

The Highland Council

Minutes of Meeting of the **Sutherland County Committee** held in the Chamber, Council Offices, Drumbuie, Golspie on Tuesday 16 May 2023 at 10.30 am.

Present:

Mr M Baird
Mr R Gale (Chair)
Ms M Hutchison

Mr J McGillivray
Mr H Morrison
Ms L Niven

In attendance:

Ms F Duncan, Executive Chief Officer, Health and Social Care
Mr P Tomalin, Ward Manager
Ms J Sutherland, Roads Operation Manager
Mrs K Lyons, Principal Solicitor
Mr M Dent, Access Officer
Ms M Grant, Principal Housing Officer
Mr C Sutherland, Principal Repairs Officer
Ms P Betts, Project Officer (Community Regeneration)
Ms A Macrae, Senior Committee Officer

Also in attendance:

Station Commander M Leavey, Scottish Fire & 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.

Mr R Gale in the Chair

Business

**1. Apologies for Absence
Leisgeulan**

There were no apologies for absence.

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

There were no declarations of interest.

**3. Scottish Fire and Rescue Local Performance Report
Aithisg Dèanadais Ionadail Seirbheis Smàlaidh is Teasairginn na h-Alba**

There had been circulated Report No SCC/05/23 by the Local Senior Officer for Highland.

In discussion, Members raised the following main points:-

- a query as to whether the Service had any information on recent incidents of deliberate fires in Golspie. The Station Commander confirmed he would report back to Members on this issue;

- an update was sought and provided on the plans for delivering the Driving Ambitions initiative in partnership going forward, including engagement with young people and schools;
- an explanation was sought on the figures for station availability at Tongue and Bonar Bridge and a query in relation to recruitment status at the Lochinver station. The Station Commander advised he would provide Members with a more detailed response on the issues raised. He also referred to the joint mobilisation protocol being undertaken between Tongue and Bettyhill stations;
- potential initiatives to encourage recruitment in the Bonar Bridge/Ardgay area given there was more of a population in this area compared to other rural settlements in Sutherland;
- an update was sought and provided on progress with the roll out of lighter personal protection equipment in the area for firefighters attending wild fires;
- an explanation was sought and provided on the process within the Service for providing station commanders with advance notice of muirburn in the area; and
- the Service be commended on the work undertaken in Sutherland to keep the public safe.

The Committee **NOTED** the Area Performance Report.

4. **The Progress of School Counselling Services in Sutherland Comhairleachadh Sgoile ann an Cataibh**

There had been circulated Report No SCC/06/23 by the Executive Chief Officer Education and Learning.

In discussion, Members raised the following main points:-

- queries as to how many counsellors covered Sutherland and their general availability and in relation to the timescales for young persons to access counselling sessions. It was confirmed that a response to these points would be provided to Members outwith the meeting;
- it was positive there was provision for self-referrals and that pupils were generally able to access counselling timely;
- confirmation was sought and provided that arrangements would be made for counsellors providing services in Sutherland to attend a future Area Business meeting; and
- confirmation was sought and provided that approximately a third of all referrals continued to be due to anxiety.

The Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the progress to date with respect to counselling in schools;
- ii. **NOTED** the very recent changes in some of the provision in schools in Sutherland; and
- iii. **NOTED** the wider supports in place in relation to the mental health and emotional wellbeing of children and young people in our schools as noted in the Committee paper from September 2022 as noted in the report.

5. **Area Roads Capital Programme 2023/24** **Prògram Calpa Rathaidean Sgireil 2023/24**

There had been circulated Report No SCC/07/23 by the Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure & Environment.

