

**The Highland Council
Sutherland County Committee**

Minutes of Meeting of the Sutherland County Committee held in the Chamber, Council Offices, Drumbuie on Thursday, 15 November 2018 at 10.30am.

Present:

Ms K Currie

Mr R Gale

Mrs D Mackay

Mr J McGillivray

Mr H Morrison

Ms L Munro

Officials in attendance:

Mr H Ross, Senior Ward Manager, Chief Executive's Office

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

Mr D Chisholm, Planner, Development and Infrastructure Service

Mr J Henderson, Housing Investment Officer, Community Services

Mr C Simpson, Principal Tourism and Film Officer, Development and Infrastructure Service

Ms J Sutherland, Senior Engineer, Community Services

Ms S Tarrant, Public Relations Officer, Chief Executive's Office

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

Also in Attendance:

Group Manager R Dibble, 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**

Item 10(b): Mr J McGillivray (non-financial)

**3. Appointment of Chair of Sutherland County Committee
Cur Cathraiche an Dreuchd airson Comataidh Siorrachd Chataibh**

Mrs L Munro thanked Members and officers for their support during her period as Chair and advised that she would remain committed to the Committee and to working in partnership, including with the Community Planning Partnership to tackle issues such as poverty and inequalities in Sutherland. She then proceeded to invite nominations for the position of Chair of the Committee.

Members then thanked Mrs L Munro for her significant contribution as Chair during what had been a challenging period and wished her well in her new role as Vice Chair of the Care, Learning and Housing Committee and the contribution she would make from a Sutherland perspective.

Thereafter, Mr H Morrison seconded by Mrs D Mackay proposed that Mr R Gale be appointed as Chair of the Committee.

On there being no other nominations, the Committee **AGREED** to appoint Mr R Gale to the position of Chair.

The Chair advised that he looked forward to working with Members, the Community Planning Partnership, community councils and other community groups in the area to ensure the needs of Sutherland were addressed. He wished to ensure the Committee was relevant, respective and reflective of the unique communities it represented

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

There had been circulated Report No SCC/20/18 dated 6 November 2018 by the Local Senior Officer for Highland.

During discussion, Members raised the following key issues:-

- a point in regard to the suspected cause of the wildfire in Golspie which had occurred in July 2018. The Group Manager advised that the Service suspected it had been deliberate, although this was difficult to prove;
- confirmation was sought and provided on the main causes of the unwanted false alarm signals which had occurred over the reporting period and the action being taken to address this issue;
- the Service be commended on its Transformation programme which suited the needs of the Highlands and on its significant investment in Sutherland;
- clarification was sought on the Service's policy in respect of turn out times for recruits in relation to those stations which had challenges around availability. The Group Manager advised that a flexible approach was taken in the Highlands and the Service would consider each individual case on its merits. The main challenge continued to be getting potential recruits to come forward in communities and Members continued support on this issue would be helpful;
- the importance of there being a focus on training drivers in the area and an update was sought and provided on the timescale for the provision of new fire appliances across Sutherland; and
- the potential for Hi-fires type courses to be organised for young people in Sutherland in partnership, on the basis there were communities in the area who would be keen to work with the Service towards funding these events. The Station Manager confirmed that he would welcome any discussions with local communities on this matter and advised that funding had been secured from TESCO towards the cost of running such courses. The Service was also seeking to address recruitment challenges through a new cadet scheme.

In response to further questions, the Group Manager reported that a review of the Retained Duty System was currently being undertaken, including the potential to vary contracts to suit the skill sets and availability of recruits. It was hoped a rural full time officer post would be based in North West Sutherland to provide support to RDS crews at a cluster of stations and improve availability. In terms of improving community resilience the pilot scheme in relation to the Service attending uninjured falls had also been extended into Sutherland and defibrillators had been provided in all appliances in the area, and there had been enhanced emergency medical response training for crews.

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

**5. Kinlochbervie Associated School Group Overview
Sealladh Coitcheann air Buidheann Sgoiltean Co-cheangailte Cheann Loch Biorbhaidh**

There had been circulated Report No SCC/21/18 dated 13 November 2018 by the Director of Care and Learning.

During discussion, Members raised the following key issues:-

- the 100% positive destinations achieved within the ASG over the period 2014/15 to 2016/17 be welcomed;
- an explanation was sought in relation to the assessment of both the suitability and condition of the buildings within the ASG as set out in the report. The Education Quality Improvement Manager confirmed she would arrange for Members to receive a more detailed explanation of the gradings;
- confirmation was sought and provided that there were no underlying concerns with attendance within the ASG, and that the small numbers of pupils involved could skew the percentages under this heading;
- the positive feedback received in relation to the operation of the 3 to 18 campus be welcomed, however it was also important for Members to receive feedback in relation to any concerns people may have in relation to the new model;
- it was crucial there was good tracking and monitoring at all schools in terms of raising attainment and closing the attainment gap; and
- in terms of the positive destinations into employment, it was noted this tended to be mainly into local employment.

The Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** following scrutiny, the content of the report; and
- ii. **AGREED** that Members be provided with a more detailed explanation in relation to the gradings shown for the condition and suitability of the buildings within the ASG.

