

**The Highland Council**

Minutes of Meeting of the **Nairnshire Committee** held remotely Wednesday 16 September 2020 at 10.30 am.

**Present:**

Mr L Fraser  
Mr T Heggie

Mrs L MacDonald  
Mr P Saggars

**In attendance:**

Ms K Lackie, ECO Performance & Governance  
Mr M Rodger, ECO Housing & Property  
Ms A Clark, Acting Head of Policy, Chief Executive's Office  
Mr W Munro, Interim Ward Manager, Chief Executive's Office  
Mr J Henderson, Housing Investment Officer, Community Services  
Ms S MacLennan, Housing Manager (South), Community Services  
Mr D Mackenzie, Corporate Communications & Engagement Officer, Chief Executive's Office  
Mrs L Dunn, Principal Administrator, Chief Executive's Office

**Also in attendance:**

Area Inspector V Tough, Police Scotland (Item 3)  
Mr I McKenzie, Highland Third Sector Interface (Item 4.ii)

**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 T Heggie in the Chair**

**BUSINESS**

**1. Apologies for Absence  
Leisgeulan**

There were no apologies for absence.

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

Item 5: Mr L Fraser (non-financial)  
Item 6: Mr L Fraser (non-financial)

**3. Police Scotland Area Performance Report  
Poileas Alba – Geàrr-chunntas Dèanadais Sgìreil**

There had been circulated Report No **NC/06/20** dated 1 September 2020 by the Area Inspector.

During discussion, the following main points were raised:-

- Confirmation was provided that a small number of fixed penalty notices had been issued for breaches of the new coronavirus regulations that had had been introduced by the Scottish Government;
- It was noted that there had been a sharp rise in homelessness presentations and that this had mainly been due to relationship breakdown. It was queried, and confirmation was provided, that there had not been a similar rise in the number of domestic abuse cases;
- A warm welcome was made to Chief Inspector Jenny Ballentine who would be based at Nairn Police Station and Chairing the Community Planning Partnership;
- Confirmation was provided that the number of officers on shift were reduced if they had to attend hospital due a medical issue but the Control Room deployed additional support/officers from Inverness for priority issues; and
- The Committee noted that performance results were very positive and commended staff for their work particularly in view of the challenges currently being presented.

The Committee **NOTED** the progress made against the objectives set within the Highland Local Policing Plan:-

- i. 2017-20 Year 3, attached as Annex A to the report, for the period covering 1 April 2019 - 31 December 2019; and
- ii. 2020-23, Year 1, attached as Annex B to the report, for the period covering 1 April 2020 – 30 June 2020.

#### **4. Highland Council and Local Community COVID-19 Response Comhairle na Gàidhealtachd agus Freagairt COVID-19 na Coimhearsnachd Ionadail**

##### **i. The Highland Council: Local Community Hub**

The Acting Ward Manager gave a verbal report on the Local Community Hub during which he advised that, in line with Scottish Government guidance for local authorities, a local hub had been set up in Nairn initially operating five days a week but was now on standby. In addition, the people in Nairnshire had support from the Highland Council freephone helpline and the hubs had been supported by Highland Council officials and volunteers from High Life Highland.

The Local Community Hub was supported by the Ward Manager and the Distribution Hub in Inverness supported the co-ordination of food deliveries to local hubs for distribution. There was also a virtual hub which provided specific support to those shielding and support and guidance to local community hubs. To give an indication of the scale of the operation, during the busiest period (April, May and June 2020), there were in excess of 971 individuals in receipt of the Scottish Government food parcels; 552 cases of support for food; and there was direct food provision for 797 people in the Highland Council area. Although now significantly reduced,

there were still pockets of support required for people in local infection outbreaks areas.

There had been significant collaboration with partners including prescription deliveries by the British Red Cross along with support from the Nairn Task Force. The Nairn Hub also worked with local supermarkets to use all options available to ensure people had access to food and welfare support was also provided. Overall, Nairnshire had responded positively either via community groups or through the local hub to ensure that the needs of the local community were being met.

In terms of recovery, Emergency Liaison Groups had been established to respond to any specific difficulties going forward and close collaboration with agency partners and voluntary groups would continue.

