

**The Highland Council
Sutherland County Committee**

Minutes of Meeting of the Sutherland County Committee held in the Chamber, Council Offices, Drumbuie on Monday, 25 February 2019 at 2.00pm.

Present:

Ms K Currie

Mr R Gale

Mrs D Mackay

Mr J McGillivray

Mr H Morrison

Ms L Munro (by tele-conference)

Officials in attendance:

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

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

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

Mr M Dent, Access Officer, Development & Infrastructure Service

Mr J Allan, Lighting and Communications Manager, Community Services

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

Also in Attendance:

Chief Inspector I MacLelland, North Area Commander, Police Scotland

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

There had been circulated Report No SCC/01/19 dated 12 February 2019 by the North Area Commander.

In discussion, Members raised the following issues:-

- the level of enforcement being carried out in relation to road safety and reduction in the number of speeding offences over the period was welcomed;
- an assurance was sought and provided by the Chief Inspector that he was not aware of any change in policy by the Council as the lead agency with regard to the Driving Ambitions initiative being rotated around secondary schools in Sutherland or in terms of pupils from other areas travelling to Golspie High School to participate in the initiative
- the potential to refresh the above initiative and to use a range of strategies and new technologies to educate young drivers in relation to road safety, including local initiatives and the involvement of Transport Scotland, Scottish Fire and Rescue Service and the Scottish Ambulance Service;

- concern at the increase in the number of drink/driving offences over the period. The Chief Inspector advised this mainly related to drink driving offences, although there were elements of drug driving and he provided an assurance that enforcement would continue including the targeting of young drivers;
- concern at the number of people who continued to be detected for seat belt offences, it being noted this was across a range of age groups and tended to involve work vehicles;
- an assurance was provided that if Members had any information in relation to drug dealing in Sutherland then they pass this to the Chief Inspector, local officers, or call Crimestoppers or the 101 number;
- while the increase in the numbers of detections for drugs supply, production and cultivation was positive, the overall numbers appeared to be relatively low in comparison to the levels of supply and demand, and given this was an endemic problem in many areas and an issue across society. The Chief Inspector confirmed he would feedback Members comments in relation to drugs to the relevant officers; and
- clarification was sought and provided on the reason for the increase in the occurrences of common assaults, Members were advised this encompassed a range of types of assaults in and out of dwellings and there were no specific trends being observed, for example linked to licensed premises.

The Committee **NOTED** following scrutiny, the progress made against the objectives set within the Highland and Islands Local Policing Plan 2017-20.

4. North Coast Campus Overview Sealladh Coitcheann air Campas a' Chost a Tuath

There had been circulated Report No SCC/02/19 dated 11 February 2019 by the Director of Care and Learning.

The Education Quality Improvement Manager provided an update to the report during which she reported on the substantial redevelopment and improvements undertaken to improve the condition and suitability of the buildings within the ASG. Specifically, she detailed the works carried out over the past year at Farr High School, Farr and Melvich Primary Schools and planned work to Tongue Primary School.

In discussion, the improvement in the condition of the buildings and staffing levels within the ASG was welcomed. Thereafter, reference was made to the positive figures detailed in the High Life Highland section of the report, and particularly the fact that customer visits to Bettyhill Library and Service Point and Youth Development Officer attendances had effectively trebled. Clarification was sought on the reasons for the significant increase and in response the Education Quality Improvement Manager confirmed she would report back to Members on this matter.

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

5. Modified Core Paths Plan (Caithness and Sutherland) Amended Plana Phrìomh Cheuman Mion-atharraichte (Gallaibh agus Cataibh) Atharraichte

There had been circulated Report No SCC/03/19 dated 11 February 2019 by the Director of Development and Infrastructure.

In response to questions, the Access Officer provided further details in relation to the nature of the unresolved objections set out at Appendix 3 to the report.

In response to the Chair, the Access Officer also provided an update in relation to an issue which had arisen the previous year in relation to access over the Dairy Park, Golspie. He had written to Golspie Community Council to confirm that the access which had been ploughed and cropped over in the previous year, would be kept trampled or cut if cropped in the current year to ensure it was not impenetrable during the growing season and access could be taken. He explained there was no expectation that a field should not be ploughed because of a core path.

The Committee **APPROVED** the:-

- i. the modifications to the Amended Core Path Plan which have resolved objections shown in **Appendix 2**;
- ii. the modification to the Amended Core Paths Plan following a representation shown in **Appendix 4**;
- iii. the Amended Core Paths Plan for a 30 day public consultation on the above modifications; and
- iv. the Amended Core Paths Plan with unresolved objections shown in **Appendix 3** and thereafter to be submitted to Scottish Ministers.

