

AGENDA ITEM 3

The Highland Council

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, 2 December, 2019 at 10.30 am.**

Present:

Mr J Finlayson
Mr J Gordon

Mr R MacDonald

In attendance:

Mr M MacLeod, Executive Chief Officer – Infrastructure and Environment
Mr W MacKinnon, Ward Manager
Mr M Colliar, Station Manager, Scottish Fire and Rescue Service
Mr G MacDonald, Senior Engineer (Ross, Skye & Lochaber)
Mr J Holden, Housing Manager (North)
Ms J Bruce, Principal Housing Officer
Mr T Stott, Principal Planner
Mr D Chisholm, Planner (Development Plans)
Mr A MacInnes, Administrative Assistant

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

Preliminaries

The Chairman on behalf of the Committee congratulated the communities of Portree and Braes for their tremendous work involved in the Christmas lighting in Portree which had been a great success. Fundraising had secured £27,000 for the event and it was intended to organise further community events. There had been other community events across the area and the Council needed to support community groups to arrange these events.

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. 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 30 September, 2019, which were approved at the Highland Council meeting held on 31 October, 2019, the terms of which were **NOTED**.

4. Scottish Fire and Rescue Service Local Committee Performance Report Aithisg Coileanaidh Comataidh Ionadail Seirbheis Smàlaidh agus Teasairginn na h-Alba

There was circulated Report No SR/18/19 by the Local Senior Officer, Scottish Fire and Rescue Service.

During discussion, the following main points were raised:-

- Some of the station availability had been lower than anticipated and this was predominately due to recruitment difficulties. In Uig and Staffin, staffing levels were only half the establishment and Broadford was also showing a downward trend. The Service intended to run a recruitment campaign early in the new year.
- There was a perception that you had to live close to where your local fire station was in order to be considered for employment. While the required response times were in the region of 8 to 10 minutes from the station, there may be some flexibility on response times and the Service were happy to discuss this with applicants. In terms of youth recruitment, there were a lot of young people in the Service and in addition the Service was considering introducing a Cadet Scheme in the area.
- It was advised that NHS Highland had in the past experienced problems in recruiting staff locally and a significant reason for this had been the lack of housing. It was queried if the lack of housing was a problem for the Fire Service recruiting staff. It was advised that the availability of housing was not a significant issue in this area for the Service as most employees were Retained staff and already part of the community.
- It was explained that a number of the larger incidents in this area had not been as a result of Muirburn. The Fire Service were taking the lead on a national wildfire strategy. This would include meeting landowners to discuss tactics for fighting wildfires and also new strategies for tackling wildfires with new equipment and techniques.
- Insofar as road traffic collisions were concerned, it was explained that fire service interaction in these incidents had reduced, probably due to collisions being at lower speed. Road safety campaigns were having a positive effect.
- In terms of the First Responder role for the Fire Service, this was being discussed at a national level and was close to an agreement. This role would be particularly important in rural areas.
- Home fire safety visits were promoted nationally and also through local community engagement by the Fire service. The Service also had recently appointed a Community Safety Advocate in Skye who would be proactive in community engagement and would attend home fire safety visits.

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

5. **Area Roads Capital Programme Progress 2019/20** **Adhartas Prògram Calpa Rathaidean Sgìreil 2019/20**

There was circulated Report No. SR/19/19 by the Executive Chief Officer Customer and Communities.

During discussion, the following main points were raised:-

- The Committee recognised the hard work of the local roads team and thanked them for this. The winter last year had been challenging for local roads teams and there continued to be road infrastructure pressures as a result of increased tourism.
- In terms of staffing levels in the area, there was currently one vacancy which was being advertised. Also, four apprentices were being recruited.
- Additional funding had been brought forward from the 2019/20 roads budget into the 2018/19 budget due to the long harsh winter, but while this was welcomed there was obviously less money in the roads budget in the current financial year which the Service was trying to manage. It was anticipated that the current year's roads maintenance programme would be completed and an update on the programme was provided at the meeting.
- It was advised that there was a significant backlog in road maintenance and in order to highlight this it was advised that for Skye, around £2m a year would be required to maintain the roads in the current condition (currently a third of this amount was spent on roads in Skye). To make improvements in the roads would require significantly more funding.
- An update was provided on progress with white lining in the area and it was also advised that some of the local roads team were to receive training on this activity.
- In terms of the roads budget allocation for Skye, a view was expressed that road usage should be a criteria for allocating funds given the increased traffic from tourism in the area. Roads maintenance was a majority priority for the area and local Members would be working together in order to try and have the roads maintenance budget for the area increased.

The Committee **NOTED** the contents of the report.

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

There was circulated Report No. SR/20/19 by the Executive Chief Officer Customer and Communities.

During discussion, the following main points were raised:-

- It was noted a maintenance technician had recently been appointed which was welcomed by Members and should improve emergency repair response times. It was also intended to recruit a further Maintenance technician based in the South of Skye.
- There had potentially been some computer system delays and this would explain delays to repairs response times. This was being looked at and an update would be provided to Members.
- There had been an improvement in re-let times in the last quarter as a result of better systems being put in place to speed up work on properties.

