

The Highland Council

Minutes of Meeting of the **Nairnshire Committee** held remotely Wednesday 10 March 2021 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 W Munro, Interim Ward Manager, Performance and Governance
Mr R MacLeod, Housing Manager, Housing and Property
Mr R Porteous, Roads Operations Manager, Economy and Infrastructure
Ms S Murdoch, Common Good Fund Officer, Resources and Finance
Mrs L Dunn, Principal Administrator, Performance and Governance

Also in attendance:

Area Inspector V Tough, Police Scotland (Item 3)

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**

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

Item 5: Mr L Fraser (non-financial)

Item 7: Mr L Fraser (non-financial)

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

There had been circulated Report No **NC/02/21** by the Area Inspector.

During discussion, the following main points were raised:-

- Confirmation was provided that a proportionate response, which included engagement and education with members of the public, was being taken in respect of the issuing of Covid fines. It was also queried whether there would be more policing, particularly in areas such as the Links, as the weather improved to ensure that social distancing measures were

maintained and further information was provided on how this would be managed;

- It was welcomed that the positive community response to Covid had been recognised in the report;
- It was confirmed that there had not been a rise in suicide calls but that the trend for vulnerable person calls was increasing;
- The new testing mechanism, Drug Wipes, could be the reason for the increase in the number of people being detected for drug driving offences. It was therefore queried and clarified that there would be increased messaging and education of this method of testing in a bid to deter motorists from drug driving;
- Confirmation was provided that the missing people statistic was similar to other areas; and
- It was acknowledged that there was a need to attract and recruit Special Constables for the Nairnshire Area.

The Committee **NOTED** the progress made against the objectives set within the Highland Local Policing Plan 2020-2023 Year 1, attached as Annex A to the report, for the period covering 1 April 2020 to 31 December 2020.

4. Housing Revenue Account: Garage Rents 2021/22 Cunntas Teachd-a-steach Taigheadais: Màil Gharaidsean 2020/21

There had been circulated Report No **NC/03/21** by the Executive Chief Officer Housing and Property.

During discussion, the following main points were raised:-

- Further information was sought and provided on the process to address garages that were in a poor state of repair;
- Confirmation was provided that the total annual rent received would remain within the Nairnshire rents budget;
- It was highlighted that the Nairnshire garages/garage sites were almost fully occupied but rent levels were significantly lower than the rest of the Highlands. It was therefore felt that there was capacity for a greater increase than 2% and this should be considered for the next financial year. The Housing Manager proposed that further financial modelling be undertaken with a view to aligning Nairnshire rent levels closer to the Highland average.

The Committee **AGREED:-**

- i. a 2% rent increase to be applied to the Nairnshire Garages; and
- ii. that further financial modelling be provided on aligning the Nairnshire rent levels with the Highland average.

5. Housing Performance Report – 1 April 2020 to 31 December 2020 Aithisg Coileanaidh Taigheadais – 1 An Giblean gu 31 An Dubhlachd 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 No **NC/04/21** by the Executive Chief Officer Housing and Property.

During discussion, the following main points were raised:-

- In view of the ongoing delays due to Covid, it was queried whether there would be sufficient capacity to undertake capital programme works once permitted to do so. The Housing Manager acknowledged this concern and proposed that the Housing Investment Officer should attend a Ward Business meeting to provide further information on this; and
- The overall performance results were positive and staff were commended for their efforts. It was noted that the level of tenancy offers refused was significantly lower than the national average. This highlighted the high demand for housing in Nairnshire and the need for every effort to be made to support affordable housing for the area. It was further highlighted that in Nairnshire there was a need for a high level of housing points compared with other areas of the Highlands which further demonstrated the shortage of housing in the local area and that repurposing existing buildings would not be sufficient to meet the housing need demand.

The Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the information provided on housing performance for the period 1 April 2020 to 31 December 2020; and
- ii. **AGREED** that the Housing Investment Officer be invited to attend a future Ward Business meeting to provide further information on the roll out of the capital programme works.

6. **Nairn Area Roads Maintenance 2021/22** **Càradh Rathaidean Sgìre Inbhir Narann 2021/22**

There had been circulated Joint Report No **NC/05/21** by the Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure and Environment.

