

**The Highland Council
Sutherland County Committee**

Minutes of Meeting of the Sutherland County Committee held remotely on Monday 17 May 2021 at 10.30am.

Present:

Mr R Gale

Mr J McGillivray

Mrs D Mackay

Officials in attendance:

Ms F Duncan, Executive Chief Officer, Health and Social Care

Mr P Tomalin, Ward Manager, Communities and Place

Ms A Donald, North Area Manager, Education & Learning

Mr N Ross, Acting Headteacher, Dornoch 3-18 Campus, Education & Learning

Mr P Mascarenhas, Community and Democratic Engagement Manager, Communities and Place

Mr E McIntosh, Localism and Engagement Coordinator, Communities and Place

Mr J Holden, Housing Manager, Housing and Property

Mrs M Grant, Principal Housing Officer, Housing and Property

Mr C Sharp, Repairs Manager, Housing and Property

Ms S Murdoch, Common Good Fund Officer, Performance and Governance

Mr K Forbes, Property Manager, Infrastructure and Environment

Ms A Macrae, Committee Administrator, Performance & Governance

Also in Attendance:

Inspector J Thomson, Police Scotland

Mr R Gale in the Chair

**1. Apologies for Absence
Leisgeulan**

Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of Ms K Currie, Mr H Morrison and Ms L Munro.

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

There were no declarations of interest.

**3. Police – Area Performance Summary
Poileas – Geàrr-chunntas air Coileanadh Sgìreil**

There had been circulated Report No SCC/06/21 by the North Area Commander.

In discussion, Members thanked Inspector Thomson and officers for all the work undertaken in the area and raised the following issues:-

- an update was sought and provided on the Police Scotland's response to the increased volume of traffic on the North Coast 500, including the provision for enhanced and targeted patrols and prevention and intervention actions with visitors;
- an explanation was sought and provided in relation to the figures shown for the detection rates with regard to theft by housebreaking in the area;
- clarification was sought and provided on the process for dealing with anti-social behaviour cases in the area involving the owners of private properties. The Inspector referred to the challenges in this regard and advised she would follow up on this matter;
- confirmation was sought and provided that illegal parking in cemetery car parks by visitors was a matter for the Council rather than the Police, the former having more enforcement powers; and
- confirmation was sought that Police Scotland and the Council worked jointly in relation to the removal of unlicensed cars parked in public spaces, the former having the enforcement powers to remove these vehicles.

The Committee following scrutiny, **NOTED** the content of the report.

4. Dornoch 3-18 Campus Overview Foir-shealladh air Campus 3-18 Dhòrnaich

There had been circulated Report No SCC/07/21 by the Executive Chief Officer Education and Learning.

The Acting Head Teacher, Dornoch Academy, provided a further update in relation to the Campus and in particular the return to schools experience, the current focus on senior phase pupils and the ongoing cross school and sector moderation being undertaken, the progress being made in relation to attainment and the focus on health and wellbeing. The Campus was committed to avoiding exclusions and on behaviour management and attendance was in line with other Highland schools. He also provided more detailed information on the 100% figures shown for leavers and positive destinations.

In discussion, Members raised the following issues:-

- an explanation was sought and provided on the range of factors taken into account in the assessment of the suitability and condition of Dornoch Academy's buildings, confirmation being provided that it was considered the building was fit for purpose;
- the suitability of the buildings at Dornoch Academy would be enhanced by the proposed investment in the tennis court/multi games area to be located to the rear of the School, and the fact the Council would take on responsibility for these facilities was welcomed.
- in addition, lobbying had been initiated to have a sports centre built in Dornoch through community renewable monies which were to become available, details of which were provided;
- the figures shown in the report for positive destinations was welcomed and further detail was sought and provided in relation to figures shown for 'unemployed and seeking'; and

- confirmation was sought and provided that it was not anticipated the peak in Dornoch Primary School's roll at Primary 4 level would create any issues going forward.

The Committee following scrutiny, **NOTED** the content of the report.

**5. Community Asset Transfer Requests
Gluasad So-mhaoin Coimhearsnachd**

There had been circulated Report No SCC/08/21 by the Executive Chief Officer Communities and Place.

Members welcomed the recommendations in the report as a positive development. The Kyle of Sutherland Development Trust had an excellent track record in delivering projects and the proposal provided an opportunity to provide a quality facility for locals and visitors.

In relation to the resource implications, an explanation was sought and provided in relation to the net saving to the Council arising from the sale of the site. In addition, it was confirmed that if Members agreed to the sale, all responsibility for the site would transfer to the Trust.

