

The Highland Council

Minutes of Meeting of the **Badenoch and Strathspey Area Committee** held in the Courtroom, Grantown Courthouse, Grantown-on-Spey on 22 May 2018 at 10.30 am

Present:

Mr J Bruce
Mrs M Cockburn

Ms P Hadley
Mr B Lobban

In attendance:

Ms L Cowie, Ward Manager (Nairn, Badenoch and Strathspey), Chief Executive's Office
Ms C McGonigal, Head Teacher, Grantown Grammar School
Mr A Puls, Conservation Officer, Development and Infrastructure Service
Mr F Nixon, Group Manager, Scottish Fire and Rescue Service
Mr R MacLeod, Principal Housing Officer, Community Services
Mrs M MacLeod Mitchell, Gaelic Development Officer, Care and Learning Service
Mrs L Dunn, Principal Administrator, Chief Executive's Office

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**

There were no apologies for absence.

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

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

Item 6 – Ms P Hadley (financial)

**3. Presentation – Head Teacher – Grantown Grammar School
Taisbeanadh – Ceannard – Sgoil Ghràmair Bhaile nan Granndach**

A presentation was made at the meeting by the Head Teacher of Grantown Grammar School during which she provided basic background information and explained the uniqueness of the school, particularly in regard outdoor education; outlined the school's values; provided information on the local delivery and outcomes from Curriculum for Excellence, including performance in regard to attainment and achievement. Information was also provided on the links between the Kingussie High School and Grantown Grammar School and other educational establishments to progress pathways to further education, training and employment. In conclusion, she set out the challenges ahead for the school and the next steps to ensure continuous improvement.

During discussion, the following main points were raised:-

- The Committee commended the staff for their diligent work ethic and praised the results being achieved. Although the school was relatively small and based in a rural location, Grantown Grammar School was an excellent example of adopting innovative ways of working that could be replicated not only across the Highlands but also nationally;
- Concern was expressed at the worrying trend of a 75% reduction in applications to Inverness College due to transport difficulties and this had to be addressed; and
- Further information was sought and provided in regard to the building improvement priorities.

The Committee **NOTED** the presentation and **AGREED** that further work be undertaken to investigate and address the trend of a 75% reduction in applications to Inverness College due to a lack of transport provision.

4. **Grantown Conservation Area Appraisal** **Measadh Sgìre Ghlèidhteachais Bhaile nan Grandach**

There had been circulated Report No BSAC/6/18 dated 11 May 2018 by the Director of Development and Infrastructure.

During discussion, the following main points were raised:-

- It was difficult to understand why 1970s redevelopments, as referred to within the Appraisal, should be included within the conservation area and further explanation on the rationale for this was provided;
- There was a need to communicate with the relevant residents to ensure that they were aware that they resided within the conservation area and the potential impact of this; and
- Further information was sought on where the consultation process would be held, the details of which had yet to be confirmed. It was further confirmed that both schools, the primary and secondary, would be included in the consultation process.

Thereafter, the Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the Appraisal and recommendations to extend the current Conservation Area boundary; and
- ii. **APPROVED** the draft appraisal for a minimum six week public consultation and **NOTED** that Members would continue to be kept informed of this process as it progressed.

5. **Scottish Fire and Rescue – Area Performance Summary** **Smàladh agus Teasairginn na h-Alba – Geàrr-chunntas Coileanadh Sgìre**

There had been circulated Report No BSAC/7/18 dated 7 May 2018 by the Local Senior Officer for Highland.

During discussion, the following main points were raised:-

- Concern was expressed at the substantial increase in the number of fatalities on the A9;
- There was a perception that Grantown station did not have sufficient staffing levels and further information was requested in regard to local recruitment of retained fire fighters;
- It was queried whether fines were incurred for repeat offenders of false fire alarms and further information was provided on the proactive approach to address this; and
- Overall it was felt that this was a very positive report with a reduction in the number of fatalities which was evidence that the community safety approach was effective.

