

**The Highland Council
Sutherland County Committee**

Minutes of Meeting of the Sutherland County Committee held in the Chamber, Council Offices, Drumbuie on Wednesday, 23 May 2018 at 10.30am.

Present:

Ms K Currie

Mr R Gale

Mrs D Mackay

Mr J McGillivray

Mr H Morrison

Ms L Munro (Chair)

Officials in attendance:

Mr P Tomalin, Ward Manager, Chief Executive's Office

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

Ms J Sutherland, Senior Engineer, Community Services

Mrs M Grant, Principal Housing Officer, Community Services

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

Also in Attendance:

Mr M Evans, Head Teacher, Golspie High School

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

**1. Apologies for Absence
Leisgeulan**

There were no apologies for absence.

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

There were no declarations of interest.

**3. Golspie Associated School Group Overview
Sealladh Coitcheann air Buidheann Sgoiltean Co-cheangailte Ghoillspidh**

There had been circulated Report No SCC/04/18 dated 10 May 2018 by the Director of Care and Learning.

Arising from the report, the Education Quality Improvement Manager provided an update on the actions being taken by the Service in response to the challenges around staffing within the ASG. This included the early interviewing and placing of probationary teachers, and other placements and recruitment of a number of teachers from Canada through TimePlan.

Mr M Evans, Head Teacher, Golspie High School reported on HMIE's inspection of the School and subsequent report published in May 2017 and recent press coverage in regard to attainment in relation to five Highers. He reported that the School's improvement plans were mainly directed at improving attainment, and highlighted the following key issues:-

- overall attainment at the School had been graded as satisfactory in the inspection report, and HMIE had been supportive of the improvement plans which had been put in place;
- in terms of Level 4 and 5 results, the School was generally above HMIE's virtual comparator;
- a key focus had been on developing strategies to target attainment within the various subgroups identified by HMIE within the overall cohort of pupils at the School;
- it was important to note the School was performing well in regard to positive destinations and had been generally above the Highland and national figures over the last 2/3 years;
- this coming year it was anticipated that approximately 40% of school leavers would go to university, of which 58.3% had received unconditional offers;
- there was also a focus on developing the aspiration of pupils in relation to attainment at Level 6;
- work had also focused on ensuring the School was inclusive for all, particularly in relation to the timetable and subject choice so that pupils' attainment at any level and in any subject area was recognised in the same way as those going to university, and he provided details of vocational courses being developed in this regard; and
- the School was holding informal discussions with parents on how to improve engagement with them to aid the learning of pupils.

In discussion, Members commented it was crucial the School was being supported in relation to the challenges around staffing levels and recruitment in terms of improving attainment and the next HMIE report. In response, Members were advised of the support being provided to the School including that the Acting Depute Head was to remain in post for a further year. In addition, provision had been made for the recruitment of both a maths and home economics teacher.

During further discussion, Members raised the following issues:-

- it was important to recognise the excellent work being undertaken by the School on inclusion and around vocational education;
- a point in regard to the reason for the difference in attainment at level five at the School and a neighbouring School. The Head Teacher referred to the differences in SIMD data and also the challenges faced in creating a positive forward thinking School. He reported the current complement of staff were committed in this regard and the more positive ethos and atmosphere in the School had been commented on by parents;
- it was suggested utilising Canadian teachers was not a sustainable model going forward and the long term strategy should be to create a workforce dedicated to the School and the community;
- the potential for flexibility to match teacher vacancies in north schools to probationers leaving teaching college to attract teachers who wanted to return to the area and those who wished to live in the Highlands;
- it was suggested there was a need to better market and publicise the excellent and positive work being undertaken at the School;
- a particular success and good news story had been the uniformed services courses which had been run at Golspie High School and this should be highlighted to the HMIE;

- the uniformed services course was an excellent example of developing local solutions to the challenges around young people wishing to remain in the area and employers seeking to attract recruits;
- it was noted that the Pupil Equity Fund had been used to employ a health and wellbeing officer at the School and Members welcomed the excellent work the officer was undertaking with disadvantaged young people in raising their attainment; and
- the Head Teacher be commended on taking the HMle report and using it as a benchmark to focus on the areas which need to be addressed and by which to move the School forward, specific reference to the work being undertaken in relation to inclusion.

Thereafter, the Committee **NOTED** following scrutiny, the content of the report.

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

There had been circulated Report No SCC/05/18 dated 10 May 2018 by the Local Senior Officer for Highland.

In discussion, information was sought and provided in relation to the Driving Ambitions initiative. It was suggested that the initiative and materials used required to be updated to encourage young people to become involved. In addition, concern was expressed that Members and schools on the north and west coasts were no longer actively involved in Driving Ambitions, and that it would also encourage participation to take the initiative out to those schools.

Mrs D Mackay confirmed that she would take this issue back to the Sutherland Community Planning Partnership and the local Senior Officer confirmed that he would also report back to the relevant staff within the Service with a view to meeting local requirements. The Chair advised that the Committee would also be content to work with the Partnership in terms of rolling out Driving Ambitions in the area.

Thereafter, it was suggested that in terms of recruitment at Bonar Bridge, it would be helpful if the Service could provide publicity material which could be posted in Ardgay and District Community Council's newsletter, which was within the catchment area for that station. There may also be an opportunity to circulate material in the other areas where recruitment challenges were being experienced. The Local Senior Officer confirmed that he would follow up on this matter.

Following on from the above, there was discussion on the issues around road safety on the North Coast 500 and the Local Senior Officer advised of a multi-agency approach in relation to which the Service would be content to be involved.

