

The Highland Council

Minutes of Meeting of the **Dingwall and Seaforth Area Committee** held remotely via Microsoft Teams on 16 August 2021 at 10.30 pm.

Present:

Mr A MacKinnon
Mrs A MacLean

Mr G Mackenzie
Mrs M Paterson

In attendance:

Mr M Rodgers, ECO Property and Housing
Ms D Ferguson, Senior Ward Manager, Communities and Place
Ms D Agnew, Ward Manager (Black Isle, Dingwall and Seaforth), Communities and Place
Miss J MacLennan, Democratic Services Manager, Performance and Governance
Ms L MacKellaich, Road Safety Officer, Infrastructure, Environment and Economy
Mr R Bartlett, Technician, Roads and Transport, Infrastructure, Environment and Economy
Mr R MacLeod, Area Housing Manager, Property and Housing
Mr C Sutherland, Repairs Manager, Property and Housing
Mr K MacKenzie, Principal Repairs Officer, Property and Housing
Mr J Henderson, Housing Investment Officer, Property and Housing
Mr I Moncrieff, Roads Operations Manager, Infrastructure, Environment and Economy
Mr A Coyle, Corporate Communications and Engagement Officer, Performance and Governance
Mrs A MacArthur, Administrative Assistant, Performance and Governance

Also in attendance:

Group Commander A McKinley, Scottish Fire and Rescue Service

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

There were no apologies for absence.

2. Declarations of Interest Foillseachaidhean Com-pàirt

Item 7 – Mrs A MacLean (non-financial).

3. Appointment of Chair Cur Cathraiche an Dreuchd

Nominations were invited for the post of Chair of the Dingwall and Seaforth Area Committee.

Mrs M Paterson, seconded by Mr A MacKinnon nominated Mr G Mackenzie.

Mr Graham Mackenzie thanked members for the nomination and accepted the appointment.

Mrs M Paterson was to continue in her role as Vice Chair.

4. Scottish Fire and Rescue Service Seirbheis Smàlaidh is Teasairginn

There had been circulated Report No DSA/001/21 dated 29 July 2021 together with the Dingwall and Seaforth Performance Report by the Local Group Commander for the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service.

The Committee asked that their appreciation for the work undertaken be passed to all fire station staff. The Group commander responded to comments as follows:

- the Group Manager gave appreciation for the commitment of his staff and to the full-time employers of the retained fire station staff and the time given to attend incidents;
- the fire service and retained fire fighters have all been key workers undertaking a tremendous amount of work during the pandemic;
- the Dingwall station currently had a full complement of staff. When a recruitment campaign was carried out there was always a push for diversity and inclusivity in the staff employed. Separate recruitment evenings were also organised to promote female firefighters;
- Covid vaccinations had not unfortunately been made a priority for either firefighters or police officers, although most firefighters had now been vaccinated. Fire stations however had the best PPE supplied, stations were made Covid secure, firefighters worked in bubbles and had various measures in place to make the stations and firefighters safe.
- although they had been unable to undertake home safety visits safely during the pandemic, visits had been prioritised to areas with no smoke detection or at risk of crime. The fire service was now back to normal working and supporting the fire safety campaign;
- where wild camping was accepted where campers camped responsibly, dirty camping where people light fires and leave rubbish was not accepted. Unfortunately the Fire Service had no authority to stop fires unless the fires were at risk of getting out of control. The Fire Service used social media sites to put out information and engaged with landowners and farmers not to burn fields at certain times of high risk;
- antisocial fires are predominantly unattended barbeques and malicious lighting of fires predominantly outdoors; and
- generally false alarm signals are from poorly sited smoke detectors and Members were urged to complete the online survey for the consultation on Unwanted Fire Alarm Signals.

The Group Commander thanked members for their support.

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 Traftaig
co-cheangailte**

There had been circulated Report No DSA/002/21 dated 30 July 2021 by the Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure, Environment and Economy.

