

The Highland Council

Minutes of Meeting of the **Badenoch and Strathspey Area Committee** held in the Courtroom, Grantown Courthouse, Grantown-on-Spey on 11 February 2020 at 10.30 am.

Present:

Mr J Bruce
Mrs M Cockburn

Ms P Hadley
Mr B Lobban

In attendance:

Mrs K Lackie, Executive Chief Officer – Performance and Governance, Chief Executive's Office

Ms L Cowie, Ward Manager (Nairn, Badenoch and Strathspey), Chief Executive's Office

Mrs A Mackintosh, Principle Teacher, Modern Languages, Grantown Grammar School
Inspector V Tough, Police Scotland

Mr K Murray, Interim Education Quality Improvement Manager, Education & Learning Service (via VC)

Mr R Porteous, Roads Operations Manager (LNBS), Community Services

Ms S MacLennan, Housing Manager (South), Community Services

Mr J Henderson, Housing Investment Officer, Community Services

Ms M Mcleman, Principal Tenant and Customer Engagement Officer, Community Services

Mrs L Dunn, Principal Administrator, Chief Executive's Office

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 B Lobban in the Chair

Business

1. **Apologies for Absence** **Leisgeulan**

There were no apologies for absence.

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

The Committee **NOTED** the following declarations of interest:-

Items 7, 8 & 9 – Ms P Hadley (financial)

3. **Presentation: Confucius Hub at Grantown Grammar School** **Taisbeanadh: Co-Ionad Confucius aig Sgoil Bhaile nan Granddach**

There was a presentation by Mrs Ann Mackintosh, Principal Teacher, Modern Languages, Grantown Grammar School on the development and progress of the Confucius Hub. During the presentation it was explained that the Hub had been transferred from Kingussie High School to Grantown Grammar School mainly due to staffing reasons.

It was explained that the Confucius Classroom was a network that had been set up across Scotland to help promote Chinese language and culture in schools. The Grantown Hub had one fully qualified Mandarin Teacher. Further information was provided on their work teaching the Chinese language in primary and secondary schools, not only locally in Badenoch and Strathspey but also in other areas of the Highlands via video link. Further information was provided on the types of initiatives that had been undertaken to stimulate learning of the Chinese culture and also on the personal successes of some individual students that had participated in the Hub. The presentation concluded with photographs from the 2019 Pupil Immersion Trip to China.

During discussion, the following main points were raised:-

- Disappointment was expressed that the Confucius Hub was no longer being operated in Kingussie High School, but Members were pleased that the project was continuing at Grantown Grammar School. However, concerns were expressed that opportunities were being missed by other schools by not being involved, therefore, the work of the Hub needed to be actively promoted and expanded across the Highlands;
- Further information was sought and provided on the qualifications that could be achieved through studying Chinese with the Hub; and
- The Chair requested that the presentation be made at a future meeting of the Council to increase awareness and participation in the cultural and learning opportunities available through the Hub.

Thereafter the Committee **NOTED** the presentation and **AGREED** that this be made at a future meeting of the Highland Council.

4. Police Area Performance Report Poileas – Geàrr-chunntas air Coileanadh Sgireil

There had been circulated Report No BSAC/01/20 dated 4 February 2020 by the Area Commander.

During discussion, the following main points were raised:-

- Members welcomed the positive report and highlighted that speeding and anti-social behaviour associated to cars were ongoing problems in small communities;
- The benefits of the Pubwatch initiative were emphasised and further information was sought and provided on how this scheme was operated;
- The introduction of Roadside Drug Testing kits was welcomed and further information was sought and provided on how long training on the usage of the kits would take;
- It was queried whether any statistical data was available on the number of incidents that were reported via the Police non-emergency number 101;

- It was queried, and assurances were provided, on the measures taken by the Police to ensure that young drivers fully understood their road safety and passenger responsibilities;
- It was confirmed that members of the public could report crime safely and anonymously via Crimestoppers;
- With regard to rural crime, it was indicated that much of this appeared to be opportunistic as opposed to organised; and
- It was anticipated that thefts of electric bikes were likely to rise given the increase in usage of these high value items.

The Committee **NOTED** progress made against the objectives set within the Highland and Islands Local Policing Plan 2017-20 Year 3, attached as Annex A to the report, for the period covering 1 April 2019 - 31 December 2019.

5. **Kingussie Associated School Group: Area Overview** **Buidheann Sgoiltean Co-cheangailte Cheann a' Ghiùthsaidh: Tar-sealladh Sgìreil**

There had been circulated Report No BSAC/02/20 dated 28 January 2020 by the South Area Care and Learning Manager.

