

The Highland Council

Minutes of Meeting of the **Sutherland County Committee** held in the Chamber, Council Offices, Drumbuie, Golspie on Tuesday 8 August 2023 at 10.30 am.

Present:

Mr M Baird

Mr R Gale

Ms M Hutchison (remote)

Mr J McGillivray

Mr H Morrison (remote)

Ms L Niven

In attendance:

Mr P Tomalin, Ward Manager

Ms J Sutherland, Roads Operation Manager

Ms A Macrae, Senior Committee Officer

Also in attendance:

Chief Inspector S Fitzpatrick, Police Scotland

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. Recess Powers Cumhachdan Fosaidh

The Committee **NOTED** that the recess powers granted by the Council at its meeting on 29 June 2023 did not require to be exercised in relation to the business of the Sutherland County Committee.

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

There had been circulated Report No SCC/13/23 by the North Area Commander.

During discussion, Members raised the following main points:-

- the Chief Inspector and officers were commended for the work they undertook across Sutherland, particularly in supporting vulnerable people

with mental health issues, and at a time when there was pressure on Police Scotland's resources;

- an explanation was sought and provided on the percentages shown in the report in relation to detection rates;
- the potential for more enforcement action to be undertaken on the NC500 to tackle speeding. The Chief Inspector advised that there were resourcing issues around the ability to have dedicated patrolling on the route all year round. However, the route would continue to be monitored and feedback on hot spots or requests to target specific problem areas would be welcomed;
- an explanation was sought and provided on the detection rates for and wider issues around fraud, including electronic fraud, and noting that the vast majority were conducted from outwith the UK;
- clarification was sought and provided that the potential to install road signage as a deterrent to speeding on the A836 Balblair straight and to undertake speed surveys was the responsibility of the Council, and that Police Scotland were supportive of such measures;
- advice was sought and provided on the issues around volunteers undertaking speed surveys in the Dornoch/Embo area and the opportunity to learn from a volunteer initiative in Argyll; and
- Brora Community Council had raised an issue in relation to an offer by Police Scotland to have meetings in East Sutherland earlier in 2023 which it was understood had not taken place. The Chief Inspector confirmed that he would follow up on this matter.

The Committee **NOTED** the progress made against the objectives set within the Highland Local Policing Plan 2020-2023 Year 2, attached as Annex A to this report, for the period covering 01 April 2022 – 31 March 2023.

5. Winter Service Plan for 2023/24 Plana Seirbheis Geamhraidh airson 2023/24

There had been circulated Report No SCC/14/23 by the Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure and Environment.

In discussion, a point was raised regarding the potential for the Council to promote its winter resilience scheme to the public with a view to increasing its uptake. It was confirmed that the opportunities in this regard would be raised with the Corporate Communications team.

Thereafter, an amendment to the Plan was proposed that the road from Lochinver Primary School, South, to Inverkirkaig Bridge, a distance of approximately 2.5miles/4km, be re-prioritised from the category "Other" to "Secondary", as defined in The Highland Council Community Services Winter Service Policy August 2018, paragraph 3.1, Network Hierarchy. This was on the basis that this was a school bus route for primary and high school pupils and currently 16 young people depended on the route to access their education.

The Chair advised that he was aware the proposed amendment would possibly have financial implications for which there was no provision within the available budget for Sutherland and therefore would require to be referred to the full Council for approval.

The Roads Operation Manager advised that adding a 'secondary' route to the Plan would have financial implications for the budget and there may also be resource implications in that area associated with the proposal, for example in terms of staffing levels and driver hours.

*Thereafter, the Committee **APPROVED** the Winter Service Plan for 2023/24 with an amendment, subject to approval at full Council, that the road from Lochinver Primary School, South, to Inverkirkaig Bridge, a distance of approximately 2.5miles/4km, be re-prioritised from the category "Other" to "Secondary", as defined in The Highland Council Community Services Winter Service Policy August 2018, paragraph 3.1, Network Hierarchy.

