

The Highland Council

Minutes of Meeting of the **Black Isle Committee** held remotely via Microsoft Teams on Tuesday 7 November 2023 at 10.30 am.

Present:

Ms S Atkin
Ms L Johnston

Ms M MacCallum

In attendance:

Mr B Cameron, Service Lead – Housing Policy and Performance
Ms H Ross, Senior Ward Manager
Mr M Greig, Ward Manager
Ms J Wileman, Assistant Ward Manager
Mr A Coyle, Corporate Communications and Engagement Officer
Ms M Murray, Principal Committee Officer, Performance and Governance

Also in attendance:

Mr P Young, 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.

Ms L Johnston in the Chair

Business

1. Apologies for Absence Leisgeulan

There were no apologies for absence.

2. Declarations of Interest/Transparency Statement Foillseachaidhean Com-pàirt/ Aithris Fhollaiseachd

There were no declarations of interest or transparency statements.

3. Scottish Fire and Rescue Performance Report Seirbheis Smàlaidh is Teasairginn

There had been circulated Report No BI/13/23 dated 25 October 2023 by the Local Group Manager for the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS).

During discussion, the following main points were raised:-

- information was sought, and provided, on the procedure when there was an automated fire alarm during the night; progress with recruitment of firefighters in Fortrose; the cause of the deliberate fires that had taken place; and the location and cause of the road traffic collisions that had taken place, which were above average;
- it was reassuring that there had been no accidental dwelling fires in this reporting period;

- appreciation was expressed for the work of the SFRS in the communities of Fortrose and Cromarty. In particular, Members commended the outstanding work that had taken place in respect of the Halloween community event in Cromarty;
- the SFRS had had an extremely challenging summer, and appreciation was expressed for their heroic efforts in tackling the unprecedented wildfires that had taken place;
- reference having been made to a vehicle fire that had taken place in Cromarty, concern was expressed regarding appliance availability, not only in the Black Isle but across Highland, and information was sought, and provided, in that regard and on minimum crewing levels. On the point being raised, it was confirmed that Cromarty Community Response Unit staff were not respiratory trained. However, the Cromarty appliance dealt with road traffic accidents and wildfires, and had been a great asset at the recent incidents in Cannich and Daviot; and
- in response to a question, it was explained that the joint mobilising arrangements that were in place in some remote areas were at the pilot stage. However, the scheme was under constant review, and it was possible it could be rolled out to other areas going forward.

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

4. Black Isle Ward Discretionary Budget applications approved since 23 May 2023

Iarrtasan Buidseit fo Ùghdarras Uàird an Eilein Duibh air an Aontachadh bho 23 an Cèitean 2023

The Committee **NOTED** that the following Black Isle Ward Discretionary Budget applications had been approved since 23 May 2023:-

- Fortrose Academy Parent Council - Duke of Edinburgh Awards Expedition - £1,000
- Chanonry Sailing Club SCIO - Quest to Develop: Purchase of two RS Quest Sailing Dinghies - £500
- Knockbain Community Council - North Kessock Underpass Community Artwork & Youth Competition - £2,300
- Highland Rugby Club - Under 16 Legacy Tour to Italy in October 2023 - Multi Ward - Lead Officer Mark Greig - £400
- First Scottish Searching Services - Legal Report Munlochry Tennis Court - £76
- Avoch and Killen Community Council - to support the running costs for the local public bathrooms - £1,000.
- Ferintosh Community Council - contribution towards the cost of maintaining equipment and insurance - £250.

In relation to the North Kessock Underpass Community Artwork and Youth Competition, Members commended the artist involved and the impact of the artwork on the underpass. Members also praised the efforts of parents at Fortrose Academy in relation to Duke of Edinburgh Awards.

It was highlighted that, since the above applications had been approved, the maximum award had been reduced to £1000 to ensure that the funding went as far as possible. A small amount of money at community level made a huge difference and it would be great to support more community projects going forward.

5. Common Good Funds Maoin Maith Choitchinn

a. Cromarty Common Good Fund – Quarter Two Monitoring Report

There had been circulated joint Report No BI/14/23 dated 4 October 2023 by the Executive Chief Officer Communities and Place and the Head of Corporate Finance and Commercialism.

In introducing the report, the Senior Ward Manager drew attention to the proposed budget changes as a result of the reclassification of the Victoria Hall. In relation to the options set out in the report in respect of the grants budget, it was explained that the officer recommendation was to set a nil budget.

During discussion, the following main points were raised:-

- Members were content to set a nil grants budget in the short-term with the caveat it could be reinstated if the position of the fund was to change or if there was a project that had significant community impact that merited support; and
- the East Hall remained empty and it was necessary to consider the impact that might have on the fabric of the building in the long-term. Impetus was needed to bring it back into use so it could serve the community and generate income for the Common Good Fund. The Senior Ward Manager confirmed that she had noted Members' comments and suggested the matter be picked up following the Community Support and Engagement Team restructure when the officer appointed to support the Black Isle would be looking to build relationships with community groups. Members welcomed the suggestion, added that the Cromarty community was resourceful and it was amazing what could be achieved with some creativity.

The Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the position of Cromarty Common Good Fund as shown in the 2023/24 Quarter Two Monitoring Statement; and
- ii. **AGREED** the proposed budget changes outlined in paragraph 4 of the report in order to reflect the reduced income now available to the fund as a result of the reclassification of the Victoria Hall and to avoid a deficit budget; and
- iii. **AGREED** to set a nil grants budget on the basis that it could be reinstated if the position of the fund was to change or in exceptional circumstances.

b. Fortrose and Rosemarkie Common Good Fund – 2023/24 Quarter Two Monitoring Report

There had been circulated joint Report No BI/15/23 dated 5 October 2023 by the Executive Chief Officer Communities and Place and the Head of Corporate Finance and Commercialism.

The Senior Ward Manager highlighted that, due to a miscommunication, there was an error in the report in that the contract for the urgent safety works to the gabions on the coastal area running from the Golf Club House towards Rosemarkie had not yet been awarded. The recommendation was therefore that the Committee approve expenditure estimated at £90,000 to deliver the urgent safety works required.

A detailed discussion took place during which Members expressed concern regarding the devastating impact of coastal erosion, not only on the gabions, as detailed in the report, but on surrounding areas which were beyond the scope of the Committee. In relation to the gabions, whilst the proposed expenditure was significant relative to the size of the Common Good Fund, the works were essential given the safety risk. However, the effectiveness of gabions having been questioned, it was emphasised that the urgent nature of the repairs was about making them safe, not more effective.

With regard to the surrounding areas that were beyond the scope of the Committee, and noting the need for urgency, the Senior Ward Manager undertook to liaise with Members and appropriate officers and arrange an initial meeting on the earliest possible date. It was noted that wider engagement with stakeholders would also be needed.

Thanks having been expressed to the Senior Ward Manager for her efforts in respect of this and the preceding Common Good report, the Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the position of Fortrose and Rosemarkie Common Good Fund as shown in the 2023/24 Quarter Two Monitoring Statement; and
- ii. **APPROVED** expenditure estimated at £90,000 to deliver urgent safety works to the gabions on the coastal area running from the Golf Club House towards Rosemarkie.

6. Minutes Geàrr-chunntas

The Committee **NOTED** the Minutes of Meeting of the Black Isle Committee held on 15 August 2023 which had been approved by the Council on 29 June 2023.

The meeting concluded at 11.15 am.