

Highland Council

Minutes of Meeting of the **Black Isle, Dingwall and Seaforth Committee** held remotely via Microsoft Teams on 13 October 2020 at 10.30 am.

Present:

Mr G Adam
Mrs J Barclay
Mr C Fraser

Mr A MacKinnon
Mrs A MacLean
Mrs M Paterson

In attendance:

Mr M Rodgers, Executive Chief Officer - Housing and Property
Mrs A Clark, Head of Policy and Reform
Mrs D Ferguson, Senior Ward Manager, Chief Executive's Office
Ms D Agnew, Ward Manager (Black Isle, Dingwall and Seaforth), Chief Executive's Office
Mr I Moncrieff, Roads Operations Manager
Mr C Howell, Head of Infrastructure
Mr R Bartlett, Technician, Community Services
Mr D Martin, Area Education Manager
Mr J Holden, Area Housing Manager
Mr T Stott, Principal Planner, Development and Infrastructure
Mr C Baxter, Planner, Development and Infrastructure
Mr D Chisholm, Planner, Development and Infrastructure
Miss S Tarrant, Corporate Communications and Engagement Officer
Mrs A MacArthur, Administrative Assistant, Chief Executive's Office

Also in attendance:

Chief Inspector K MacLeod, Area Commander (North), Police Scotland

An asterisk in the margin denotes a recommendation to the Council. All decisions with no marking in the margin are delegated to the Committee.

Business

1. Apologies for Absence Leisgeulans

An apology for absence was intimated on behalf of Mr Graham MacKenzie.

2. Declarations of Interest Foillseachaidhean Com-pàirt

There were no declarations of interest.

3. Police – Area Performance Summary Poilis – Geàrr-chunntas Dèanadais Sgìreil

There had been circulated Report No BIDS/008/20 dated 28 September 2020 by the North Area Commander.

In discussion, the following main points were raised:-

- Members liked the new report layout and appreciated the work undertaken during the challenging Covid 19 period. Members had also welcomed the increase in visible police patrols in the area during the Covid 19 period.
- Information was requested and provided on the new traffic calming measures. There had been an incident involving a bicycle at one of the new traffic calming features in Dingwall unfortunately it had not been recorded on the police system. Commenting on the traffic calming measures outside the police station, he had noticed that traffic tended to speed up to get through the obstacle before traffic from the other direction forced them to stop. Initially when the traffic calming had been set up some informal complaints had been received.
- In response to a question on missing people, Members were advised that the police always preferred to be involved as early as possible, following initial checks by family and friends;
- Input from the police on the road study between Tore and North Kessock would be appreciated, also in the possibility of reducing the speed limit from Arpafeelie junction to Tore from 70 mph to 50 mph.

The Committee:

- i. **NOTED** progress made against the objectives set within the Highland Local Policing Plan 2017-20 Year 3, attached as Annex A to this report, for the period covering 1 April 2019 - 31 March 2020; and
- ii. **NOTED** progress made against the objectives set within the Highland Local Policing Plan 2020 – 23 Year 1, attached as Annex B to this report, for the period covering 1 April 2020 – 31 August 2020.

4. Roads Maintenance Programme Prògram Càradh Rathaid

There had been circulated Report No BIDS/009/20 dated 5 October 2020 by the Executive Chief Officer – Infrastructure and Environment which provided an update on road maintenance operations within the Black Isle, Dingwall and Seaforth area and detailed the impact of Covid-19.

In discussion, the following main points were raised and answered:-

- Members had concerns over gullies in the following locations - Leaniag Road, Conon Bridge; Craig Road, Dingwall; Ross Wynd, Dingwall; Neil Gunn Road, Dingwall and Macleod Place, Dingwall. The gullysucker had been fitted with a GPS tracker and the locations of where it had been operated would be forwarded. The gully on Church Street, Cromarty would be added to the Technical Team Programme for investigation. With

reference to an additional gully sucker for Wards 8 and 9, this would clearly be beneficial but had to be balanced out against the capital cost of purchasing the plant. The situation had improved over the last year or so as Skye, Ross and Cromarty now have their own gully sucker which is well used.

