

**The Highland Council
Caithness Committee**

Minutes of **Special Meeting of the Caithness Committee** held REMOTELY on Friday,
11 December 2020 at 10.30 am.

Present:

Mr R Bremner (am only)	Mr M Reiss
Mr D MacKay	Mr K Rosie
Mr W Mackay (am only)	Mr A Sinclair
Mr S Mackie	Ms N Sinclair

Non Members in attendance

Mr A Jarvie
Mrs D Mackay

Officials in attendance:

Mrs D Manson, Chief Executive
Ms N Grant, Interim Executive Chief Officer, Education & Learning
Mrs K Lackie, Executive Chief Officer Performance and Governance
Mrs F Malcolm, Interim Executive Chief Officer, Health and Social Care
Mrs H Ross, Senior Ward Manager, Communities and Place
Mr A Macmanus, Ward Manager, Communities and Place
Mr I Kyle, Head of Improvement and Performance
Mr A MacInnes, Administrative Assistant

Also in Attendance:

Ms P Dudek, Chief Executive, NHS Highland
Chief Superintendent, C Trickett, Police Scotland
Mr D Wilson, Scottish Fire & Rescue Service

Ms N Sinclair in the Chair

1. Apologies for Absence

There were no apologies for absence.

2. Declarations of Interest

Item 3: – Mr W Mackay, Mr K Rosie, Mr M Reiss – Non financial

3. Caithness Mental Wellbeing Pathfinder Project

Declaration of Interest - Mr W Mackay declared a non-financial interest in this item as Chairman, Caithness Learning Disabled Group ENABLE and Director, Caithness Mental Health Support Group 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.

Mr K Rosie, declared a non financial interest in this item as Chairman of Caithness Drug and Alcohol Forum 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.

Mr M Reiss, declared a non financial interest in this item as Director of Caithness Mental Health Support Group 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.

The Chair advised that this special meeting had been called as an emergency response to the escalating mental health issues in the Caithness area. The aim of the meeting was to consider a series of positive and immediate steps under the pathfinder programme, funded by the Scottish Government and agreed at the recent meeting of the Health, Social Care and Wellbeing Committee.

A wide range of guests had been invited to the meeting, highlighting the strategic importance of the Caithness challenge and the commitment of all statutory service providers.

A series of presentations were made by statutory service providers.

Presentations

The Highland Council – Mrs D Manson, Chief Executive, The Highland Council

Honesty, Courage, Understanding, and Empathy were themes highlighted in association with mental health issues. In recent months, it had been inspiring to hear the honesty that had come forward in conversations and this was intergenerational in Caithness and people wanted to open up and talk about their experiences with mental health issues that perhaps they had not shared before.

Everyone needed courage in the months ahead and many people had shown this. Courage to be able to open up and to be honest. Courage to say what is not working and what we need to do better and the need to provide the services that are required for the people of Caithness so that they can be supported with some of these issues.

There was a need to understand what was happening and whether this was just a Caithness issue. In this respect, the pathfinder project would be important for the rest of Highland and Scotland.

There was an empathy and commitment to make sure that everyone learned together. The Lead partners needed to work in a different way to provide services and consider what Caithness could offer as a community in helping to understand the issue. The Lead Partners would work together to make a difference to people's lives and regular updates on progress would be made to the Caithness Committee and the Health, Social Care and Wellbeing Committee.

Police Scotland – Chief Superintendent, C Trickett, Police Scotland

There were challenges facing Police Officers in Caithness on a daily basis. There had been a significant increase in suicides and drug related deaths in 2020. There had been an increase in violence, violent custodies in Police stations; murders; attempted murders; increases in weapon crime; increases in assaults against emergency workers. There was also a complicated drug problem with a variety of drugs in the area that were causing some of the reactions that Police Officers were experiencing.

The way to tackle some of these issues was by a collaborative approach by Lead agencies. Some of the approaches being taken by Police Scotland were highlighted and in particular Operation Ruling launched in December, 2020 following public engagement, to target crime and improve public confidence in policing.

NHS Highland – Ms P Dudek, Chief Executive, NHS Highland

There was an opportunity for Lead Partners to do something meaningful in tackling mental health issues in Caithness and other areas in Highland and to take forward the ambitions of the Christie Commission in 2011 on the future delivery of public services.

The trauma that Caithness had experienced recently with suicides and drug related deaths was devastating. The pathfinder project offered a significant opportunity to consider how we tackle inequality, poverty and bring hope to people.

Scottish Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS) – Mr D Wilson

The Scottish Fire and Rescue had a proud history of working in partnership across Scotland, Highland and in Caithness to achieve best outcomes. They worked to deliver positive community outcomes and its staff, who were positive and strong role models, were willing to be involved in any initiative to improve matters for the community.

The SFRS had some positive projects that had taken place and were due to take place in Caithness through the Fire Service Skills Employability Awards and the Prince's Trust that worked with partners and young people who were identified as at greatest risk to help them build social, team working skills and confidence. Further, a Youth Volunteer Scheme was to be developed in Wick, for young people to learn skills and be given guidance and support.

SFRS community advocates had undertaken training in identifying adverse childhood experiences and this role was key to link in with the different projects referred to in Caithness and Highland.

Thereafter, the Executive Chief Officer Education and Learning gave an introduction to the circulated Report No CC/12/20 dated 6 December 2020 in relation to the Caithness Mental Wellbeing Pathfinder project.

At this point, the Chair sought the approval of the Committee, as provided for under Standing Order 24, to adjourn the meeting for a period of 1 hour. This would allow the Committee to discuss the report and the presentations with all of the community and partner representatives present and help to inform the Committee Members consideration of the matter.

The Committee **AGREED** to adjourn the meeting and the meeting reconvened at 12 noon.

The Chair highlighted the very useful discussion that had taken place involving community and partner representatives as it was important for everyone to talk about this very important issue. There was a commitment to work together going forward and hopefully this pathfinder project would be a turning point and it could eventually be rolled out across Highland and build hope and resilience in our communities.

Following consideration of the recommendations contained in the report, the Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the five key workstreams identified through the workshops and community engagement that took place on Monday 30 November virtually in Caithness as detailed in Appendix 1 to the report;
- ii. **AGREED** to the development of the Project Action Plan as set out in Appendix 2, and that the Action Plan will make clear how the grant funding will be allocated to the Third Sector Groups operating locally to enhance the provision that is already in place;
- iii. **AGREED** to recognise the role that “lived experience” must play as an embedded part of the Action Plan;
- iv. **AGREED** to the immediate recruitment of a Strategic Lead to oversee the Pathfinder and ensure the pathfinder work and good practice is shared and developed across other Highland Communities;
- v. **AGREED** that a follow up workshop will take place early in 2021 when the strategic lead is in place to commit to the delivery of the action plan; and
- vi. **NOTED** the excellent contribution made by the elected Members, Community and many young people during the workshops sessions.

The meeting ended at 12.05 p.m.