

The Highland Council

Minutes of Meeting of the **Black Isle and Easter Ross Area Committee** held remotely on Monday, 22 January 2024, at 10.30 am.

Present:

Ms T Collier	Ms M Nolan
Ms L Johnston	Mr A Rhind
Mr D Louden	Ms M Ross
Ms M MacCallum	

Participating Officials:

Ms H Ross, Senior Ward Manager
Mr B Cameron, Head of Housing and Building Maintenance
Mr I Moncrieff, Area Roads Operations Manager
Mr M Culbertson, Project Officer- Community Regeneration
Ms A Tanner, Community Regeneration Team
Ms F MacBain, Senior Committee Officer

Also in Attendance:

Inspector Richard Ross, Police Scotland (Item 4)

**An asterisk in the margin denotes a recommendation to the Council.
All decisions with no marking in the margin are delegated to Committee.**

Ms L Johnston in the Chair

1. **Appointment of Chair and Vice Chair** **Cur Cathraiche agus Iar-Chathraiche an Dreuchd**

Ms M MacCallum, seconded by Ms M Nolan, **MOVED** to defer the appointment of the Chair and Vice Chair to the next meeting due to the absence of a number of members of the committee.

Ms L Johnston, seconded by Ms T Collier, moved as an **AMENDMENT**, to appoint the Chair and Vice Chair immediately.

There were two votes for the motion and five votes for the amendment, and the **AMENDMENT** was carried, the votes having been cast as follows:

For the motion: Ms M MacCallum, Ms M Nolan

For the amendment: Ms T Collier, Ms L Johnston, Mr D Louden, Mr A Rhind, Ms M Ross

The Committee **AGREED:**

- i. to appoint Ms L Johnston as Chair, and Ms M MacCallum as Vice Chair, of the Black Isle and Easter Ross Area Committee; and

- ii. to investigate the possibility of appointing a second Vice Chair at the next meeting of the Committee.

2. Apologies for Absence Leisgeulan

Apologies were intimated on behalf of Ms S Atkin, Ms M Smith and Ms P Munro.

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

Item 6 – Mr A Rhind, Ms M Ross, Mr D Louden

4. Police – Area Performance Report Poilis – Geàrr-chunntas Dèanadais Sgìreil

There had been circulated Report No BIER/01/24 by Chief Inspector Stuart Fitzpatrick - Area Commander (North Highland Area Command).

During discussion, the following issues were raised:

- the geographic area of the North Highland Area Command was clarified;
- information was sought and provided on the types of shoplifting offenders, and preventative measures being undertaken, which included assisting retailers to improve security. Vulnerable offenders, who were thought to be shoplifting due to need, were reported to partner agencies as appropriate;
- the drop in the numbers of Looked After children being reported as missing was welcomed;
- information was sought and provided on sexual and drink spiking offences, and on driving offence detection policy; and
- Mr Rhind expressed disappointment the Council did not keep more schools open during periods of severe weather.

The Committee **NOTED**:

- i. progress made against the objectives set within the Highland Local Policing Plan 2023 – 2024 Year 1 attached as Annex A to this report, for the period covering 01 April 2023 – 30 November 2023; and
- ii. the change in format necessitated by a reduction in back office capacity to prepare additional area committee reports.

5. Garage Rents Màil Gharaidsean

There had been circulated Report No BIER/02/24 by the Executive Chief Officer Property and Housing.

During discussion, Members referred to the need for investment to reduce the number of void garages, and the relative affordability of garage rents. Consideration was given to both a 7.3%, and a 7.95% rise, and clarification was

sought and provided that the increases were in line with Council house rent increases.

The Committee **AGREED** that a 7.95% rent increase be applied to Black Isle and Easter Ross Garages and Garage Sites.

**6. Community Regeneration Fund – Assessment of Applications
Maoin Ath-bheòthachadh Coimhearsnachd – Measadh Iartasan**

Declarations of Interest - the undernoted Members made declarations of interest and, in accordance with paragraph 5.6 of the revised Code of Conduct, left the meeting for this item:

- **Maureen Ross, as a Project Management Team member for the Tain & Fearn Free Church – New Build, as a director of the Seaboard Memorial Hall Ltd, and as a Trustee of the Seaboard Polytunnel Group;**
- **Derek Loudon, as a director of Tain Heritage Trust; and**
- **Alasdair Rhind, as Chair of the Tain Initiative.**

Transparency Statement - Maureen Ross, in relation to the Fearn Amenities SCIO 2 applications, as she was asked to help them on a voluntary advisory basis in relation to their application, declared a connection but, having applied the objective test, did not consider that she had an interest to declare.

