

Minutes of Meeting of the **Isle of Skye and Raasay Committee (Comataidh an Eilein Sgitheanaich agus Ratharsair)** held in the Chamber, Tigh na Sgìre, Park Lane, Portree on **Monday, 4 June, 2018 at 10.30 am.**

**Present:**

Mr J Finlayson  
Mr J Gordon

Mr R MacDonald

**In attendance:**

Mr W MacKinnon, Ward Manager, Chief Executive's Service  
Mr F Nixon, Group Manager, Scottish Fire and Rescue Service  
Mr J Holden, Housing Manager (North), Community Services  
Mr J Mackay, Amenities Manager (North), Community Services (by Video Conference)  
Mr R Gerring, Transport Planning Manager, Development & Infrastructure Service  
Mr D Chisholm, Planner, Development & Infrastructure Service  
Mr A MacInnes, Administrative Assistant, Chief Executive's Service

**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 J Gordon – Cathraiche (Chair)**

**Business**

**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. Grounds Maintenance Performance Monitoring Report for 2017/18 and  
Priorities for 2018/19  
Aithisg Sgrùdaidh Dèanadais air Cumail-suas Talmhainn airson 2017/18 agus  
Prìomhachasan airson 2018/19**

There was circulated Report No. SR/4/18 by the Director of Community Services which provided information on how Community Services performed in relation to performance indicators for the period 1 January to 31 March 2018.

In discussion, the following main points were raised by Members:-

- It was noted that in order to reduce the amount of strimming which was a slow process and reduce the number of accidents caused by flying stones, weedkilling was now being undertaken along fence lines/edge of pavements and around obstacles like lampposts. Members welcomed this sensible

approach which allowed a larger, quicker machine to cut closer to these edges. Further, it was queried if there was any scope for weedkilling around Highland Council buildings in the area. In response, it was confirmed that more weedkilling would be carried out around these buildings.

- It was queried how often grass was cut around schools. It was advised that grass cutting around schools was carried out on the same regularity as other areas of grass cutting and for efficiency purposes one geographical area at a time would be concentrated on.
- It was confirmed that Portree Primary School was on the grass cutting schedule.
- An update was sought in relation to discussions regarding the Minginish toilets remaining in the Highland Comfort Scheme. It was advised that the Amenities Manager (South) was to have discussions with the Minginish Community Hall toilets provider this month.
- It was welcomed that there had been improvements in maintaining grass in cemeteries. It was requested that details of the way grass was maintained to prevent subsidence of lairs in cemeteries from heavy mowers, be sent to Members.
- It was advised that on average there would be 25 inspections of grounds maintenance and public conveniences per operative a week using mobile technology.
- There was a perception that there was not enough public conveniences in the area. It was queried if there were standard opening/closing times for these public conveniences. It was advised that the opening/closing times were based on local needs and details of opening/closing times for public conveniences on Skye and Raasay would be sent to Members.
- In terms of the Highland Comfort Scheme, there was a need to promote the toilets in the scheme better so the public were aware of their location and opening/closing times. Details of the proposed improvements to the promotion of the Highland Comfort Scheme would be sent to Members.

Having scrutinised the report, the Committee **NOTED**:-

i the information provided on performance for the period 1 January to 31 March 2018;

ii that details of the way grass was maintained to prevent subsidence of lairs in cemeteries from heavy mowers would be sent to Members;

iii that details of opening times for Public Conveniences on Skye and Raasay would be sent to Members; and

iv that details of proposed improvements to the promotion of the Highland Comfort Scheme would be sent to Members.

#### **4. Minutes Geàrr-chunntas**

There were circulated for information, Minutes of Meeting of the Isle of Skye and Raasay Committee (Comataidh an Eilein Sgitheanaich agus Ratharsair) held on 5 March, 2018, the terms of which were **NOTED**.

#### **5. Scottish Fire and Rescue Service Local Committee Performance Report Aithisg Dèanadais Comataidh Ionadail Seirbheis Smàlaidh agus Teasairginn na h-Alba**

There was circulated Report No SR/5/18 by the Local Senior Officer, Scottish Fire and Rescue Service which provided an update on progress against the priorities outlined in the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service Area Committee Plan for Skye and Raasay 2016-2017.