6. **Dornoch Business Improvement District** **Roinn Leasachadh Gnothachais Dhòrnaich**

There had been circulated Report No SCC/15/23 by the Executive Chief Officer Communities and Place.

In discussion, Members raised the following main points:-

- further clarity was provided on the BID levy that would be payable by businesses and the 12 charging bands that would apply;
- providing further context and background to the development of the BID proposal and the next phase. The Dornoch Area Community Interest Company and Ward Manager were thanked for their hard work in moving the BID forward;
- an explanation was sought and provided that if the result of the ballot of local businesses was to proceed with the BID proposal this would be binding on all businesses and they would be compelled to pay the levy. The levy would be collected through the Non Domestic Rates System by the Council and any defaults on payment would be pursued through its normal enforcement procedures; and
- further clarity was provided that for the BID proposal to be accepted by the Scottish Government a level of support had to be demonstrated and approximately 30% of businesses in Dornoch had indicated they were supportive of the proposal.

The Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the proposals for the establishment of a Business Improvement District in Dornoch; and
- ii. *** AGREED to RECOMMEND** to full Council that it supports the Dornoch BID Proposal when this is considered at the meeting of the Highland Council on 14 September 2023. This will be subject to the Economy and Infrastructure Committee confirming that Highland Council has no cause to exercise its right of veto in respect of the establishment of the BID.

7. **Dornoch Common Good Quarterly Monitoring Report** **Aithisg Sgrùdaidh Ràitheil Math Coitcheann Dhòrnaich**

There had been circulated Report No SCC/16/23 by the Head of Community Support and Engagement.

In discussion, reference was made to the excellent work being undertaken through the Fund, including the two major projects being progressed, and the benefits this work was delivering for Dornoch.

The Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the position of Dornoch Common Good fund at the end of the first quarter FY 23/24;
- ii. **HOMOLOGATED** £13,163 of expenditure on essential repairs to Dornoch Beach car parks; and
- iii. **NOTED** the update on current Dornoch Common Good issues.

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

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 have 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
Farr Youth Development – High Life Highland - Day Trip to Durness	£240.00
The Sutherland Community Partnership - Community Learning Exchange	£500.00
Kyle of Sutherland Development Trust - Kyle Feeds	£1,000.00
Lairg & District Community Initiative - Replace Flag Pole	£500.00

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 have 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
Go Golspie - Caretaker Post	£500.00
Dornoch Bowling Club - Defib at Clubhouse	£1,641.96
The Sutherland Community Partnership - Community Learning Exchange	£500.00
Dornoch Academy - Edinburgh Book Festival Literacy Trip	£1,175.00
The Embo Trust - Old School Reset	£600.00
HLH - Dornoch Youth Services Summer Activity Programme	£1,000.00

12. Minutes Geàrr-chunntas

There was circulated and **NOTED** the Minutes of the Sutherland County Committee held on 16 May 2023, which were approved by the Council on 29 June 2023.

Additional Item PSA Hours in Sutherland

The Chair indicated that from that information, it would appear there had been little change in the number of hours, however that was contrary to the information that he had received from concerned parents. For example, the parents of Rogart Primary School had advised him that the number of PSA hours allocated to the school had dropped significantly in spite of an increase in demand.

He expressed concern that the algorithm that was used to determine the hours required in any particular school was flawed and as such was not addressing the level of need that existed.

Given this involved the most vulnerable children, the Chair proposed that the Committee calls upon the Council to review the PSA hours allocation to all schools and in particular to remote and rural schools, and that consultations be carried out with staff and parents to determine the actual level of PSA hours required to meet the requirements of all children who need that additional support.

Thereafter, the Committee **AGREED** to call upon the Council to review the PSA hours allocation to all schools in Sutherland in particular to remote and rural schools, and that consultations be carried out with staff and parents to determine the actual level of PSA hours required to meet the requirements of all children who need that additional support.

The meeting concluded at 11.40am.