During discussion, the following main points were raised:-

- Although the information in the report was interesting, concern was expressed that the report lacked focus and strategic direction. In particular, there was a need for future reports to contain information on educational attainment and how the Council could support and facilitate improvement of this across the Highlands;
- Disappointment was expressed at the lack of information being shared between the Corporate Parenting Board and Secondary Head Teachers. Communication in this regard needed to be improved to ensure that information on events and resources available for care experienced young people in secondary schools was being shared and opportunities were not being missed; and
- Further information was sought and provided regarding any forthcoming government inspections and whether there were any pinch points and/or capacity issues particularly in regard to the roll out of the increased funded hours for Early Learning.

The Committee **NOTED**:-

- i. the contents of the report;
- ii. that there had been a breakdown in reporting between the Corporate Parenting Board and Secondary Head Teachers and **AGREED** that this be investigated to ensure that information was shared; and
- iii. that the outcome of the recent HMIE of Kingussie Primary School would be the subject of a future report.

**6. Roads Maintenance Programme 2020/21
Prògram Càradh Rathaidean 2020/21**

There had been circulated Report No BSAC/03/20 dated 22 January 2020 by the Executive Chief Officer – Communities and Place.

During discussion, the following main points were raised:-

- Although an increased spend on the Roads Maintenance Programme would be welcomed, staff were commended for their excellent work and managing resources throughout the Badenoch & Strathspey area. However, further information was sought and provided on whether any additional staffing resource were required and the benefits that could be achieved;
- Concern was expressed at the detrimental impact that timber transport vehicles were having on the roads infrastructure and further information was sought and provided on the measures available to recover costs for damages including the Timber Transport Routes Fund;
- There was a need for early intervention in terms of Preventative Maintenance and maximising the life of roads;
- Given the mild winter to date, it was queried whether there was likely to be an excess of salt, and if so, whether the quality would deteriorate over time;
- It was noted that a significant number of entries contained within Appendix 2 related to the need for Surface Dressing and it was queried whether this treatment also included pot hole filling; and
- The need for white lining works to be undertaken was emphasised.

The Committee **APPROVED** the proposed 2020/21 Roads Maintenance Programme for Badenoch & Strathspey Area.

**7. Housing Revenue Account: Garage Rents 2020/21
Cunntas Teachd-a-steach Taigheadais: Màil Gharaidsean 2020/21**

Declaration of Interest – Ms P Hadley declared a financial interest in this item as a Council house tenant but, in terms of the dispensation granted by the Standards Commission, remained in the room to participate in the discussion.

There had been circulated Report No BSAC/04/20 dated 29 January 2020 by the Executive Chief Officer – Property and Housing.

The Committee **AGREED** a 3% rent increase be applied to Badenoch and Strathspey Garages for 2020/21.

**8. Housing Performance Report – 1 April 2019 to 31 December 2019
Aithisg Coileanaidh Taigheadais – 1 An Giblean gu 30 An Dubhlachd
2019**

Declaration of Interest – Ms P Hadley declared a financial interest in this item as a Council house tenant but, in terms of the dispensation granted by the Standards Commission, remained in the room to participate in the discussion.

There had been circulated Report No BSAC/05/20 dated 29 January 2020 by the Executive Chief Officer – Property and Housing.

During discussion, the following main points were raised:-

- Further data was sought on sub-letting and the measures taken to reduce this;
- Further information was sought and provided on the comprehensive level of housing support that was available to help tenants with their independent living to ensure sustainable tenancies; and
- Overall Members welcomed the report and the positive performance results. In addition, the need for the capital spend to be used prudently was emphasised and the Castle Road East project was referenced as an excellent example of good practice.

The Committee **NOTED** the information provided on housing performance for the period 1 April 2019 to 31 December 2019.

**9. Tenant Participation and Engagement Update
Fios às Ùr mu Luchd-màil agus Com-pàirteachas**

Declaration of Interest – Ms P Hadley declared a financial interest in this item as a Council house tenant but, in terms of the dispensation granted by the Standards Commission, remained in the room to participate in the discussion.

There had been circulated Report No BSAC/06/20 dated 28 January 2020 by the Executive Chief Officer – Property and Housing.

During discussion, Members indicated that the high Customer Satisfaction level of 81.82% was a reflection of the assiduous work being undertaken by staff and the excellent vision being demonstrated, particularly in regard to Youth Engagement, was highly commended. It was also recommended that Face to Face contact be continued as a key method of engagement with tenants.

The Committee **NOTED** the recent tenant engagement activities in Badenoch and Strathspey.

10. Minutes
Geàrr-chunntas

There was circulated and **NOTED** Minutes of Meeting of the Badenoch and Strathspey Area Committee held on 11 November 2019 which were approved by the Council on 9 December 2019.

The meeting was closed at 12.25pm.