6. Christmas Lighting and Decorations Solais agus Sgeadachaidhean Nollaige

There had been tabled revised Report No SCC/04/19 dated 22 February 2019 by the Director of Community Services.

The Chair advised that an amended report had been tabled which included additional information on the Community Groups which delivered Christmas lighting and decorations in the area.

In discussion, it was suggested that further clarification was required in relation to the figures set out in the report and the extent of the works which were being delivered by the Council or by community councils and/or community groups in the area. The report should also be amended going forward to cover all of the communities in Sutherland which had Christmas lights. In relation to the recommendations set out in the report, it was not the role of elected Members to liaise with local community councils and/or community groups where communities wished to deliver Christmas lighting and decorations, this being more appropriately the remit of officers.

In response to questions, the Lighting and Communications Manager advised that the Council's insurance covered Christmas lighting and decorations where they were mounted on street light columns. Work was ongoing to identify any

undocumented installations around the County with a view to universal approach being adopted in all communities. In this regard, it was suggested that it would be helpful to write to all community councils in Sutherland asking them to clarify the arrangements for Christmas lighting and decorations in their communities.

The Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** that the Council had previously removed the £35,000 budget for the delivery of Christmas Lighting;
- ii. **AGREED** that the appropriate officers within Community Services liaise with local Community Councils and/or Community Groups where communities wish to deliver Christmas lighting and decorations;
- iii. **NOTED** that health and safety, and general guidance will be published for communities to enable the safe erection of Christmas lighting and decorations in the future; and
- iv. **AGREED** to write to all Community Councils in Sutherland asking them to clarify the arrangements for Christmas lighting and decorations in their communities.

**7. Dornoch Common Good – Assignment of Dornoch Caravan Park Lease.
Math Coitcheann Dhòrnaich – Sònrachadh Aonta-màil Phàirc
Charabhanaichean Dhòrnaich**

There had been circulated Report No SCC/05/19 dated 8 February 2019 by the Depute Chief Executive/Director of Corporate Development and Acting Head of Policy.

In discussion, reference was made to concerns which existed within the community, community council, and amongst long term site residents in regard to the current operation of the Caravan Park. The outstanding debts had not been paid and therefore and it was questioned why the Irritancy clause within the lease had not been evoked and the lease cancelled. This was a commercial lease and therefore Members had not had the opportunity to scrutinise all aspects including any business or payment plan, however there were reputational issues for the Council and Members which should be considered. Further concerns expressed included whether the terms attached to the dilapidations would be enforceable, the length of time the lease had been in the hands of the executors and in relation to the solvency of the new operator.

The Chair seconded by Mrs D Mackay moved that consideration of the report be deferred until the next meeting of the Committee on 22 May 2019 to allow clarification to be provided on:- (i) rent arrears (ii) proposals for dilapidations, and (iii) evidence of available funds from the new operator

Mr J McGillivray seconded by Ms K Currie moved as an amendment that the Irritancy clause contained within the lease be pursued.

The Ward Manager advised that the amendment was not competent on the grounds that a decision on this matter could not be taken until such time as an assessment of whether the terms of the lease had been broken had been undertaken and the Council's debt recovery procedures and the negotiations on the dilapidations had been completed, all of which were contained in the motion to

defer consideration of the report. On this basis, Mr J McGillivray with the agreement of Ms K Currie confirmed he was content to withdraw his amendment.

The Committee **AGREED** that consideration of the report be deferred until the next meeting of the Committee on 22 May 2019 to allow clarification to be provided on:- (i) rent arrears (ii) proposals for dilapidations, and (iii) evidence of available funds from the new operator.

**8. Dornoch Common Good Quarterly Monitoring Report
Aithisg Sgrùdadh Ràitheil Math Coitcheann Dhòrnaich**

There had been circulated Report No SCC/06/19 dated 25 January 2019 by the Depute Chief Executive/Director of Corporate Development and Acting Head of Policy.

In response to a question, the Ward Manager confirmed he would discuss the current status of the Fund with Mr J McGillivray outwith the meeting.

The Committee **NOTED** the position of the Dornoch Common Good Fund, as shown in the Q3 monitoring statement against budget.

**9. Minutes
Geàrr-chunntas**

There were circulated and **NOTED** Minutes of the Sutherland County Committee held on 15 November 2018, which had been approved by the Council on 13 December 2018.

The meeting closed at 3.15pm.