In discussion, the following main points were raised:-

- Members expressed their appreciation for all the hard work that the Fire Service undertook on behalf of communities and in particular their recent extensive efforts in containing heath fires on the Isle of Skye, Lochalsh and Wester Ross.
- It was noted that the number of road traffic collisions in the area requiring special services had shown a slight decrease in activity and were low compared to the total number for Highland. In terms of reasons for this, it was felt that on other roads such as the A9, A96, A82 drivers were generally driving at higher speeds, resulting in more substantial incidents, while on the Isle of Skye and Raasay, driving speeds tended to be much lower, resulting in less serious incidents.
- In relation to the transformation of the Fire Service, it was explained that the aim was to improve the service provided by carrying out a better and broader role for community safety and supporting other organisations, such as the Health Service in local areas. The Fire Service had a good number of stations, many located in rural areas of the Highlands, and their personnel were well trained and their skills, expertise and equipment could be put to good use in supporting other services in the community.
- It was advised that the ideal number of Fire personnel for a one pump station was around 10 personnel to allow for holiday cover etc. The minimum requirement would be 4/5 personnel. It was very challenging to get a full complement of personnel in rural stations. Anyone who was interested in joining the service would be supported through the process. A multi agency recruitment event was being arranged to raise the profile of encouraging people to join the emergency services.
- As part of the Fire Service transformation, the implementation of new Rapid Response Units in three Stations in the Skye area would hopefully assist in improving availability in these Stations as they needed fewer personnel to operate them.
- The Fire Service did receive a lot of requests for home fire safety visits and the Service did encourage the public to request these, particularly from the elderly, vulnerable and those with mobility issues. It was an important aspect of fire prevention.
- the Fire Service engaged closely with landowners and Scottish Natural Heritage to get the message across to farmers etc. when there was a high

risk of heath fires due to very dry conditions. A community asset register had also been introduced where people could register their off road vehicles and fire fighting equipment that could be made available to the Fire Service in an operational incident.

Having scrutinised the report, the Committee **NOTED** the Local Performance Report.

## **6. Housing Performance Report Aithisg Dèanadais Taigheadais**

There was circulated Report No. SR/6/18 by the Director of Community Services which provided information on how the Housing Section performed in relation to Scottish Social Housing Charter and other performance indicators up to 31 March 2018.

In discussion, the following main points were raised:-

- In common with other areas in Highland, rent arrears had increased with the continued roll out of Universal Credit a key contributing factor. The local team would continue to prioritise rent arrears. A report on Welfare Reform which gave an update on rent arrears Highland wide had been submitted to a Working Group of the Council. A copy of this would be sent to local Members.
- It was queried how the Housing team dealt with tenants in rent arrears and whether it liaised with the Citizen's Advice Bureau on this. It was advised that when Universal Credit was introduced, the Council reviewed its rent arrears policy; how its officers interacted with tenants and what advice should be given to them. This policy was based on early intervention to take action to prevent arrears increasing. However, due to delays in tenants receiving their Universal Credit payments, action was not taken as quickly as it used to be, but arrears were still closely monitored and the Housing team were proactively tackling rent arrears. The Council's staff resources to tackle rent arrears had been increased in Highland. Housing debt could just be one of a range of debts for tenants and therefore the Citizen's Advice Bureau played an important role in offering advice and support.
- It was noted that the average time taken to complete emergency repairs was higher in Skye than in the rest of Highland. It was queried if this was due to staffing shortages and if so, was the Council actively recruiting trades people and apprentices to work in the in-house repairs team, which could save money in the long term as sub contractors would not require to be used as often. It was advised that the challenge of meeting Highland repairs averages in Skye was due to geography and the availability of tradesmen. Due to the boom in tourism in this area, getting the services of skilled tradesmen was difficult and led to delays in repairs being made. Having an in-house team would help the problem and an undertaking was given to provide to Members information regarding what measures the Council was taking to recruit an in-house repairs team.
- It was queried if there was a reluctance for people to report anti social behaviour incidents as there was a perception that no one would help. Also, was there enough Police support to deal with such incidents. It was advised that in this area there was good support from the Police in dealing with anti social behaviour incidents. However, there was a reluctance in reporting

such cases, other than people making a telephone complaint, as statements required to be taken for evidence in case future court action was required.

- it was advised that trends in homeless presentations was difficult to understand and anticipate as, for example, while there was a drop in homeless presentations in the last quarter, this could increase again due to seasonal lets coming to an end and people presenting themselves as homeless.
- In relation to the Cruachan Flats in Portree, options were being looked at to improve the standard of accommodation.
- Working with the Housing Association would hopefully, in time, increase the amount of homeless accommodation, but it was felt that there would still be pressures in providing accommodation due to demographic changes.
- Members expressed their appreciation to all the hard work and effort by the local Housing team. This was a small team who faced great work pressures and challenges, particularly with homeless presentations, and they performed their duties in a very professional manner.

The Committee **NOTED:-**

i the information provided on housing performance in the period 1 April 2017 to 31 March 2018;

ii that a report on Welfare Reform which contained information on Rent Arrears for Highland, previously submitted to a meeting of the Poverty and Inequalities Working Group on 13 February, 2018, would be sent to Members; and

iii that information would be provided to Members on whether the Council was actively recruiting trades people and apprentices to work in the in-house repairs team.

## **7. Skye Air Services Seirbheisean Adhair An Eilein Sgitheanaich**

There was circulated Report No. SR/7/18 by the Director of Development and Infrastructure which provided an update on the Skye Air Services Project following the meeting of the HITRANS Board on 20 April, 2018.