In discussion, the following main points were raised:-

- the majority of people in Dingwall wanted the 20 mph speed restriction in the town and with climate change in mind we had to look to encouraging people to walk and cycle and not take their cars;
- when you look at the Conon and Maryburgh school traffic calming which was not initially popular, people now accepted the traffic calming and it kept the speeds down at the school;
- the traffic calming provides a safer environment for pedestrians;
- respect the view of the Community Council, the Burn Place traffic calming; caused a considerable amount of delay to traffic;
- in order to bring in 20 mph without traffic calming, existing mean average speeds prior to installation of a 20 mph limit are required to be below 24 mph;
- the petition had been signed by almost 400 people and with the Community Council, it illustrated the extent of concern by a large number of people in Dingwall;
- although concerns had been raised at Old Evanton Road for years, it had not been included in the 20 mph speed limit, due to the level of traffic calming required;
- we have to go through a statutory process to make permanent the 20 mph speed limit;
- the existing schemes in residential areas involving signing and lining could be made permanent;
- no concerns had been raised by Statutory Consultees (excluding the Community Council) in relation to the proposed bus stop lay-by removal and traffic calming at the school crossing at the top of Back Road; and
- Scottish Safety Camera Programme are responsible for the management of speed cameras in Scotland and have specific site assessment criteria. These sites do not meet the criteria.

Following lengthy discussion, Mr G MacKenzie, seconded by Mrs M Paterson moved refusal of the traffic calming.

Mr A MacKinnon, seconded by Mrs A MacLean moved as an amendment the approval of the traffic calming.

There being an equality of votes, the Chair used his casting vote to vote for the refusal of the traffic calming and omitting of the 20 mph speed limit on Burn Place,

Mill Street, Back Road, Bridgend Avenue, Slaughter House Road and Strathpeffer Road in the permanent RTRO.

The Members thanked the Road Safety Team and gave their appreciation of the work undertaken on traffic calming.

The Committee:

- i. **NOTED** the background to the proposed 20 mph speed limit order and associated traffic calming for Dingwall and the representations received;
- ii. **APPROVED** the making of the Road Traffic Regulation Order omitting Burn Place, Mill Street, Back Road, Bridgend Avenue, Slaughter House Road and Strathpeffer Road;
- iii. **REFUSED** the construction of the associated traffic calming at Burn Place, Old Evanton Road and Back Road and **AGREED** that these should be looked at again; and
- iv. **NOTED** the intention to carry out speed counts to determine effectiveness of the new reduced speed limit.

6. Housing Performance Report Aithisg Dèanadais a thaobh Taigheadais

There had been circulated Report No DSA/003/21 dated 26 July 2021 by the Executive Chief Officer – Housing and Property which provides 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 2021 to 30 June 2021.

In discussion, the following responses were given:-

- visits had been reduced due to the Covid restrictions, it was hoped this would be alleviated once restrictions reduced but in essence properties are coming back in a poorer condition;
- voids had been experienced where delays had been encountered with works to properties where only one trade would enter the house at a time;
- changes to the methods of communication had seen some improvements in rent arrears;
- conscious of the need to understand the condition of the properties and of the support our tenants might need to maintain their homes and report repairs;
- there had been 48 homeless presentations in Ross and Cromarty and approximately half of these would have been in the Dingwall and Seaforth area, there had been 271 homeless presentations in Highland, the bulk of which were in Inverness;
- there was an advantage in carrying out house inspections and there would be a focus on checking the Council's vulnerable tenant's houses coming out of lockdown; and
- trade staff, contractors and housing staff would be encouraged to flag any tenant concerns when they visit a property.

Mr M Rodgers advised that the service visited properties for a range of reasons each year and that this presented opportunities to look at the condition of the property and see how the tenants were managing. In other authorities Housing staff were trained to spot any home safety issues and any other vulnerabilities that tenants may have, and we would look at the opportunity to further develop that in our service. There may be a way to interrogate our existing database to glean how many visits had been made to a property and for what purpose, and how many properties had been visited within a year.

The Committee praised the Housing Team staff for their efforts during the covid restrictions.

The Committee **NOTED** the report.

7. Dingwall and Seaforth Housing Revenue Account Capital Programme 2021-2022

Prògram Calpa Cunntas Teachd-a-steach Taigheadais Inbhir Pheofharain is Shiophoirt 2021-2022

Declaration of Interest: Mrs A MacLean declared a non-financial interest as her sister was receiving improvements to her Council house but, having applied the test outlined in Paragraphs 5.2 and 5.3 of the Councillors' Code of Conduct, concluded that their interests did not preclude their involvement in the discussion.

There had been circulated Report No DSA/004/21 dated 26 July 2021 by the Executive Chief Officer – Housing and Property.