In discussion, Members raised the following main points:-

- the additional funding for roads approved at the Economy and Infrastructure Committee on 4 May 2023 was a positive development. However, it was important to be aware this would allow only approximately 22/23 schemes of the full priority list for Sutherland set out in Appendix 2 of the report to be progressed;
- welcoming that the B9176 Ardgay to Evanton road would be progressed in the current year, noting the Struie route was also one of the main arteries for North and West Sutherland. It was disappointing that similar works were not being progressed on the route outwith the area;
- further clarity was sought and provided on the status of the pavements in Bonar Bridge in the recommended priority list. Members had the ability to accelerate works within the Programme if they so wished;
- noting that any queries in relation to the condition of the Naver Bridge be referred to the appropriate structures team within the Service;
- an update was sought and provided that staff training to allow the pothole pro to be deployed in Sutherland was being organised;
- an update was sought and provided in relation to crash barriers, noting this was a specialised area managed by the Service centrally. The prioritised list of schemes for Sutherland had been provided to the relevant team within the Service;
- the fact the majority of works would be carried out in house was welcomed, while acknowledging the need to use external contractors as and when required to ensure the budget allocation was spent; and
- the Service be congratulated on the proactive approach being taken in relation to the Helmsdale to Melvich Road.

The Committee **APPROVED** the proposed prioritised Area Roads Capital Programme for Sutherland Area.

6. **Sutherland Spaceport Byelaws to Restrict Public Access** **Fo-laghan Port-fànais Ionad Fànais Chataibh airson Inntrigeadh Poblach a Chuingealachadh**

There had been circulated Report No SCC/08/23 by the Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure & Environment.

In discussion, Members raised the following main points:-

- an explanation was sought and provided that it would not be practical to process a Section 11 Order under the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003 for each launch event as this would place an undue burden on the Council in terms of workload. The proposed byelaws would allow access to be managed more flexibility around launch events given likely constraints such as timing of launches due to weather and technical matters;

- confirmation was sought and provided that any parties who had a right to access the land, such as those with grazing rights, crofting tenures, landowners or those with the express permission of the landowner(s) would not be affected by the proposed byelaws;
- further clarity was sought and provided that the byelaw would be worded so that responsibility for clearing and enforcing the exclusion zone would be passed onto the site operator or range licensee; and
- confirmation was sought and provided that provision for the public who wished to view the launches would form part of the Visitor Management Plan. It was also likely that the highway would be subject to a traffic order for launches.

The Committee **AGREED** to:-

- i. promote draft byelaws to restrict public access to the launch exclusion zone associated with Space Hub Sutherland during launches; and
- ii. make the proposed byelaws available for public inspection and to consult those persons and bodies set out in Section 12 (7) of the 2003 Act.

7. Housing Performance Report – 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023
Aithisg Dèanadais a thaobh Taigheadais – 1 Giblean 2022 gu 31 Màrt 2023

There had been circulated Report No SCC/09/23 by the Executive Chief Officer Housing and Property.

In discussion, Members raised the following main points:-

- confirmation was sought and provided that the number of void properties in Sutherland was low. There were currently two hard to let properties located in Lochinver and Melvich;
- further clarity was sought and provided on the current complement of tradesmen within the Service in the area. In addition, reference was made to the challenges around the willingness of contractors to travel to North and West Sutherland;
- information was sought and provided in relation to the level of rent arrears, in Sutherland, noting these were relatively low compared to other areas in Highland;
- a query in relation to the level of rent arrears shown for East Sutherland and Edderton in Quarter 4 as a proportion of the total rent income for Sutherland. It was confirmed that this information would be provided to Members outwith the meeting; and
- further clarity was sought and provided that in terms of homelessness no impact had been observed due to the closure of the Women's Aid refuge in Inverness or issues raised at the Homeless Working Group.

The Committee **NOTED** the information provided on housing performance in the period 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023.

**8. Community Regeneration Fund – Assessment of Applications
Maoin Ath-bheòthachadh Coimhearsnachd – Measadh Iarrtasan**

There had been circulated Report No SCC/10/23 by the Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure & Environment.

Thanks having been expressed to the Project Officer for the work involved, the Committee:-

- i. **APPROVED** the application presented for a funding award from the Community Regeneration Fund as follows:-

Applicant	Project	Grant Awarded
Dornoch Heritage SCIO	Historylinks Extension Project – Phase 3 - Construction	£50,000.00

- ii. **AGREED** to ringfence up to the balance of remaining funding (£101,673.65) for a transport project, which would be brought back as a full application to a future Committee for consideration.

**9. Repurposing Sutherland Place Based Investment Fund – Repair Golspie Public Toilets
Ag Ath-adhbhrachadh Maoin Stèidhichte air Àite Chataibh – Càradh Taighean-beaga Poblach Ghoillspidh**

There had been circulated Report No SCC/11/23 by the Head of Community Support and Engagement.