In discussion, the following main points were raised:-

- It was queried if Loganair had given a commitment to be involved in a pilot scheduled air service between Skye Airport and the Central Belt. It was explained that while initial contact had been made with Loganair who had given some very helpful business insight and had given a positive response to a trial air service, they had not made any commitment to be involved in the pilot. Loganair would be invited to take part in the Working Group set up to support the establishment of the pilot air service. The Working Group may also consider co-opting additional members as identified and agreed by the Group.
- It was confirmed that work had already commenced to look for modular buildings and redundant/surplus equipment from other airports to reduce costs and offer a sustainable way forward through a lower cost trial. Further, Skye Flying Club who were using the airfield, were interested in modular

buildings to expand their operations, so there may be potential for sharing all the infrastructure at the airfield.

- It was advised that should scheduled air services commence it might not be the Council that operates the airfield and therefore there needed to be a short term view in dealing with the current users of the airfield, so as not to constrain any future plans.
- There was a suggestion that the fees for use of the Skye airfield were high in comparison to other airfields. It was explained that there was a framework of charges approved by the Committee for use of the airfield, but there could be some variation to these on an individual or operational basis and he was happy to discuss this with potential customers. The Transport Planning Manager advised that he would be happy to review the fees and, if appropriate, would report back to Committee with any changes he felt necessary.
- In the event that the airfield needed to expand, it was queried if the Council owned enough land for this. It was explained that the operational airfield was in the control of the Council, but there was a piece of adjacent land to the airfield which the Council did not have clear records of owning that land. If there was an expansion of the airfield, then ownership of the adjacent land would need to be established.
- In terms of the business case for scheduled air services from Skye, it was explained that an analysis had been carried out of who on Skye and elsewhere might use the air service. A conservative evaluation of forecasted use was that two air services a day, with a return fare of circa. £120.00 from Skye to Glasgow would be realistic and affordable for customers. A 19 seater aircraft was being used for the business case purposes. The business case also set out the infrastructure requirements at the airfield i.e. runway, runway lighting, radar, ground buildings and crew, particularly a fire and rescue service. An economic evaluation of the benefits to tourism and creation of jobs had also been included in the business case.
- New technology would allow the pilot to fly to a point where he could see the airfield and therefore the decision to abort a landing could be made much later than previously was the case. In addition, HIAL were investigating remote air traffic control. This could be used for the Skye airfield and therefore less flights would have to be aborted due to the lack of Air Traffic Controllers.
- It was confirmed that any income from customers for the use of the Skye airfield was being carried over for purposes to invest in the airfield.

Thereafter, the Committee:-

- i **NOTED** the contents of the report;
- ii **AGREED** to delegate the Director of Development and Infrastructure to represent the Council on the proposed short life working group; and
- iii **AGREED** to periodic update reports, typically every three months, being provided to the Ward Members.

## 8. Draft Uig Development Brief Dreachd de lùil Leasachadh Ùige

There was circulated Report No. SR/8/18 by the Director of Development & Infrastructure which sought approval for the Draft Uig Development Brief to be published for public consultation. The brief aimed to identify and coordinate development and regeneration opportunities within the commercial core of Uig and maximise benefits which may arise from Transport Scotland's investment in the Skye Triangle ferry routes. The Brief would set out detailed planning guidance which, when adopted, would inform the Council's future decisions on planning applications.

In discussion, the following main points were raised by Members:-

- In relation to the consultation on the development brief which would take place in July and August, 2018, it was queried if one afternoon drop-in exhibition followed by an open evening meeting was enough. It was advised that there had been significant consultation with local stakeholders in terms of the Harbour re-development, so it was felt that the single consultation for the Development Brief was sufficient. The public could contact the Council at any time during the consultation period which would run for at least 6 weeks, and should, for example, the Community Council request a separate meeting, then this could be arranged.
- In relation to the use of the existing terminal building and the land immediately to the rear, there were aspirations for more business premises which could go in this area, but also there was a local need for more residential accommodation, which was also a possibility in the development brief, if the Housing Association wished to build affordable housing in this area.
- There was a significant demand for affordable housing on Skye and Uig and in terms of the redevelopment it was queried if there was an option to encroach onto the land earmarked for potential future development. It was advised that this land had been purchased by a private owner for the sole purpose of protecting the land from development. Therefore there was no prospect of development on this land in the short term.
- It was advised that the residents of the Fairy Glen, near Uig were considering a pilot for Park and Ride facilities for visitors to the Fairy Glen and perhaps a tourism outlet. It was advised that there was scope for a large car park in the Brief, which could provide an opportunity for Park and Ride facilities to take pressure off the Fairy Glen road.

Thereafter, the Committee:-

- i. **APPROVED** the Draft Uig Development Brief at Appendix 1 to the report;
- ii. **AGREED** to authorise officers to make minor illustrative and presentational changes prior to publication, in consultation and agreement with the Chair of the Committee;
- iii. **AGREED** the approach to public consultation on the Draft Uig Development Brief as set out in section 5 of the report; and

- iv. **NOTED** that comments received on the Draft Uig Development Brief will be reported back to this Committee for its consideration, together with possible amendments prior to completion of procedures leading to its adoption as interim statutory supplementary guidance.

The meeting ended at 12.35 p.m.