In discussion, the following responses were given:-

- there were approximately 48 houses to receive replacement windows and doors in Deas Avenue and MacIntyre Place;
- one off budgets related to items that had not been planned, the figure was for a number of installations not just one;
- in relation to the previous item where we look for more visits and highlighting of concerns it would also be helpful to have early warnings of any house issues or deterioration in properties.

Mr M Rodgers stated that there was an expected asset life of items in a building. Stock condition surveys would be undertaken across the whole Council estate to enable us to form a view on the capital programme for future years.

The Committee:

- i. **NOTED** the allocation of resources to Dingwall and Seaforth Area as set out at 5.5;
- ii. **NOTED** the guideline investment priorities as set out in sections 5.2 of the report;
- iii. **AGREED** the proposed one-year HRA Capital Programme for Dingwall and Seaforth Area 2021-22 as set out in **Appendix 1**;

- iv. **NOTED** the position relating the current year HRA Capital Programme.
- v. **NOTED** that updates on the Housing Revenue Account Capital Programme will continue to be provided through ward briefings and at future Local Committees as requested by local Members, in addition to reporting to Housing and Property Committee.

**8. Winter Maintenance Plan 2021/22
Obair-glèidhidh Geamhraidh 2021/22**

There had been circulated Report No DSA/005/21 dated 3 August 2021 by the Interim Chief Officer – Infrastructure, Environment and Economy.

In discussion, the following responses were given:-

- having just lost the foreman at Greenhill, an Acting foreman position will be advertised this week thus maintaining establishment levels;
- the six gritters at Greenhill are for Dingwall and Seaforth area. The other gritters at Greenhill cover the Black Isle routes. There are spare gritters across Highland Council but that doesn't mean we will have one at any one depot at any particular time;
- in relation to the maintenance of gritters, all our fleet are checked prior to the winter and the spinners for the gritters are all calibrated; and
- in relation to grit bins and winter resilience no date has yet been set for sending out the communication but we would be working with community groups to provide grit bins, snow shovels and manual grit spreaders;

Thanks were given for the years of excellent service by the foreman, Mr A Macivor, at Greenhill.

The Committee **APPROVED** the Winter Maintenance Plans for Dingwall and Seaforth.

**9. Area Capital Programme 2021 – 2022 Progress Report and approval of Ward Discretionary Budget and additional schemes
Aithisg Adhartais Prògram Calpa Sgìreil 2021–2022 agus aonta Buidseat fo Ùghdarras Uàird agus sgeamaichean a bharrachd**

There had been circulated Report No DSA/006/21 dated 22 July 2021 by the Interim Chief Officer – Infrastructure, Environment and Economy.

In discussion, the following responses were given:-

- an update would be provided on the pavements in Woodlands Road, Dingwall and the road at Seaforth Road, Muir of Ord;
- reassurance was given that MacDonald Road was on the priority list and as soon as the surface dressing had been completed MacDonald Road would be undertaken; and
- one of our Roads Team will be given refresher training on the paver.

The Committee thanked the Roads Team for their hard work and:

- i. **NOTED** the progress on the 2021/22 Road Maintenance Programme for the Dingwall and Seaforth area;
- ii. **APPROVED** the proposed 2021/22 Roads Maintenance Programme schemes funded by the Additional Roads Ward allocation; and
- iii. **APPROVED** the additional capital schemes funded from Capital Budget.

10. Dingwall Common Good Fund Maoin Math Coitcheann Inbhir Pheofharain

There had been circulated Report No DSA/007/21 dated 2 August 2021 by the Executive Chief Officer – Communities and Place and the Executive Chief Officer – Resources and Finance.

The Committee **NOTED** the updated information provided in relation to the Dingwall Common Good Fund.

11. Minutes Geàrr-chunntas

There was circulated and **NOTED** Minutes of Meeting of the Black Isle, Dingwall and Seaforth Committee held on 14 April 2021 which were approved by the Council on 13 May 2021.

In discussion, the Committee:

- i. **AGREED** that a report on St Clements School be brought to each meeting of Dingwall and Seaforth Area Committee;
- ii. **AGREED** that a report on Garages – Strategic Overview be presented to November 2021 Dingwall and Seaforth Area Committee; and
- iii. **AGREED** that Members would like to see a report on Young People on Agenda for future Dingwall and Seaforth Area Committee.

The meeting closed at 12.50 pm.