**6. Caithness and Sutherland Local Development Plan: Action Programme
Prògram Gnìomha: Plana Leasachaidh Sgìreil Ghallaibh agus Chataibh**

There had been circulated Report No CC/22/18 dated 15 November 2018 by the Director of Development and Infrastructure.

The Planner advised that Members' approval was being sought to include the John O'Groats Trail in the Action Programme as an additional action prior to its publication, following engagement with the Caithness Community Partnership and NHS Highland. He advised that feedback would be sought from the Friends of John O'Groats Trail on this action.

In discussion, an update was sought on progress with the delivery of the National Digital Fibre Network/Local Access to Full Fibre Network projects, concern being expressed at any potential delays in relation to Sutherland given their importance to the future development of the area. A specific point was raised in relation to

whether private wireless network providers had been involved in any discussions to date. The Planner confirmed that he would seek to provide Members with a further update on these items.

During further discussion, Members then raised the following key points:-

- confirmation was sought and provided that the Action programme reflected the up to date position with the A9 Berridale Braes Improvement Scheme;
- clarification was sought on what was proposed under the 'Golspie reconfiguration and demolition' action. The Planner confirmed he would seek an update on this item from NHS Highland for Members;
- an explanation was sought and provided as to why there under no sites in Sutherland listed under the Economic Development Sites section of the Action Programme which related to developments outwith the main and growing settlements. The Planner advised that while there had been no requests to include additional economic settlement sites in the CaSPlan, there was flexibility in the Action Programme to include emerging developments in the area;
- in regard to the above, arrangements be made for Members to meet with Mr E Sinclair, Area Manager, Highlands and Islands Enterprise to discuss economic development in Sutherland;
- a query in relation to progress with the Golspie Flood Protection Scheme. The Planner confirmed he would arrange for Members to receive an update on this item.
- confirmation was sought and provided that the Golspie Town Centre health check was expected to be published in November 2018;
- the Council's policy in regard to developer contributions for housing developments, and the process by which the Council and communities could access this funding. The Planner confirmed he would provide Mr J McGillivray with the contact details of the Council's new Developer Contributions Officer as the first point of contact on this matter; and
- the need for a coordinated strategy to address various pinch points on the A9 in Sutherland, and also in relation to the rail network given the importance of both to the development of Sutherland. In this regard, Members requested that representatives from Transport Scotland and Hi-Trans be invited to attend a future meeting of the Committee.

The Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the Local Development Plan that has been adopted;
- ii. **APPROVED** the Action Programme in Appendix 1 subject to the inclusion of the John O'Groats Trail as an additional action;
- iii. **NOTED** the intended arrangements for ongoing monitoring and review of the Action Programme and that updates to the Action Programme will be made from time to time;
- iv. **AGREED** that the Planner seek updates from the relevant stakeholders on the following items for Members:
 - the National Digital Fibre Network/Local Access to Full Fibre Network projects in respect of Sutherland
 - under Health Services, Golspie reconfiguration and demolition; and
 - Golspie Flood Protection Scheme

- v. **AGREED** that arrangements be made for Members to meet with Mr E Sinclair, Area Manager, Highlands and Islands Enterprise; and
- vi. **AGREED** that representatives from Transport Scotland and Hi-Trans be invited to attend a future meeting of the Committee.

7. **Housing Capital Programme 2019-2021** **Prògram Calpa Taigheadais 2019–2021**

There had been circulated Report No SCC/23/18 dated 24 October 2018 by the Director of Community Services.

During discussion, Members raised the following key issues:-

- the report and information on Sutherland's allocation of the overall capital spend be welcomed.
- the flexibility provided by the two year Programme and the provision made for equipment and adaptations also be welcomed;
- further information was sought and provided in relation to that part of the Programme which related to 'on demand' works;
- an explanation was sought on the Member led budget for environmental improvements in response to which it was confirmed this would be taken forward through the local Housing Team who were best placed in terms of identifying local priorities;
- an update was sought in relation to those properties which would benefit from external insulation works and the budget allocation for these works. The Housing Investment Officer advised that he would circulate the address list of the properties identified for these works, and that it was hoped at the tendering stage the two year budget and economies of scale would allow additional external insulation works to be undertaken in the area; and
- the potential for external insulation works to be undertaken to Council properties when contractors were on site to carry out works to private properties.

The Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the allocation of resources to Sutherland Area as set out in Appendix 1;
- ii. **NOTED** the investment priorities as set out in section 4.2 of the report;
- iii. **AGREED** the proposed two year HRA Capital Programme for Sutherland 2019-21 as set out in Appendix 2; and
- iv. **NOTED** that updates on the Housing Revenue Account Capital Programme will continue to be provided through ward briefings and at Local Committees as requested by local Members, in addition to reporting to the Environment, Development and Infrastructure Committee.

