

The Highland Council

Minutes of Meeting of the **Badenoch and Strathspey Area Committee** held in the Courtroom, Grantown Courthouse, Grantown-on-Spey on 14 November 2018 at 10.30 am.

Present:

Mr J Bruce
Mrs M Cockburn

Ms P Hadley
Mr B Lobban

In attendance:

Ms L Cowie, Ward Manager (Nairn, Badenoch and Strathspey), Chief Executive's Office
Mr G Morrison, Group Manager, Scottish Fire and Rescue Service
Mr J Henderson, Housing Investment Officer, Community Services
Mr R MacLeod, Principal Housing Officer
Mrs L Dunn, Principal Administrator, Chief Executive's Office

Also in attendance:

Dr Oliver O'Grady, Project Officer, Badenoch Great Place Project (Item 3)
Mr F Nixon, Group Manager, Scottish Fire and Rescue Service (Item 4)

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 Foillseachaidhean Com-pàirt

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

Item 3 – Ms P Hadley (non-financial)
Item 6 – Ms P Hadley (financial)
Item 7 – Ms P Hadley (financial)

At this point, the Chairman drew the Committee's attention to the brevity of the agenda, despite the diligent efforts of the Ward Manager, and expressed disappointment that reports from Community Services had been withdrawn and no report had been submitted from the Care and Learning Service in regard to Education.

Arising from this, it was stressed that it was essential that regular reports were submitted to the Area Committee providing accurate and up to date information on local schools on a range of topics including performance measures, staffing and capacity levels, and estate issues. Without this information Members could not fulfil their duties in terms of celebrating and supporting staff and pupils. The Committee was supportive of this view and the importance of reports being submitted to the Area Committee was emphasised.

The Committee **NOTED** the position.

In terms of Standing Order 9, it was **AGREED** to take item 5 at this point.

**5. Scottish Fire and Rescue Area Committee Performance Report
Aithisg Coileanaidh Comataidh Sgìreil Smàlaidh agus Teasairginn na h-Alba airson**

There had been circulated Report No BSAC/17/18 by the Area Commander.

During discussion, the following main points were raised:-

- The Chairman commended the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service for their successful performance results, especially the reduction in road traffic collisions and it was hoped that this would continue;
- Estate owners were commended for the lack of wildfires particularly as it had been an extremely dry and hot summer;
- In response to queries, confirmation was provided that there were no habitual offenders for repeated false alarms; there had been no incidents arising from fireworks; and the 8 minute rule (the time in which a crew had to get to a station for a callout) was being achieved;
- Confirmation was provided that work continued in regard to the falls prevention programme and it was anticipated that an update on this would be provided to the next meeting; and
- It was queried, and confirmed, that female members of staff attended recruitment campaigns and it was explained that targeted campaigns were also conducted to attract women such as stay at home mums.

The Committee **NOTED** the report.

**3. Presentation: Badenoch Heritage Great Place Project
Taisbeanadh: Pròiseact Dualchais agus Sàr Àiteachan Bhàideanach**

Declaration of Interest – Ms P Hadley declared a non-financial interest in this item as a Board member of Badenoch Heritage Great Place Project but having applied the test outlined in Paragraphs 5.2 and 5.3 of the Councillors’ Code of Conduct, concluded that her interest did not preclude her from taking part in the discussion.

There was a presentation by Dr Oliver O'Grady, Project Officer, on the Badenoch Great Place Project (BGPP) which was a community heritage project primarily funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund as well as through additional funding from the Cairngorms National Park Authority, Transport Scotland, Highlands and Islands Enterprise and The Highland Council along with support from a number of other partner agencies.

Dr O'Grady explained that Badenoch was an area immersed in history and the project intended to create a legacy of economic development around the area's cultural heritage. Continuing he explained the vision and project aims and explained how these had been translated into 20 project activities to be delivered across the area. He further set out the benefits of the project which included the commissioning of two important studies, namely Interpretation and Marketing Plan for Badenoch and Concept Development and Testing of a new Alternative Tourist Route for Badenoch. Concluding, he advised of the importance of sharing knowledge and urged people to get in touch and be involved in the project.

Arising from the presentation the following key points were raised:-

- The Chairman thanked Dr O'Grady for his presentation and he particularly welcomed that the project had already engaged with local schools as the children were the future of the area;
- It was recommended that the project study related to a new Alternative Tourist Route for Badenoch and should consider links with the snow roads route at the eastside of the Cairngorms leading back into Grantown-on-Spey. In doing so, this would provide strong economic support to the area via a circular tourist route i.e. exiting the A9 heading north towards Ballater, leading to Grantown-on-Spey and continuing around the southern part of Badenoch towards Laggan and Dalwhinnie;
- A number of suggestions were made in regard to areas of historical interest that could be captured within the project including the local Wade and Telford roads; capturing oral recordings from local residents; and building on increased attention on the area as result of high profile TV programmes/films being filmed on location in Badenoch; and
- Confirmation was sought and provided that the Ambassador programme would be intergenerational and this was welcome.