The Chair welcomed the new type of fire appliances being introduced at Bettyhill and Lochinver as part of its Transformation programme. She also requested that the potential to introduce the Hi-Fires programme into Sutherland be discussed at the next appropriate meeting. The Local Senior Officer reported that a programme of Hi-Fires events was being scheduled and he would forward this to Members once available.

The Committee **NOTED** following scrutiny, the Area Performance Report.

5. Road Structural Maintenance Report 2018-19 Càradh Structarail Rathaidean 2018-19

There had been circulated Report No SCC/06/18 dated 26 April 2018 by the Director of Community Services.

The Senior Engineer advised that due to the winter conditions a large number of pot hole repairs were required, and that capital monies would be used to supplement the revenue budget to carry out those repairs which would in turn have an impact on the Programme for 2018/19. She explained this was a 'live' list of works and subject to change throughout the year depending on the rate of the deterioration of roads. Therefore the intention was to provide quarterly progress reports to Members on all roads matters in Sutherland.

The Senior Engineer also provided an update to the list of priority projects circulated as Appendix 1 to the report and advised that the following schemes had been identified as the top three priorities within this year's Programme:- (i) Muirfield Road, Brora, (ii) Lyne Straight, Ledmore; and (iii) Embo to Crossroads

In discussion, concern was expressed at the condition of Muirfield Road, Brora which it was reported served a significant number of elderly people and young families and was the direct route to the local wellbeing hub. This matter had been raised initially in 2015, and since then different start dates had been provided, albeit with the proviso that there may be slippage on the Programme. It was appreciated there had been staffing issues over this period, and it was reported that the local community had been patient on this matter to date. However it was suggested the road had deteriorated to the extent it was disintegrating and it was important this scheme was progressed as a priority.

During further discussion, Members raised the following issues:-

- an update was sought and provided on the initial feedback on the Totalmobile system of reporting and repairing pot holes which was being piloted in Sutherland;
- a point in regard to how Members communicated any changes to the Programme throughout the year to their constituents. The Senior Engineer confirmed that any changes would be notified in the quarterly updates to be provided to Members at their Ward Business Meeting;
- the Chair advised that the quarterly updates would also give Members the opportunity to input into the priority list within the Programme;
- it was noted that the outstanding projects from the previous year had not been included in the Programme as set out in Appendix 1 to the report. It was important that an accurate and up to date list be provided to allow Members to properly scrutinise the Programme; and
- an update was sought and provided on the position with white and yellow lining in Sutherland.

Thereafter, the Senior Engineer provided an update on the current vacancies for road workers in Sutherland and advised of three posts which had been earmarked for the Council's modern apprentice scheme. In response to questions, she confirmed that the information on the modern apprentices would be circulated to

Members once fully scoped. In addition, it was intended to feed into the careers initiative being run in Sutherland schools.

The Committee **APPROVED** the prioritised programme of Maintenance for Roads for the Sutherland Local Committee Area commencing in 2018/19.

6. Housing Performance Report - 1 April 2017 to 31 March 2018
Aithisg Dèanadais a thaobh Taigheadais - 1 Giblean 2017 to 31 Am Mart 2018

There had been circulated Report No SCC/07/18 dated 24 April 2018 by the Director of Community Services.

In discussion, confirmation was sought and provided that Sutherland compared favourably to other areas of Highland in relation to rent arrears notwithstanding that a significant increase was being observed in the area which reflected the Highland-wide trend. It was confirmed that a detailed report on rent arrears was being submitted to the Care, Learning and Housing Committee on 30 May 2018.

Thereafter, Members queried the main reasons Universal Credit was contributing to increased rent arrears, in response to which it was reported that delays in payment continued to be a main contributory factor and the number of seasonal workers in the area was not being observed to be having a significant impact. Further information was also provided on the assistance provided by the Housing Team to those in rent arrears through repayment plans, housing support delivered in Sutherland by New Start Highland and referrals to the Highland Council Welfare Support team.

Thereafter, the Chair suggested that going forward the Performance Report be submitted to the Committee on an annual basis with exception reporting throughout the year as and when required.

The Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** following scrutiny, the information provided on housing performance in the period 1 April 2017 to 31 March 2018; and
- ii. **AGREED** that the Housing Performance Report be submitted to the Committee on an annual basis with exception reporting throughout the year as and when required.

7. Street Naming – New Housing Developments
Ainmeachadh Sràide - Leasachaidhean Ùra Taigheadais

There had been circulated Report No SCC/08/18 dated 23 May 2018 by the Head of Policy and Reform

The Committee **APPROVED** the name of a new development in Dornoch as Allan Gardens.

8. Dornoch Common Good Leases
Aontaidhean Math Coitcheann Dhòrnaich

There had been circulated Report No SCC/09/18 dated 11 May 2018 by the Depute Chief Executive/Director of Corporate Resources and the Head of Policy and Reform.

The Committee **HOMOLOGATED** approval of lease of:-

- i. Dornoch Beach playpark to Dornoch Community Council for £1pa (if asked) for 19 years and otherwise on terms and conditions agreed by the Director of Development and Infrastructure; and
- ii. 2,000 sq.m of Dornoch Common Good Land to Mid- America (UK) for £1,500 pa for 30 years and otherwise on terms and conditions agreed by the Director of Development and Infrastructure.

9. Minutes Geàrr-chunntas

There were circulated and **NOTED** the Minutes of the Sutherland County Committee held on 27 February 2018, which were approved by the Council on 8 March 2018.

The meeting closed at 11.55am.