8. **Sutherland Tourism** **Turasachd Chataibh**

The Principal Tourism and Film Officer give a presentation on this item during which he provided an update on who was involved in tourism within the Council and on what had been a successful 2018 tourist season. He also reported on the

Expressions of Interest submitted for the second round of the Rural Tourism Infrastructure Fund in respect of Sutherland projects. He reported on the main benefits associated with the success of the North Coast 500 route. In conclusion he provided a summary of the opportunities and challenges for Sutherland Tourism going forward.

In discussion, Members requested a copy of the presentation and raised the following key issues:-

- information was sought and provided on the level of engagement the Council had with VisitScotland, on the basis there was need for the organisation to do more to promote Sutherland;
- concern at the impact of VisitScotland's decision to withdraw from the tourist information and visitor centre in Durness which had a significant footfall and had been a great asset to tourists visiting the area;
- a mature conversation was required in relation to the negative impact the increasing number of motorhomes and campervans visiting the area was having on some local communities and on how improved facilities and services could be provided;
- in terms of the challenges for tourism going forward, this should also include the impact on the condition of the road network in Sutherland;
- confirmation was sought and provided that there the opportunity to submit an application to Rural Tourism Infrastructure Fund in time for the January 2019 deadline and that the Council Leader had written to the Scottish Government asking that the scheme be extended; and
- a request that Members be provided with a summary of all the Expressions of Interest submitted for the second round of the Rural Tourism Infrastructure Fund.

The Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the presentation and **AGREED** that a copy be circulated to Members;
- ii. **AGREED** that Members be provided with a summary of all the Expressions of Interest submitted for the second round of the Rural Tourism Infrastructure Fund.

9. Winter Maintenance 2018/19 Obair-gleidhidh Geamhraidh 2018/19

There had been circulated Report No SCC/24/18 dated 17 October 2018 by the Director of Community Services.

In discussion, Members raised the following key issues:-

- Information was sought and provided on the weather forecasts used by the Service to inform the decision making around treatment plans for the area;
- a request that Members be provided with the relevant contact numbers for the duty officers in Sutherland and the emergency out of hours number;
- the progress being made in relation to recruitment of operatives to ensure the depots were fully staffed and any assistance Members could provide in this regard;
- an assurance was sought and provided that measures had been taken to address the technical difficulties experienced with some gritters in the previous year;

- the process under the Winter Resilience scheme by which Members and communities could request that salt/grit bins be provided at strategic points in the area;
- a request that the Ward Manager in conjunction with the Policy and Programmes Manager write to all community councils in Sutherland to raise awareness of the Winter Resilience scheme;
- the potential for a programme to be put in place to ensure there was equity of provision of the footpath tractor between the villages on the east Coast of Sutherland. The Senior Engineer confirmed she would refer this matter to the Roads Operation Manager; and
- information was sought and provided on the process by which repairs to safety barriers could be requested and taken forward, reference being made to the need to replace barriers at Kylesku and Kylestrome.

The Committee:-

- APPROVED** the 2018/19 Winter Maintenance Plan for Sutherland;
- AGREED** that Members be provided with the relevant contact numbers for the duty officers in Sutherland and the emergency out of hours number; and
- AGREED** that the Ward Manager write to all community councils in Sutherland to raise awareness of the Winter Resilience Scheme.

10. Dornoch Common Good Math Coitcheann Dhòrnaich

(a) Dornoch Common Good Annual Report 2017/18, Proposed Budget 2019/20 and Quarter 2 Monitoring Statement 2018/19 Aithisg Bhliadhnail Math Coitcheann Dhòrnaich 2017/18, Buidseat ga Mholadh airson 2019/20 agus Aithris Sgrùdaidh Cairteil 2 2018/19

There had been circulated Report No SCC/25/18 dated 18 October 2018 by the Depute Chief Executive and Director of Corporate Development and Acting Head of Policy.

In discussion, an emerging issue was highlighted in relation to concerns around the lack of progress made with the conclusion of the lease for the Dornoch Caravan and Camping Park which continued to lie with the executors,. This matter had been raised with the Chief Executive and Depute Chief Executive and a response was awaited. In the meantime, Members expressed their support for the early resolution of this matter.

The Committee:-

- NOTED** the Dornoch Common Good Fund Annual Report and Accounts for 2017/18;
- AGREED** the Dornoch Common Good Fund Annual Budget for 2019/20; and
- NOTED** the position of the Dornoch Common Good Fund, as shown in the Q2 monitoring statement against budget.

(b) Dornoch Area Community Interest Company (DACIC) - Application Companaidh Ùidh Choimhearsnachd Sgìre Dhòrnaich – Iarrtas

Declaration of Interest: Mr J McGillivray declared a non-financial interest in this item as a Director of Dornoch Area Community Interest Company and left the Chamber for the remainder of the meeting.

There had been circulated Report No SCC/26/18 dated 18 October 2018 by the Depute Chief Executive and Director of Corporate Development and Acting Head of Policy.

The Committee **AGREED** an award of £20,000 over two years to Dornoch Area Community Interest Company for part funding of Community Development Manager post.

11. Minutes
Geàrr-chunntas

There were circulated and **NOTED** Minutes of the Sutherland County Committee held on 23 August 2018, which had been approved by the Council on 6 September 2018.

The meeting ended at 1.00pm.