The Committee **AGREED** a contribution of £1,878 towards the repair of Golspie Public Toilets.

**10. Dornoch Common Good
Dornoch Heritage Society - Application for funding
Math Coitcheann Dhòrnaich
Comann Dualchais Dhòrnaich – Iarrtas airson Maoineachadh**

There had been circulated Report No SCC/12/23 by the Head of Community Support and Engagement.

The Committee **APPROVED** £50,000 to Dornoch Heritage SCIO for the Historylinks Museum Extension project (Phase 3), subject to match funding being in place.

**11. Ward Discretionary Awards
Duaisean fo Ùghdarras Uàird**

North, West and Central Sutherland Ward Discretionary Budget applications approved 1 April 2022 – 31 March 2023

The Committee **NOTED** that the following North, West and Central Sutherland Ward Discretionary Budget applications were approved in the 2022/23 Financial Year:

Loch Shin Sailing Club – Sailing Equipment	£1,155.00
Naver Telecentre Centre – Service Development and Community Outreach	£1,528.00
NW Training Centre – Adult Learning Programme 2022-2023	£1,500.00
Kyle of Sutherland Development Trust – Sutherland Wellbeing Promotional Plan	£415.00
Community Care Assynt – Drop in Hub	£4,413.00
Culrain Hall – Replacing flat roof	£4,175.00
Lairg and District Community Initiatives – Emergency Food Parcels	£200.00
Kyle of Sutherland Development Trust – Promoting Community Partnership	£400.00
Durness CC - Purchasing Defibrillators	£2,820.00
Scourie Community Development Co – Mental Health Support	£350.00

East Sutherland and Edderton Ward Discretionary Budget applications approved 1 April 2022 – 31 March 2023

The Committee **NOTED** that the following East Sutherland and Edderton Ward Discretionary Budget applications were approved applications approved in the 2022/23 Financial Year:

Clyne Heritage Society – Greeanan Community Archaeological Excavation	£2,500.00
Highland Historic Buildings Trust – Easter Ross Churches Trail	£350.00
Kyle of Sutherland Development Trust – Sutherland Wellbeing Promotional Plan	£415.00
HLH Youth Zone – Summer Activities, Holiday Hunger and Safe Space Drop-in	£2,900.00
Sutherland Care Forum - Food Support Worker	£2,000.00
Go Golspie – Development Officer Project	£3,000.00
Dornoch Academy – Trip to Scottish Parliament	£795.00
Dornoch Allsorts – After School Childcare	£1,000.00
Dornoch Free Church – The Living Room	£350.00
Kyle of Sutherland Development Trust – Promoting Community Partnership	£400.00
Clyne Heritage Society – 25 year celebrations	£920.00
Lochview Rural Training – Family and Adult Learning	£900.00
Sutherland Care Forum - Food and Heat Support	£500.00
St Andrew's Church, Golspie – Food and Fuel Support	£500.00

North, West and Central Sutherland Ward Discretionary Budget applications approved 1 April 2023 – 31 March 2024

The Committee **NOTED** that the following North, West and Central Sutherland Ward Discretionary Budget applications had been approved since 1 April 2023:

Lairg Community Council - Lairg Bird Hide upgrade	£2,000.00
Sutherland Women's Football Club - Transport Funds	£800.00

East Sutherland and Edderton Ward Discretionary Budget applications approved 1 April 2023 – 31 March 2024

The Committee **NOTED** that the following East Sutherland and Edderton Ward Discretionary Budget applications had been approved since 1 April 2023:

Clyne Heritage Society – Aultcraggie Roundhouses Archaeological Excavation	£500.00
Dornoch Bowling Club – Victorian Benches	£700.00
East Sutherland Camera Club – Highland Challenge 2023	£600.00
Sutherland Women's Football Club - Transport Funds	£800.00

**12. Minutes
Geàrr-chunntas**

There was circulated and **NOTED** the Minutes of the Sutherland County Committee held on 24 January 2023, which were approved by the Council on 9 March 2023.

The meeting concluded at 11.40am.