During discussion, the following main points were raised:-

- The high quality of the pavement works at the hospital was highlighted;
- There was only a small local team covering a wide remit of duties and the significant pressure on staff was highlighted;
- It was indicated that items 66 to 82 in the Appendix to the report all related to footpaths, several of which were on Council housing estates, and it was confirmed that work was underway to investigate the feasibility of using funding from the Environmental Improvement budget to assist with these works;
- Confirmation was provided that Laing Garden was not part of the Cranloch scheme but that this work would be incorporated into the roads programme and that the 50mph speed limit signs would be installed at Brackla; and
- Appreciation was expressed for the work undertaken to ensure that both the resources and benefits for the community were maximised.

Thereafter, the Committee **APPROVED** the proposed prioritised 2021/22 Roads Programme for the Nairn Area.

7. **Nairn Common Good Fund: Consultation on Links Tea Room and Store
Maoin Math Coitcheann Inbhir Narann: Co-chomhairle mu Sheòmar-teatha
is Stòr Links**

Declaration of Interest: Mr L Fraser declared a non-financial interest in this item having worked for the tenant of the Links Tea Room 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 Joint Report No **NC/06/21** by the Executive Chief Officer Communities and Place and Executive Chief Officer Resources and Finance.

During discussion, the following main points were raised:-

- Appreciation was expressed for the work that had been undertaken in regard to this initiative;
- Members expressed their support for the disposal, by lease, of the Links Tea Room;
- Disappointment was expressed that if tenders were invited for the old store and there was no interest, then a new consultation would be required. It was confirmed that there was a cost saving by making a joint application, in respect of the Tearoom and the old store, to the Sheriff Court. It was further clarified that the cost of the consultation and application process was approximately £1,800-£2,500 and these costs would be apportioned between the two assets;
- Concern was expressed at the condition of the old store which it was felt was currently unfit to be let out and it was therefore felt that the building should be demolished. Further views were expressed in support of this option;

The meeting was adjourned at 11.50am and reconvened at 12 noon.

- Members proposed that the electrical supply should be retained but that the old store should be demolished on the basis that the building was extremely dilapidated and did not readily lend itself to being repurposed; demolition of the old building and landscaping the area would be in keeping with the revamp of the Links area; no firm proposals had been received in respect of use of the building and, in the absence of these, there would be additional costs to the Common Good Fund arising from the need of a further consultation and Sheriff Court application fees.

Thereafter, the Committee:-

- NOTED** the outcome of the consultation process undertaken as contained in the analysis at Appendix 1 to the report;
- APPROVED** the responses to the issues raised in connection with both proposals;
- AGREED** the proposal to dispose, by lease, of the Links Tea Room, The Links, Nairn;

- iv. **NOTED** the response from Nairn West & Suburban Community Council regarding alternative use/repurposing of the old store on the Links and **AGREED** the proposal to dispose, by demolition, of the old store, The Links, Nairn and to return the use of the area of land to public amenity; and
- v. **NOTED** that it would be necessary to seek Sheriff Court consent in respect of both proposals.

8. Nairn Common Good Fund – Budget Setting for 2021/22 and Quarter 3 2020/21 Monitoring Report
Maoin Maitheas Coitcheann Inbhir Narann – Suidheachadh Buidseit airson 2021/22 agus Aithisg Sgrùdaidh Cairteil 3 2020//21

There had been circulated Joint Report No NC/07/21 by the Executive Chief Officer Communities and Place and Executive Chief Officer Resources and Finance.

During discussion, appreciation was extended to Mr John Prince for his help and support in the successful reduction of the fishing levies and it was hoped that this might be reduced further in future. It was also clarified that the Council absorbed the costs of standard Freedom of Information requests and that these were not recharged to the Common Good Fund.

The Committee:-

- i. **AGREED** the Nairn Common Good Fund budget for 2021/22 detailed within the report; and
- ii. **NOTED** the position of the Nairn Common Good Fund as shown in the Quarter 3 Revenue Monitoring Statement against Budget.

9. Minutes
Geàrr-chunntas

There had been circulated and **NOTED** Minutes of Meeting of the Nairnshire Committee held on 2 December 2021 which were approved by the Council on 7 January 2021.

The meeting was closed at 12.15pm.