In conclusion, the Ward Manager provided further information on the learning outcomes and on the financial support that had been received which included £2.26m being distributed across the Highlands with Nairnshire attracting 14 separate awards of £14,941. There were also £4,238 of COVID Ward Discretionary awards with a number of applications still pending. There were a number of other awards through the HTSI Wellbeing Fund, Response, Recovery and Resilience, Supporting Communities (HIE) and the Wellbeing Fund as well as £2.62m of Business grants being awarded in the Nairn area.

During discussion, Members praised the work of rural Community Councils who had applied for grants and provided much needed support to people in rural Nairnshire. The infrastructure and experience of the Nairn Task Force was reassuring in the event that there would be a further lockdown during the winter period. Further information was also provided on the steps that had been taken to ensure that contact was maintained with individuals that had been identified to ensure they continued to be supported going forward.

Thereafter, the Committee **NOTED** the verbal report on the local Community Hub.

## ii. Community Response

Mr Iain McKenzie, Highland Third Sector Interface, gave a verbal report on the Third Sector and community response to COVID-19 in Nairnshire. It was explained that the Highland Third Sector Interface had been set-up under the Community Empowerment Act 2012 and its three key pillars of activity were to promote and support the third sector, promote and support volunteering, and promote and support social enterprise.

In terms of COVID-19, a website ([www.covidhelp4highland.org](http://www.covidhelp4highland.org)) had been established to help the third sector organisations. A community action register had been set up comprising of 357 organisations of which seven were based in the Nairn area. A register for volunteers was also set up with over 2,000 people registered and approximately 300-500 volunteers had been deployed. In addition, other methods of support included provision of a telephone helpline; provision of e-learning courses

and training activities; and holding frequent and regular meetings through different network platforms. With regard to the Support in Communities Fund, £8,700 had been awarded to organisations in Nairn which was approximately 7% of the total fund. However, a significantly higher proportion had been awarded to organisations based in Inverness many of which provided Highland wide services.

During discussion, the following main points were raised:-

- It was noted that there had been a high level of volunteer activity in response to the pandemic. It was felt that they needed a more prominent base within the local community and it was hoped this would be established through the local workshops that were planned to be undertaken on a regular basis;
- The new model that had been implemented through the Highland Third Sector Interface was welcomed and opportunities to strengthen the local infrastructure in Nairn should be maximised;
- It was anticipated that the level of enquiries for advice and support would increase and further information was sought and provided on how local interest would be maintained once COVID-19 was not as prominent; and
- It was highlighted that High Life Highland had provided volunteers with professional skills and this combined with volunteers with local knowledge gave added value to the local community response.

Thereafter, the Committee **NOTED** the verbal report on the Third Sector and community response to COVID-19 in Nairnshire.

**5. Nairnshire Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Capital Programme 2021/22  
Prògram Calpa Cunntas Teachd-a-steach Taigheadais Siorrachd Inbhir  
Narann 2021/22**

**Declaration of Interest: Mr L Fraser declared a non-financial interest in this item as a Sub-Contractor for the Housing Service in Nairn but, having applied the test outlined in Paragraphs 5.2 and 5.3 of the Councillors' Code of Conduct, concluded that his interest did not preclude his involvement in the discussion.**

There had been circulated Report No **NC/07/20** dated 25 August 2020 by the Executive Chief Officer Housing and Property.

During discussion, the following main points were raised:-

- It was noted that a significant sum (60%) was being spent on energy improvements and it was queried, and confirmation was provided, that all opportunities to supplement the spend were explored in order to maximise resources;
- Confirmation was provided that further information would be provided on the Environmental Improvement works that would be undertaken and also on the priorities identified from Rate Your Estate initiative; and

- Tribute was paid to the tragic loss during lockdown of the local Housing Maintenance Officer and, although he would be greatly missed, it was reassuring that his work was being continued.

The Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the allocation of resources to the Nairnshire Area as set out at 5.7 of the report;
- ii. **NOTED** the guideline investment priorities as set out in section 5.2 of the report;
- iii. **AGREED** the proposed one-year HRA Capital Programme for Nairnshire 2021/22 as set out in Appendix 2 to the report;
- iv. **NOTED** the position relating the current year HRA Capital Programme;
- v. **NOTED** that updates on the Housing Revenue Account Capital Programme would continue to be provided through ward briefings and at future local committees as requested by local Members, in addition to being reported to Housing and Property Committee; and
- vi. **NOTED** that further information would be provided on the Environmental improvement works that would be undertaken and also the priorities identified from Rate Your Estate initiative.