- In response to a question on run off of water onto the roads: The Road (Scotland) Act 1984 placed a duty on land owners to prevent run off onto a road. This is in contrast to the general principle that the downhill land owner has to accept water from the uphill owner. However many land owners are unable to comply with this due to various issues that include: excessive costs in constructing a suitable culvert below roads and land issues as they may not own the downhill land. Where it was clear that a situation cannot be resolved Roads and Transport can often find solutions to problems;
- On a query regarding A832 Vehicle Restraint System at Fairy Glen, the vehicle restraint system or 'safety fence' was damaged when the hillside gave way in a land slide late in 2019. This was caused by excessive rain liquefying the clay soil. Temporary works were undertaken to stabilise the road and the slope but to facilitate this the safety fence was dismantled. Mr Moncrieff recognised the concerns as the safety fence remains dismantled with the onset of winter. Consideration would be given to temporary repairs.
- In response to concerns regarding cyclical road repairs Mr Moncrieff stated that commercial quarries had shut down during the recent Covid restrictions and only cold tar was available in general from the Sconser Quarry. Hot tar was supplied on one occasion but as the plant then needed to cool down to produce cold tar again it was difficult to predict when hot tar could be produced. Hot tar is not normally transported beyond Achnasheen from Sconser due to cooling and separation of the fines and stone from the vibration associated with excess haulage. It was recognised that the delay in undertaking works not considered to be 'essential' had created a back log which would have a financial implication as damage would get worse. Patching and other operations will continue as normal throughout winter subject to driver's hours regulations and the weather.
- In relation to the Capital Programme much of the Capital Programme had been deferred to the next financial year. Some overlay schemes may be able to go ahead between now and the start of winter operations but the time is rapidly running out. Schemes that are deferred will be considered for the 2020-21 Capital Programme. Each year a draft capital programme is prepared which is a snapshot of the repairs needed on the worst roads. As some roads deteriorate faster than others it could not be guaranteed that deferred schemes would automatically be selected for the 2020-21 draft capital programme. Councillors would have the opportunity to discuss the draft capital programme at their Ward Business Meeting before either approving, amending or rejecting the programme at Committee.
- With reference to specific schemes mentioned:
 - Station Road, Dingwall - Surface Dressing:
 - this surface dressing remedial work was deferred due to Covid 19;

- as the work was weather and temperature dependent it could not now go ahead in the remaining months of this financial year;
- The surface dressing was originally laid properly using trained and competent operatives. However, that day was very warm and there were two incidents on the adjacent trunk roads that forced all traffic through Dingwall which eventually caused a gridlock. The combination of the temperature, both natural, from the cars' air conditioners dumping heat and from engines coupled with the engine vibrations travelling through the tyres caused the surface dressing stone chips to sink into the emulsion;
- At present, Mr Moncrieff did not intend to remove this scheme from his draft Capital programme for next year but note that other roads may be more deserving before the draft programme has been completed.

And in relation to Munro's Nursery Road:

- This scheme has been deferred but there was no intention at present to remove it from the 2020-21 draft Capital programme.
- The fleet review was about to start, and cognisance would need to be taken of new and more efficient plant and vehicles so that with limited resources, efficiencies could be made with better equipment;
- It was recognised that there would be a significant impact on works delivered next year due to competing demands and limited resources. Planning had already started to ensure that seasonally dependent work could be resourced across Ross and Cromarty;
- The Scottish Government effectively stopped all but essential works across Scotland's road network in early April. This meant that only the very worst potholes could be repaired on the most important roads. As restrictions relaxed other works became possible. When the full financial impact of covid 19 became apparent, the Highland Council had a significant budget gap due to lost income and additional covid 19 expenditure.
- The patching budget was significantly affected together with the hired vehicles budget as Mr Moncrieff had implemented a one man per van rule very early on to reduce the transmission rate of the virus and to provide support to concerned staff. Other revenue budgets were affected less as work was deferred.
- In relation to Jet patcher repairs at Drumsmittal it was accepted that the road remained in a poor state even after the jet patcher had been working there. The jet patcher only filled in potholes with emulsion and stone chips but didn't resolve the underlying structural problems that often cause the potholes in the first place. Reluctant to put the jet patcher back and the road requires an overlay.
- Under the circumstances Members took the opportunity to recognise the work of staff and thanked everyone involved.

The Committee **NOTED** the report.

5. Dingwall Temporary 20 mph Speed Limit and associated Traffic Calming Casg Astair Sealach 20 msu Inbhir Pheofharain agus Socrachadh Trafaig co-cheangailte

There had been circulated Report No BIDS/010/20 dated 9 September 2020 by the Executive Chief Officer – Infrastructure and Environment which provided detail on traffic calming measures and 20 mph speed limit in Dingwall.