The Committee **APPROVED** the sale of South Bonar Public Toilets, Picnic Area and Car Park to the Kyle of Sutherland Development Trust for £1, if asked on the terms outlined in the report.

**6. Housing Performance Report - 1 April 2020 to 31 March 2021
Aithisg Dèanadais a thaobh Taigheadais – 1 Giblean 2020 gu 31 Màrt 2021**

There had been circulated Report No SCC/09/21 by the Executive Chief Officer Housing and Property.

The Chair advised that Mr J Holden, Housing Manager, was retiring in the near future, and on behalf the Committee conveyed thanks for his many years of service with the Council and wished him a long and happy retirement.

In discussion, Members raised the following issues:-

- the Housing Team be thanked for the work undertaken with tenants in Sutherland;
- concern at the level of increase in rent arrears shown and the impact of deferred rent payments as a result of universal credit, on the basis this could skew the figures. It was confirmed the figures for rent arrears represented a snapshot in time, and were subject to change on a weekly basis and details were provided on the most up to date figures as of the previous week;
- an explanation was sought and provided on the figures shown in Appendix 1 in relation to rent collected as a % of rent due in Sutherland; and
- information was sought on the Council house waiting list for the IV25 postcode. It was confirmed this information would be provided to Mr J McGillivray outwith the meeting.

The Committee **NOTED** the information provided on housing performance in the period from 1 April 2020 to 31 March 2021 as detailed.

7. Dornoch Common Good - Consultation on proposal to dispose, by lease, and changes of use of Common Good land at Dornoch Links to Royal Dornoch Golf Club
Maoin Math Coitcheann Dhòrnaich – Co-chomhairle mu mholadh airson toirt seachad, tro aonta-màil, agus atharrachaidhean air cleachdadh fearann Maoin Mhaith aig Fighdeach Dhòrnaich gu Club Goilf Rìoghail Dhòrnaich

There had been circulated Report No SCC/10/21 by the Executive Chief Officer Communities and Place and Executive Chief Officer Finance and Resources.

The Common Good Fund Officer advised of an amended to Appendix 1 to correct an inaccuracy included at paragraph 2(b) in relation to the rationale for the rent proposed. She explained that no visitor levy was now proposed and this section would be amended to clarify this and also the calculation of the leasehold asset, the proposed split of the rent into two parts as an incentive for the golf club in agreeing lease terms, and the likely level of rent if the new clubhouse was not built.

In discussion, Members raised the following issues:-

- this had been a challenging negotiation and consultation process and officers were commended on the work they had undertaken on the lease;
- support for the proposal and the benefits this prestigious facility would bring to Dornoch and the wider area;
- an explanation was sought and provided in relation to the fact it was understood no rent would be payable if visitor numbers fell below the threshold point;
- in regard to the above, concern was expressed at the anomaly this created in the treatment of other existing Dornoch Common Good tenants if they were experiencing difficulties generating income and possible legal challenges that may ensue;
- Dornoch Area Community Council were content with the phrasing of the proposed new lease terms as set in Appendix 2; and
- It was important that the change of use of the bowling club and release of the tennis courts translated into funding of £100k for a new sports facility at Dornoch Academy. The fact the Council would be taking full responsibility for this new sports facility was welcomed.

* Thereafter, the Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the outcome of the consultation process undertaken as contained in the analysis at **Appendix 1**;
- ii. **APPROVED** the responses to the issues raised in connection with the proposal as outlined in the table at paragraph 2 (b) of **Appendix 1, as amended**;

- iii. **NOTED** the estimated value of RDGC against the full value of Dornoch Common Good Fund will mean it must be referred to a meeting of full Council for a decision;
- iv. **AGREED** that a recommendation should be made to full Council to approve the proposal to dispose, by lease, of the area of Dornoch Links to RDGC;
- v. **AGREED** that a recommendation should be made to full Council to approve the proposals to change the use of part of the land to allow construction of a new clubhouse and part of the Bowling Club land and tennis court for improved access and parking’
- vi. **NOTED** that, if agreed, it will be necessary to seek Sheriff Court consent because the land is classed as inalienable; and
- vii. **NOTED** that other permissions may be required relating to planning however, this is a separate process to that required under Community Empowerment legislation.

8. **Minutes** **Geàrr-chunntas**

There had been circulated and **NOTED** Minutes of the Sutherland County Committee held on 1 March 2021 and 1 April 2021, which were approved by the Council on 25 March 2021 and 13 May 2021 respectively.

Arising, the Chair referred to ongoing issues with food, fuel and other types of poverty in Sutherland and proposed that this be included as a standing item on future agendas.

The Committee **AGREED** that ‘poverty in Sutherland’ be included as a standing item on future agendas.

The meeting closed at 12.15pm.