Following discussion, the Committee **NOTED** the presentation and **AGREED** that there be a further progress update to a future meeting later next year.

4. Badenoch and Strathspey Community Partnership Com-pàirteachas Coimhearsnachd Bhàideanach agus Shrath Spè

An overview of the development and progress of the Badenoch and Strathspey Community Partnership (BSCP) was provided by the Partnership Chair Mr Fraser Nixon. He advised that Highland Community Partnerships had been formed as a further development of the Community Planning Partnership and as a direct response to the Community Empowerment Act (2015) for Community Planning.

The key role of the Partnership was to tackle social, environmental and economic issues across Badenoch and Strathspey and a number of plans had been developed to achieve this including a Children's Plan and an Adult's Plan.

The BSCP comprised of five core public agencies, third sector organisations and other key community groups to work collaboratively with the people of Badenoch and Strathspey to improve services and deliver better outcomes. Mr Nixon emphasised the importance of community engagement and local knowledge to identify areas of priority and to support local areas/people more effectively. In conclusion, he advised that a Project Engagement Officer would be appointed imminently and that work was currently underway to explore the feasibility of transitioning across a small sum of funding from the Badenoch and Strathspey Drug and Alcohol Partnership for community use.

During discussion, the Chairman highlighted that the partnerships across the Highlands were at varying stages of development and he commended the significant progress of the BSCP to date. He welcomed the news regarding the appointment of a dedicated staff resource to the area and highlighted that the Chairman of the Access and Transport Group had indicated their desire to work collaboratively with the Partnership. With regard to utilisation of funding from the Badenoch and Strathspey Drug and Alcohol Partnership, it was suggested that this could be used towards educational opportunities at schools prior to the Christmas party season.

The Committee **NOTED** the presentation.

**6. Housing Revenue Account Capital Programme 2019-2021
Prògram Calpa Cunntas Teachd-a-steach Taigheadais 2019-2021**

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/**18**/18 dated 24 October 2018 by the Director of Community Services.

During discussion, the following main points were raised:-

- The Chairman welcomed the report and the planned improvements to the housing stock which was much needed;
- It was highlighted that key complaints in regard to housing related to heating and condensation, and balancing these contradictory issues was difficult, therefore assurance was sought and provided that the allocated budget for the area would be sufficient to meet ongoing demands;
- The level of engagement with tenants was commended and a request was made for an update to a future meeting on the infra-red heating technologies that were currently being piloted; and

- Assurance was sought, and provided, that the contract would be well managed and continuously monitored to ensure that the programme of works were being completed to a high standard.

The Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the allocation of resources to Badenoch and Strathspey Area as set out in Appendix 1 to the report;
- ii. **NOTED** the investment priorities as set out in section 4.2 of the report;
- iii. **AGREED** the proposed two year HRA Capital Programme for Badenoch and Strathspey 2019-21 as set out in Appendix 2 to the report;
- iv. **NOTED** that updates on the Housing Revenue Account Capital Programme would continue to be provided through ward briefings and at Local Committees as requested by local Members, in addition to reporting to the Environment, Development and Infrastructure Committee; and
- v. **AGREED** that an update be provided to a future meeting on the outcome of the infra-red heating technologies that were currently being trialled.

**7. Housing Performance Report – 1 April 2018 to 30 September 2018
Aithisg Coileanaidh Taigheadais – 1 An Giblean 2018 to 30 An t-Sultainn 2018**

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/19/18 by the Director of Community Services.

During discussion, the following key points were raised:-

- The overall results in the report were commended but concern was expressed at the rise in homelessness and it was queried whether this might be due to recent changes in national legislation which had made the role of the landlord more onerous and as a result landlords were being attracted to alternative uses such as Airbnb which was unregulated;
- It was queried whether evidence was being collected in order to establish the reasons private rentals were being vacated and whether information was recorded on the number of people from outwith the area which presented in Badenoch and Strathspey and registered as homeless; and
- It was reported that local estates had indicated that the recent changes in the short assured tenancy to the new system had resulted in difficulties in anticipating their needs for any tied housing that might become available as the option to close down a tenancy within six months was no longer available and consequently properties that had previously been occupied by local tenants had now become vacant. Therefore it was queried whether this type of information was being collated and compiled in

conjunction with the Council information in order to build a more comprehensive dossier of information on the local position as a whole.

Thereafter the Committee **NOTED** the information provided on housing performance for the period 1 April 2018 to 30 September 2018.

8. Minutes
Geàrr-chunntas

There had been circulated and **NOTED** Minutes of Meeting of the Badenoch and Strathspey Area Committee held on 21 August 2018 which were approved by the Council on 6 September 2018.

The meeting concluded at 11.55 am.