In discussion, the following main points were raised:-

- Retention of the 20 mph speed limit and traffic calming measures would improve road safety and encourage more people to walk and cycle around the town. Many residents live to the North West of Back Road and nearby Maggie's wood is a popular place for people to enjoy a walk. Before the temporary 20 mph restriction, 60% of vehicles were recorded as exceeding the speed limit, this will certainly improve safety.
- We have the ideal opportunity to not only improve the safety of walkers, cyclists and wheelchair users, especially the primary and secondary pupils that use the Back Road route regularly, but this also ties in with the Council's commitment to climate change and cutting emissions.
- The traffic calming measures had resulted in a flood of complaints calling for their removal.
- Experience shows that typically traffic calming measures generate some initial public resistance but this tends to decrease as people get used to them. The temporary measures would clarify whether the 20 mph measures worked effectively. The public will have their say over whether they are retained permanently when formal traffic orders are promoted.

The Committee:

- i. **NOTED** the evidence led design process which determined the 20 mph limit extents and locations of the associated traffic calming in Dingwall; and
- ii. **APPROVED** the retention of the temporary traffic calming features on Back Road and Burn Place, Dingwall.

Mrs M Paterson's dissent was noted.

6. Education Scotland Reports Sgrùdaidhean le Foghlam Alba

There had been circulated Report No BIDS/011/20 dated 27 September 2020 by the Education Quality Improvement Manager which provided details of Education Scotland's inspections at Fortrose Academy during the period 2 – 5 December 2020. Mr D Martin advised that this report had been published in February but due to Covid 19 restrictions, reporting had been delayed.

Members had been pleased to see that the teacher assessment was good and requested details of training for teachers with the forthcoming Covid 19 restrictions relative to all schools in light of the loss of the National 5's testing next year. Teachers had, of course, to upskill and deliver teacher-based

assessments this year where children were unable to sit their end of year examinations. Schools continue to develop teacher based assessments in the light of the cancellation of national 5 exams for next year.

Members expressed their thanks and commended the school for their work in supporting others in the community and with young people and their welfare.

The Committee **NOTED** the report.

7. Housing Performance Report Aithisg Dèanadais a thaobh Taigheadais

There had been circulated Report No BIDS/012/20 dated 29 September 2020 by the Executive Chief Officer – Housing and Property which provided Members with information on how the Housing Section performed in relation to the Scottish Social Housing Charter and other performance indicators during the period 1 April 2020 to 30 June 2020.

In discussion, the following main points were raised:-

- Information was requested and provided on repairs in the area and with arrears where there was difficulty in meeting tenants, especially during Covid 19 restrictions. Visits were precluded where people had suspected Covid 19 and a whole different way of working had to be undertaken utilising PPE or where tenants would remain away from the area of the house while the repair was undertaken. Focus was on keeping tenants in their houses and on obtaining the rent that was due for their property and tenants were advised to get in touch if they had difficulties.
- Members expressed disappointment in the lack of “walkabout” events during this time.
- Information was requested and provided on mutual exchanges where these had had to be deferred due to the inability to inspect premises by the landlords.
- Members thanked officers for work undertaken at Brown Square, Dingwall.
- The Scottish Government were to bring in fire, heat and smoke alarm installation by February 2021, this was being monitored and the majority of Council houses already had mains wired smoke alarms installed and investigation would be made into heat and carbon monoxide alarms.
- It was still important, even during this time, to have a once a year visit to tenants to highlight any difficulties within the tenancy and vulnerable tenants who needed support.
- A discussion was undertaken on Council garages and the way forward;
- Members gave a heartfelt thank you to the Housing staff for their work during this challenging time.

Mr M Rodgers appreciated that there were challenges at this time but this area had a refreshing outlook and appreciation for the work undertaken. If officers were struggling to gain access to a property over a period of time, it was worth checking if this was a vulnerable person in need of assistance. Walkabouts were challenging but providing these could be undertaken in a safe, socially distanced

way there was no reason these could not still be undertaken and he would look into facilitating this. Asset management could be taken to the local Ward Business Meetings and he looked to become more involved in these meetings if an invitation to these meetings was forthcoming. Mr Rodgers expressed concerns over no rent increases and the relevant loss of revenue. Garages were a challenge and definitely a potential income that could be investigated.

Members thanked Mr Rodgers and invited him to the Ward Business Meeting.

The Committee **NOTED** the report.