There had been circulated Report No BIER/03/24 by the Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure, Environment & Economy.

Members considered the applications as follows:

Applicant	Project	Grant approved
Cromarty and Resolis Film Society	Improving Cinema Accessibility	£35,815.00
Culbokie Community Trust	Culbokie Village Hub	£30,000.00
Ferintosh Community Hall	Repairs to external walls	£30,216.00
Fearn Amenities SCIO	Fearn Abbey Regeneration Project	£20,640.00
Tain and Fearn Free Church	New Build	£46,000.00
Fox and Friends Highland	Fox Trots	£30,000.00 agreed, subject to match funding being obtained
Inver Football Club	Osprey Park Community Sports Facility	£9,200.00
Tain Heritage Trust	Phase 3 Works	£65,000.00
North Kessock Village Hall	Village hall enhancements	£50,000.00

Ross Sutherland RFC	Sound Proofing and Kitchen Completion	£25,000.00
Tain Initiative Group	T.I.G Development Officer	£33,000.00
Seaboard Memorial Hall Ltd	Village Entrances	£43,643.00
Evanton Community Trust	Community Development Project Manager	£28,860.00
Fearn Amenities SCIO	Refurbishment of Playing Field Pavilion	£12,006.19
Seaboard Polytunnel Group CIC	Needs Must Fixtures & Fittings	£9,000.00
The Place Youth Club	The Place Staffing and Operating Costs	£42,840.00
Total funding approved:		£511,220.19
Total funding available:		£536,611.48

The Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** that an approval of funding should detail the amount approved and outline any conditions of funding that Members wished to attach to the approval over and above the required technical conditions. A deferral would allow an applicant to resubmit the current application at a future date with updated information or for the project to be approved subject to further funding becoming available. A rejection would mean that the application would not proceed and any future application to the fund should be brought forward initially as a new expression of interest;
- ii. **AGREED** the approved CRF grant award for each application up to the value of the available area allocation, as detailed; and
- iii. as there was a balance of funding remaining, **AGREED** to ringfence remaining grant within the 2023/24 allocation to deliver area priorities identified through work to develop an area-based plan, subject to full applications being brought to a future committee meeting for consideration.

7. **Area Roads Capital Programme 2024-25** **Prògram Calpa Rathaidean Sgìreil 2024-25**

There had been circulated Report No BIER/04/24 by the Executive Chief Officer, Infrastructure, Environment & Economy

During discussion, the following issues were raised:

- in relation to pothole patching, Members highlighted specific locations which were of concern, and which would be further considered at ward business meetings. Information was sought and provided on patching versus inlay, and attention was drawn to the budget restrictions in relation to road maintenance and repairs. It was anticipated that budgetary restrictions on capital projects might result in more staff being available for revenue budget repairs, and it was clarified that capital projects would start as soon as possible after the end of the winter season. Although there was some

flexibility within the programme to alter the scheduling of projects, as the start date for projects approached, it became more problematic to reschedule them without causing delays;

- it was suggested that contributions should be sought towards road maintenance from significant developments, for example the Freeport, which were likely to increase traffic levels and cause more wear and tear on the road network. Information would be sought from the Transport Planning Team on this and provided to the Committee; and
- it would be helpful if local communities were able to undertake their own patching with an appropriate service level agreement.

The Committee:

- i. **APPROVED** the proposed 2023/24 Area Roads Capital Programme for Black Isle and Easter Ross; and
- ii. **AGREED** to seek information on the possibility of obtaining developer contributions for road maintenance from significant developments and provide feedback on this to the Committee.

8. **Common Good Funds** **Maoin Maith Choitchinn**

It was explained that the four sets of common good fund accounts for 2022-23 had not been individually audited, but the total common good fund balances, comprising all of the Highland Council Common Good Funds, which appeared as a note to the Highland Council accounts, had been audited as they appeared in the Highland Council accounts and no significant issues identified. However, until signed, the Highland Council accounts including these Common Good accounts remained in draft.

a. **Cromarty Common Good Fund** **Maoin Math Coitcheann Chromba**

There had been circulated Report No BIER/05/24 by the Chief Executive Officer, Communities and Place, and the Head of Corporate Finance & Commercialism.

