the dispensation granted by the Standards Commission remained in the room to participate in the discussion.

There had been circulated Report No BSAC/2/18 dated 30 January 2018 by the Director of Community Services.

In discussion, the following issues were raised:-

- Concern was expressed at the increase in reactive repairs and an explanation was provided for the reason for this and the strategies being adopted to reduce these in future;
- Further information was sought and provided on the impact that Universal Credit was having on Rent Arrears;
- Clarity was sought on installation of biomass boilers as it had been suggested that these were still being installed due to stock surpluses and further information was requested and provided on the alternative types of heating upgrade systems available and being advocated;
- Regarding tenants being tied to a few select energy providers, it was confirmed that the Council used SSE Plc as a supplier for void properties but

once re-let tenants were able to shop around for the best supplier in their area and were encouraged to do so;

- It was highlighted that there was a requirement for smart meters to be installed within homes by 2020 and it was queried whether this would be the responsibility of the Council or tenants; and
- The property re-let time was very good and this was welcomed by the Committee.

The Committee **NOTED** the information provided on housing performance for the period from 1 April to 31 December 2017 as detailed in the report.

7. Roads Maintenance Programme 2018/19 Prògram Càraidh Rathaidean 2018/19

There had been circulated Report No BSAC/3/18 dated 26 January 2018 by the Director of Community Services.

Following the presentation of the report, the Committee welcomed proposals to improve gateway signage and speed reduction signs at village entrances and it was suggested that a collective approach be taken to ensure all communities benefited. In addition, clarity was sought and provided on the Council's policy for maintenance and verge reinstatement in view of the importance of these to ensure safety.

The Committee:-

- i. **APPROVED** the proposed Roads Maintenance Programme for 2018/19 for the Badenoch & Strathspey Area as detailed in the report; and
- ii. **AGREED** that a request be made to the Community Council Forum to collectively consider gateway signage and speed reduction signs at village entrances to ensure that all communities across the area benefited from these improvements.

8. A9 Dualling – Dalraddy to Slochd Dà-fhillteachadh an A9 – Dail Radaidh gu ruige An Sloc

There had been circulated Report No BSAC/4/18 dated 21 January 2018 by the Director of Development and Infrastructure and a verbal update was provided at the meeting on the liaison meeting with Transport Scotland and the Designer which took place on 30 January 2018.

During discussion, the following main points were raised:-

- Concern was expressed on behalf of the community of Aviemore at the proposed road alignment which moved the A9 closer to Aviemore rather than moving it towards the vacant space and an appeal was made to Transport Scotland to reconsider this aspect;
- Although the Committee welcomed traffic management measures, concern was expressed in regard to the potential for traffic diverting off the A9 through Carrbridge and Aviemore and re-joining the A9 at the Slochd entrance during the dualling construction period and it was requested that the response be amended to include these concerns; and

- Clarity was sought and provided on the difference between 20 mph speed zones and 20 mph speed limits.

Following discussion, the Chairman, seconded by Mrs M Cockburn, proposed that it be recommended that Highland Council should adopt a policy of introducing 20 mph speed limits in main built up areas throughout Badenoch & Strathspey in consultation with local communities.

Thereafter, the Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the contents of the report and the verbal update provided at the meeting following the liaison meeting with Transport Scotland and the Designer which took place on 30 January 2018;
- ii. **APPROVED** the proposed response as circulated subject to the inclusion of the concerns raised regarding traffic diverting off the A9 through Carrbridge and re-joining the A9 at the Slochd entrance during the dualling construction period; and
- * iii. **AGREED** to recommend that Highland Council adopt a policy of introducing 20 mph speed limits in main built up areas throughout Badenoch & Strathspey in consultation with local communities.

9. Local Strategic Priorities Prìomhachasan ro-innleachdail Ionadail

There had been circulated Report No BSAC/5/18 dated 31 January 2018 by the Head of Policy and Reform.

The Committee:-

- (i) **APPROVED** the local strategic priorities for Badenoch and Strathspey;
- (ii) **AGREED** these be promoted with the wider Council membership and as part of the Council's Programme for 2017-22;
- (iii) **NOTED** that there would be opportunity, through the development of the local community partnership and engagement with community bodies and communities, to consider wider shared priorities over the Council's term; and
- (iv) **NOTED** that further work would be done in 2018 to identify how the local priorities agreed could be supported by staff and any other Council resources. This would include considering how best to measure progress. Some priorities were already well aligned to the Council's Programme.

10. Minutes Geàrr-chunntas

The Committee **NOTED** the Minutes of Meeting of the Badenoch and Strathspey Area Committee held on 14 November 2017 which were approved by the Council on 14 December 2017.

The meeting concluded at 12.30 pm.