8. Inner Moray Firth Local Development Plan 2 – Main Issues Report Plana Leasachaidh Ionadail Linne Mhoireibh A-staigh 2 – Aithisg Phrìomh Chùisean

There had been circulated Report No BIDS/013/20 dated 29 September 2020 by Executive Chief Officer – Infrastructure and Environment which sought approval for the Main Issues Report for the second Inner Moray Firth Local Development Plan to be published for public consultation. The covering report should be amended at 1.1 to read “Section 4” and not “Section 3”. At item 2.1 ii the reference should be to paragraph 6.1 and not 5.1.

In discussion, the following main points were raised:-

- Members discussed the affordable housing quotient and also older people looking to downsize their houses and requested the possibility of a requirement for 15-20% housing allocation to elderly living where properties are built to cater for additional wheelchair space and associated accessibility. Mr Stott responded that 5% of the major sites had been requested to accommodate accessible housing from the large developers. As demand grew for these accessible houses, the house builders would react and increase the available houses. There would also be a request for 5% to be designated as self-build plots.
- Information was requested and provided on the timetable for the plan, this report had five area committees to seek approval from, the last being in December, therefore it was likely the consultation would start at the beginning of next year. Neighbour notifications would be sent to people living within 50 m of any of these potential development sites and they would be given a period within which to respond. Due to the current Covid restrictions creative, enhanced online digital methods will be used to better engage with the public and ensure adequate participation and responses. Full details will be provided ahead of the consultation. Following this, representations received from the consultation will be reported back to the five relevant area committees for comment, before being presented to the Economy and Infrastructure Committee, for a decision on what the Plan should contain in its Proposed Plan form. At this stage the Plan will represent the settled view of The Highland Council and be re-issued for public consultation.
- Information was requested and given on Active Travel connections and transport links. There was a supporting document on transport which included trunk road schemes.

- Members thanked the planning team for a very comprehensive report.

The Committee:-

- (i) **APPROVED** the Main Issues Report (as applicable to this committee area) to be published for public consultation, accepting that a number of minor presentational and typographical changes will be made prior to publication;
- (ii) **AGREED** the approach to consultation outlined in paragraph 6.1 of this report; and
- (iii) **NOTED** the important role that the plan will play in addressing the Climate and Ecological Emergency, economic recovery, and in taking forward The Highland Council's agreed Indicative Regional Spatial Strategy recently submitted to Scottish Government.

9. Improving Participation and Involvement with Communities A' Leasachadh Com-pàirteachas agus Ceangal le Coimhearsnachdan

There is circulated Report No BIDS/014/20 dated 5 October 2020 by the Executive Chief Officer – Communities and Place which provided an update on the recent community conversation with groups in Black Isle, Dingwall and Seaforth. It also considered the next steps for the area, including some of the key areas for shared work and focus that are already established within the community, recent developments and potential next steps for improving involvement between the local Committee and community

In discussion, the following main points were raised:-

- Improving community involvement and participation is a core strategic priority of the Council. The onset of covid-19 had resulted in an overwhelming surge in local community involvement which presented a unique opportunity to change how we work together and to develop positive relationships and improve how decisions are made locally. Discussions during this Committee were very positive and there is a real appetite to build on all the good will and new close working partnerships that have developed as everyone has come together to focus on our Covid response. We can learn a lot from recent experiences and use this to better understand local needs and how to set priorities moving forward.
- Members advised that they were content to have a broader workshop involving some of the key community groups and partners without the need for a Member only workshop.
- As many volunteers worked during the day it was important to consider evening meetings for optimum participation.

The Committee:

- **NOTED** the feedback from the Black Isle, Dingwall and Seaforth community conversation; and
- **AGREED** to workshop session(s) with community groups from across the area to consider areas for joint work.

10. Common Good Funds
Maoin Maith Choitchinn

There had been circulated Reports Nos BIDS/015/20 – BIDS/017/20 dated 29 September 2020 by the Executive Chief Officer Finance and Resources and Executive Chief Officer Communities and Place which provided information on the following Common Good Funds:-

- a. Cromarty Common Good Fund BIDS/015/20;
- b. Dingwall Common Good Fund BIDS/016/20; and
- c. Fortrose and Rosemarkie Common Good Fund BIDS/017/20.

The Committee **NOTED** the Quarter One monitoring statement for each of the Common Good Funds.

11. Minutes
Geàrr-chunntas

There was circulated and **NOTED** Minutes of Meeting of the Black Isle, Dingwall and Seaforth Committee held on 7 July 2020 which were approved by the Council on 30 July 2020.

The meeting closed at 3.05 pm.