**6. Housing Performance Report – 1 April 2020 to 30 June 2020  
Coileanadh Taigheadais: 1 Giblean 2020 gu 30 Ògmhios 2020**

**Declaration of Interest: Mr L Fraser declared a non-financial interest in this item as a Sub-Contractor for the Housing Service in Nairn but, having applied the test outlined in Paragraphs 5.2 and 5.3 of the Councillors' Code of Conduct, concluded that his interest did not preclude his involvement in the discussion.**

There had been circulated Report **NC/08/20** dated 31 August 2020 by the Executive Chief Officer Housing and Property. In addition, the Housing Manager provided an update on the Housing Team's response to COVID-19 during which she advised that prior to lockdown focus was concentrated on the Nairn sheltered housing tenants during which preventive measures were implemented and many of these continued to be place. This included closing the common rooms at the two sheltered housing complexes within Nairn; hand sanitising units had been installed and the cleaning regime increased; wardens replaced daily visits with telephone calls and the help call system; staff also used telephone, email and text messaging to undertake welfare checks and provide assistance; the Area Team was also involved in manning the Highland Council Helpline and staff continued to deal with tenancy issues throughout lockdown; as part of the housing response staff were proactive in converting available stock into temporary emergency accommodation; an emergency repairs service was also provided during lockdown; and there was housing representation on the Emergency Liaison Group.

During discussion, the following main points were raised:-

- The Committee commended the Housing team for their efforts and excellent performance during such difficult and unique conditions. The Committee requested that their appreciation be conveyed to the team;

- The proactive approach to rent arrears, which was understandable in the current climate, was welcomed and it was hoped that this sympathetic manner would continue;
- Regarding the administrative error on the time taken to complete emergency repairs, it was queried whether action had been taken to ensure this was not repeated in future; and
- Although the team had a good and clear understanding of the issues, there were future challenges ahead such as when furlough came to an end and unemployment was likely to increase. However, the new houses at Lochloy might provide an opportunity to address these serious challenges.

The Committee **NOTED** the information provided on housing performance for the period 1 April to 30 June 2020.

**7. Nairn Common Good Fund – Quarter 1 2020/21 Monitoring Report  
Maoin Math Coitcheann Inbhir Narann – Aithisg Sgrùdaidh Cairteil 1  
2020/21**

There had been circulated Joint Report No **NC/09/20** by the Executive Chief Officer, Communities and Place and Executive Chief Officer Resources and Finance.

During discussion, the following main points were raised:-

- It was felt that the maintenance charge proposed by High Life Highland for the Splash Pad was high as it had been anticipated that the costs would have at least been similar or lower to that of the original paddling pool. It was suggested that the position should continue to be monitored and reviewed after 12 months. It was stressed that the Common Good Fund would be responsible for paying for the maintenance and upkeep of this facility and there should be proper cognisance of this;
- Although understandable, it was disappointing that the facility could not be used during the summer due to COVID-19;
- Confirmation was sought and provided that there would be no metering charge for water rates for the facility. It was also highlighted that there was a water storage system therefore as there was a pump system usage/costs could be less; and
- It was accepted that the Committee had a duty of care and it was recognised that decisions were being based on the information currently available. Assurance was provided that any outstanding issues would be resolved and the final costs of the Splash Pad would be reported to a future meeting of the Committee.

The Committee **NOTED** the:-

- i. position of the Nairn Common Good Fund as shown in the Quarter 1 Revenue Monitoring Statement;
- ii. progress on delivery of the Splash Pad on the Links and the annual maintenance costs; and
- iii. any outstanding issues regarding the Splash Pad would be resolved and the final costs reported to a future meeting of the Committee.

**8. Minutes of Previous Meeting**  
**Geàrr-chunntas na Coinneimh Roimhe**

There had been circulated and **NOTED** Minutes of Meeting of the Nairnshire Committee held on 11 March 2020, which were approved by the Council on 30 July 2020.

The meeting was concluded at 11.56am.