

The Highland Council

Minutes of Meeting of the **Nairnshire Committee** held remotely on Wednesday 23 June 2021 at 10.30 am.

Present:

Mr L Fraser
Mr T Heggie

Mrs L MacDonald
Mr P Saggars

In attendance:

Mrs K Lackie, Executive Chief Officer, Performance & Governance
Ms E Tayler, Acting Ward Manager, Communities and Place
Mr D Wood, Principal Housing Officer, Property & Housing Service
Ms A Clark, Head of Policy & Reform, Communities and Place
Mr S Dalgarno, Development Plans Manager, Infrastructure & Environment
Ms S Murdoch, Common Good Fund Officer, Performance & Governance Service
Ms F Shearer, Area Education & Learning Manager, Education & Learning Service
Mr A MacInnes, Administrative Assistant, Performance & Governance Service

Also in attendance:

Mr R Chapman, Local Senior Officer for Highland, Scottish Fire & Rescue Service (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**

Item 5: Mr L Fraser (financial)

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

There was circulated Report No NC/09/21 by the Local Senior Officer.

During discussion the following main points were raised:-

- There would be ongoing information and education to the public on the potential risk of wild fires during the summer period.
- The increase in domestic incidents in the last period may in part be due to people staying at home due to Covid, but some incidents could have

happened whether people were at home or not i.e. faulty electrical equipment. Any local trends in incidents would be addressed, but at present there were no causes for concern in Nairnshire.

- Nairnshire had always been fortunate with good station availability and it was advised that the Service was currently recruiting to fill some vacancies.
- Members expressed their gratitude to the professionalism of the local Fire Service in keeping communities safe.

The Committee **NOTED** the content of the report.

4. Use of Ward Covid Response Funds Maointean Freagairt Covid Uàrd Inbhir Narann is Chaladair

There was circulated Report No NC/**10**/21 by the Executive Chief Officer Communities and Place.

The Committee were invited to agree to allocate funding from Covid- 19 Ward Discretionary funds to support the provision of grass cutting on the (old) Nairn Farmer's Showfield in support of health and well-being activity.

It was highlighted that the Council ought to be providing the grass cutting of this recreational area. Local Members would continue to discuss with Officers to find a solution and funding from Covid-19 Ward Discretionary funds was a temporary solution.

Thereafter, the Committee **AGREED** to allocate £1,470 from Covid- 19 Ward Discretionary funds to support the provision of grass cutting on the (old) Nairn Farmer's Showfield in support of health and well-being activity.

5. Housing Performance Report – 1 April 2020 to 31 March 2021 Aithisg Coileanaidh Taigheadais – 1 Giblean 2020 gu 31 Màrt 2021

Declaration of Interest: Mr L Fraser declared a financial interest in this item on the grounds that he undertook work 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 was circulated Report No NC/11/21 by the Executive Chief Officer Housing and Property.

During discussion, the following main points were raised:-

- It was noted that the number of house relets in was 64 and there were 450 people on the housing waiting list for Nairn and Cawdor. It was advised that there was not sufficient housing for the demand. Officers did not have difficulty allocating housing and there was a shortage of larger properties and limited choices of different types of property. Therefore more housing and a wider selection of types of property was needed.
- Staff were commended for their work in assisting tenants who were in rent arrears. In particular, the reintroduction of face to face interaction would bring positive results and that rent arrears figures should improve.

- There was an ongoing review of the points system used to allocate housing to try and make it fairer and more consistent. Officers did try hard to prioritise housing for local people and it was advised that in the Lochloy housing development all 29 properties went to local people or people associated with the area.
- Members expressed their appreciation to the work undertaken by the Housing team.

The Committee **NOTED** the information provided on housing performance for the period 1 April 2020 to 31 March 2021.

6. Nairn Common Good Fund: Consultation on proposal to dispose of Sandown Lands for development
Maoin Math Coitcheann Inbhir Narann: Co-chomhairle mu mholadh faighinn cuidhteas de Thalamh Sandown airson leasachadh

There was circulated Joint Report No NC/12/21 by the Executive Chief Officer Communities and Place and Executive Chief Officer Resources and Finance.