The Committee:

- i. **AGREED** the Cromarty Common Good Fund Statement of Accounts (Appendix 1a) and Quarter 4 monitoring report for 2022/23 (Appendix 1b), subject to the approval of the 2022/23 Highland Council accounts;
- ii. **NOTED** the position of the Cromarty Common Good Fund as shown in the 2023/24 Quarter Three monitoring statement at Appendix 2; and
- iii. **APPROVED** the proposed budget for 2024/25 as set out in Appendix 3

b. **Fortrose and Rosemarkie Common Good Fund** **Maoin Math Coitcheann na Cananaich agus Ros Maircnidh**

There had been circulated Report No BIER/06/24 by the Chief Executive Officer, Communities and Place, and the Head of Corporate Finance & Commercialism.

The Committee:

- i. **AGREED** the Fortrose & Rosemarkie Common Good Fund Statement of Accounts (Appendix 1a) and Quarter 4 monitoring report for 2022/23 (Appendix 1b), subject to the approval of the 2022/23 Highland Council accounts;
- ii. **NOTED** the position of the Fortrose & Rosemarkie Common Good Fund as shown in the 2023/24 Quarter Three monitoring statement at Appendix 2; and
- iii. **APPROVED** the proposed budget for 2024/25 as set out in Appendix 3.

**c. Invergordon Common Good Fund
Maoin Math Coitcheann Inbhir Ghòrdain**

There had been circulated Report No BIER/07/24 by the Chief Executive Officer, Communities and Place, and the Head of Corporate Finance & Commercialism.

The Senior Ward Manager explained that since publication of the report, she had been verbally advised by the Chair of the Invergordon Naval & Heritage Museum that they were withdrawing their Community Asset Transfer for the of Invergordon Town Hall, but a new expression of interest had been received from the Invergordon Development Trust, with discussion on this ongoing

During discussion, the process for the Community Asset Transfer was summarised and it was clarified that, at present, the Town Hall was being managed by High Life Highland.

The Committee:

- i. **AGREED** the Invergordon Common Good Fund Statement of Accounts (Appendix 1a) and Quarter 4 monitoring report for 2022/23 (Appendix 1b), subject to the approval of the 2022/23 Highland Council accounts;
- ii. **NOTED** the position of the Invergordon Common Good Fund as shown in the 2023/24 Quarter Three monitoring statement at Appendix 2;
- iii. **APPROVED** the proposed budget for 2024/25 as set out in Appendix 3; and
- iv. **NOTED** the current position in relation to Community Asset Transfer interest in Invergordon Town Hall.

**d. Tain Common Good Fund
Maoin Math Coitcheann Bhaile Dhubhthaich**

There had been circulated Report No BIER/08/24 by the Chief Executive Officer, Communities and Place, and the Head of Corporate Finance & Commercialism.

During discussion, the increase in interest received for the fund to over 1% was welcomed. To assist the Black Isle Members who were not familiar with Tain issues, Mr D Louden provided a brief explanation of the ambiguity around ownership of the Blarliath industrial estate and that the matter would

be investigated in due course by the Common Good Fund Officer, noting their significant workload at present. Solar arrays and offshore blue carbon initiatives were being looked at.

The Committee:

- i. **AGREED** the Tain Common Good Fund Statement of Accounts (Appendix 1a) and Quarter 4 monitoring report for 2022/23 (Appendix 1b), subject to the approval of the 2022/23 Highland Council accounts;
- ii. **NOTED** the position of the Tain Common Good Fund as shown in the 2023/24 Quarter Three monitoring statement at Appendix 2; and
- iii. **APPROVED** the proposed budget for 2024/25 as set out in Appendix 3.

9. Ward Discretionary Awards Duaisean fo Ùghdarras Uàird

There had been circulated and were **NOTED** details of the Discretionary Budget applications that had been approved.

10. Minutes Geàrr-chunntas

There had been circulated and were **NOTED** minutes of the meeting of the Black Isle Committee held on 7 November 2023, and the Easter Ross Area Committee held on 30 October 2023, which had been approved by the Council on 14 December 2023.

The meeting ended at 12.55pm