Thereafter, the Committee **NOTED**:-

- i. the Badenoch and Strathspey Performance Report;
- ii. that further information would be provided to Councillor Cockburn in regard to local recruitment statistics; and
- iii. that the Group Manager would report back on the concerns raised in regard to Road Traffic Collisions with a view to working in partnership with Police Scotland to develop a local strategy to reduce these incidents.

**6. Housing Performance Report – 1 April 2017 to 31 March 2018
Aithisg Coileanaidh Taigheadais – 1 Giblean 2017 gu 31 Màrt 2018**

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/8/18 dated 2 May 2018 by the Director of Community Services.

During discussion, the following main points were raised:-

- Concern was expressed at the decline in performance in regard to emergency repairs, particularly with heating issues, and further information was sought and provided on what further support could be offered to improve response times;
- It was suggested that when a new tenant took residence in a property that basic training should be provided on how to operate the heating system;
- In regard to Table 3 contained in the report, further information was requested on Cairn and Albyn Housing Associations average re-let times for comparison purposes;
- In terms of Universal Credit, the Citizens Advice Bureau provided essential support but their resources were limited and it was queried whether there would be further impact on the Council as a result of this;
- Further information was sought and provided in regard to homelessness levels;
- It was indicated that a report was regularly submitted to Ward Business Meetings on Housing Development and it was felt that it might be helpful for this to be reported at future Area Committees;

- The critical importance of encouraging people to register on the Housing Needs Register was emphasised. It was further suggested that the Council could work collaboratively with schools to educate and communicate directly with young people on the importance of registering for social housing;
- Concern was expressed that the Housing Needs and Demands Assessment was not reliable and there was a need to ensure that sufficient land was being allocated for development to meet future demands;
- It was highlighted that the local rental market was also creating additional pressures on housing; and
- There was a need to capture the demographics to fully inform future housing requirements.

The Committee **NOTED**:-

- i. the information provided on housing performance for the period 1 April 2017 to 31 March 2018;
- ii. that further information be provided to Councillor Lobban on Cairn and Albyn Housing Associations average re-let times; and
- iii. that consideration would be given to submitting reports on Housing Development to future Area Committee meetings.

7. Celtic Media Festival Fèis nam Meadhanan Ceilteach

The Gaelic Development Officer provided a briefing on the successful bid to host the 40th Celtic Media Festival in Aviemore in June 2019 (exact dates yet to be confirmed). The Celtic Media Festival was an annual three day event that promoted the languages and cultures of the Celtic Nations and Regions in media. Continuing, she explained that a strong international delegation was expected to attend which would also be an excellent boost to the local economy.

In terms of the next steps, the Gaelic Development Officer advised that a local advisory committee would be formed to support the event organisers; work was ongoing to attract additional sources of funding for the event; and plans were also being developed to engage local University of the Highlands and Islands students and local schools with a view to them participating in workshops to produce short films which would then be broadcast during the festival.

The Gaelic Development Officer assured the Committee that she would keep them informed of arrangements as they progressed and suggested that the event Director be invited to attend a future meeting of the Committee.

During discussion, the Committee welcomed the news and recognised that this would be an excellent opportunity to showcase the area as well as the economic benefits that could be achieved. It was further requested that, as well as schools, local nurseries also be encouraged to participate in the event.

The Committee **NOTED**:-

- i. the briefing on the successful bid to host the 40th Celtic Media Festival in Aviemore in June 2019; and
- ii. that Members would continue to be kept informed of arrangements and that the Festival Director would be invited to attend a future meeting of the Committee.

8. Minutes
Geàrr-chunntas

There had been **NOTED** Minutes of Meeting of the Badenoch and Strathspey Area Committee held on 13 February 2018 which were approved by the Council on 8 March 2018.

The meeting concluded at 12 noon.