The report provided information on the outcome of public consultations relating to the proposal to dispose of Sandown Land, Nairn by sale for development. The Committee were invited to consider and agree the responses to the representations raised in connection with the disposal, and approve publication of same. A decision on the outcome of the consultation would then be made at the next meeting of the Committee.

Members highlighted that this was a very comprehensive consultation with a good extension of time to it that allowed as many people to participate in it as possible. Members were supportive of the responses to the comments received in the consultation.

Some of the negative tone of the comments from the public were disappointing as were inaccurate comments, personal attacks on Members and responses to these inaccuracies were welcomed. In particular, it was confirmed that the land at Kingsteps did have 29 Council houses on it and over 25% of the housing built at that site was affordable housing. Also, there was evidence that there was a significant housing need in Nairnshire, with 450 people currently on the housing waiting list for this area.

It was also highlighted that housing was not the reason for any disposal of Sandown land, but to realise an asset for the Common Good Fund. A view was expressed that the asset should not be disposed off, as it was not the right time to sell and perhaps a local referendum should be held on the issue.

In relation to the resource implications, it was stated in the report that any sale of Sandown land would represent a permanent reduction in the Nairn Common Good Asset portfolio. However, it was suggested that any sale would in fact be exchanging one asset for another asset of an equivalent value. This matter would be clarified in the next report to the Committee in September.

Also, in relation to Developer contributions it was felt they will increase in time, as the developer/landowner benefits, leaving the Local Authority to pick up most of the capital costs for services. However, any increase in developer contributions would likely reduce the value of the land. It was advised that the

likely costs of developer contributions had been factored into the value of the land and therefore considered as part of the responses to comments on the consultation.

Thereafter, the Committee:-

i. NOTED the outcome of the consultation process undertaken as contained in the analysis at Appendix 1.

ii. AGREED the responses to the representations raised in connection with the proposal as outlined in the table at paragraph 2 (b) of Appendix 1, with the addition that a comment to the response would reflect that the development at Kingsteps had over 25% affordable housing on it. Also, **APPROVED** publication of the same on the Council website and notifying those who have responded within the consultation.

iii. AGREED that to allow time for full reflection and assessment of all comments received, a decision on the outcome of the consultation will be considered at the next meeting of the Nairnshire Area Committee.

iv. NOTED that given the value of the asset, the decision on the outcome of the consultation will rest with Highland Council and Members of the Nairnshire Committee will be asked to make a recommendation to the Council.

7. **Education Report Aithisg Foghlaim**

There was circulated Report No NC/13/21 dated 24 May 2021 by the Executive Chief Officer Education and Learning.

During discussion, it was confirmed that Primary schools in the area were coping well in the current circumstances. Rosebank and Millbank Primaries still had capacity to take in more pupils and a new Nursery at Auldearn Primary School was opening. In addition, there was good early years provision in Nairnshire with details provided.

In respect of the replacement of the synthetic pitch at Nairn Academy it was confirmed that works were due to start in early July, 2021.

Continuing, with the new Academy to be built, upgrading of properties for Early years provision and good capacity in Primary schools, the education provision in Nairnshire was in a good state.

It was highlighted that the review of the school catchment areas across the Council required to be considered as part of the financial planning of the School estate.

Members extended their thanks to the Education Service for all their hard work during the period of lockdown. All staff had to be very flexible and adaptable in trying to ensure the best was done for young people and families. Some of the work undertaken in Highland had been recognised nationally and this was to be commended.

The Committee **NOTED** the contents of the report.

8. Minutes
Geàrr-chunntas

There had been circulated Minutes of Meeting of the Nairnshire Committee held on 10 March 2021 which were approved by the Council on 13 May 2021, the terms of which were **NOTED**.

The meeting was concluded at 12.20 p.m.