- To address the homelessness issue, there was a need to build more houses as this was the only way to accommodate people long term.
- It was queried if universal credit was still having an impact on rent arrears. It was explained that universal credit took time to pay out, but in certain cases, the housing team could apply to the DWP for direct payment for housing costs from Universal Credit. It was expected that rent arrears figures would improve in the next quarter once Universal Credit payments had been received by tenants. The housing team also provided advice to tenants who were experiencing difficulties in paying their rent and referrals were made to the Council's Welfare Advice Service. Early engagement with tenants in housing arrears was key to tackling the issue. A copy of the Council's Arrears Management Policy would be sent to Members.
- It was queried if increased tourism in the area was a reason for higher homelessness presentations in the summer. An undertaking was given to investigate this and report back to Members. It was highlighted that trends in homeless presentations were monitored across Highland and there were certain areas such as Skye where the supply and demand of housing had changed dramatically over the last few years.
- There were currently 80 homelessness presentations in Skye and Lochalsh. A breakdown of presentations in Skye and Raasay would be provided to Members. There were currently 1,134 people on the housing register for Skye and this high figure demonstrated the need for more housing in the area.
- The Committee thanked the housing team for the significant amount of work they undertook.

Thereafter, the Committee **NOTED** the information provided on housing performance in the period 1 April 2019 to 30 September 2019.

7. West Highlands & Islands Local Development Plan – Action Programme Plana Leasachadh Ionadail na Gàidhealtachd an Iar agus nan Eilean – Prògram Gnìomha

There was circulated Report No. SR/21/19 by the Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure and Environment.

During discussion, the following main points were raised:-

- when considering developer contributions towards the delivery of infrastructure projects, contributions sought should be aligned to the local school area as opposed to the Associated School Group;
- It was explained that as set out in the Developer Contributions Supplementary Guidance (2018), contributions towards community facility projects will be sought on a secondary school catchment area basis. One of the reasons for a wide catchment area was to ensure that there were enough projects to consider for funding so as to avoid developer contributions being lost as most developer contributions were time limited. Decisions would have to be made on developer funding where there were multiple projects in a secondary school catchment area and it was expected that guidelines for this would be drawn up in the new year which may include consultation with the Ward Manager and local Members.
- In terms of community projects, it was important that the list of projects be updated on a regular basis in consultation with the Ward Manager and local

Members. If there were projects that had been missed out of the Action Programme, these should be highlighted to Officers for consideration as soon as possible as the Action Programme needs to be published by 30 December, 2019.

- A Masterplan was being developed in Dunvegan for a new school, sports pitch and housing.
- There would be a need for a play park in Kyleakin if there was to be further housing development in the area.
- It was queried what engagement the Council were having with the NHS on transportation links to the new hospital being built on Skye. It was explained that as part of the Planning process for the new hospital, NHS Highland would have considered transport links.
- NHS Highland were a Key agency and there was a legal duty to consult with them on Development Plans. Planning Officers were consulted on the choice of site for the new hospital in Broadford. They had not been consulted on where on the Island the new hospital would be built. Further, the Council had discussions with the NHS on affordable housing in Broadford.
- The Portree Link Road was an important project for the community in diverting traffic away from the centre of Portree. It was advised that certain housing allocations in the WestPlan are required to contribute towards its delivery but that the project would also likely require other sources of funding.
- Reference was made to the difficulties that contractors had in finding suitable accommodation for their workforce for projects on Skye and consideration should be given to this when developing housing projects.

Thereafter, the Committee:-

- NOTED** that the Local Development Plan has been adopted;
- APPROVED** the Action Programme in Appendix 1;
- NOTED** the intended arrangements for ongoing monitoring and review of the Action Programme (as set out in Section 6 of the report); and
- NOTED** that the list of community projects would be regularly reviewed in consultation with the Ward Manager and local Members.

Urgent Item of Business – *the following report was taken as an urgent item of business in order that Members could consider priorities for the local area prior to the end of the financial year.*

8. Area Priorities Update

There was circulated Report No SR/22/19 by the Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure & Environment.

In discussion, the following main points were raised:-

- The challenges facing the Skye and Raasay area were probably not anticipated five years ago, given the significant increase in tourism over the last few years. This had created great demands on the Islands infrastructure.

It was therefore welcomed to have this report setting out the local area priorities and aspirations.

- There was a need to consider refining the area priorities as not everything could be done at once.
- A planning day event to be held early in the New Year was welcomed. This would bring together key public sector partners and the wider community to discuss the area priorities.
- Skye's tourism supported a significant number of jobs and for this to be sustainable there was a need for investment in the area. The Council's lead role would enable additional funding to be sought for investment in the area.
- The scale of issues to be addressed and the money required was significant and would likely require both Scottish Government and UK Government assistance.
- A lot had been achieved in terms of the 2017 list of area priorities, such as improved health care, new schools and money for tourism related infrastructure projects which had made a huge difference to communities.

Thereafter, the Committee **AGREED** the development of a clear place based approach to priority setting for Skye and Raasay that can be used to highlight development opportunities and ideas for improved service delivery, with an update being brought to the next Area Committee.

The meeting ended at 12.15 p.m.