

The Highland Council

Minutes of Meeting of the **Dingwall and Seaforth Area Committee** held in the Council Chamber, Council Offices, Dingwall on 19 February 2024 at 11.00 am.

Present:

Mr S Kennedy (Remote)
Mr G MacKenzie

Mrs A MacLean
Mrs M Paterson

In attendance:

Mrs D Ferguson, Senior Ward Manager
Ms H Ross, Senior Ward Manager
Mr R MacLeod, Service Lead – Housing and Building Maintenance
Mr I Moncrieff, Roads Operations Manager, Ross and Cromarty
Ms A Jansson, North Area Education Manager
Mr L Hannah, Community Development Manager
Ms K Ellen, Community Support Officer
Ms F Shand, Principal Housing Officer
Ms F Hepburn, Project Officer – Community Regeneration
Ms M Gray, Project Officer – Community Regeneration
Miss J MacLennan, Joint Democratic Services Manager
Mrs G MacPherson, Committee Officer

Also in attendance:

Inspector R Ross, 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 G MacKenzie in the Chair

Prior to the commencement of the formal business, and on behalf of the Council, the Chair paid tribute to Mrs Julie Wileman who had recently passed away and extended deep condolences and sympathy to her family.

The Chair then welcomed Mr Lewis Hannah and Ms Kirsty Ellen into the roles of Community Development Manager and Community Support Officer, respectively.

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 Interests or Transparency Statements.

3. Police – Area Performance Summary Poilis – Geàrr-chunntas Dèanadais Sgìreil

There had been circulated Report No DSA/01/24 by the North Area Commander.

During discussion, the following points were raised:-

- it was enquired why Police Scotland Highlands and Islands (N Division) underwent national inspection in relation to hate crime and Members were advised that N Division was one of three areas chosen to check compliancy and if needs were being met. Although the full report was not yet available, it had shown their processes and procedures were in good order;
- concern had been raised by residents of Macrae Crescent and Brown Square, Dingwall regarding Police presence. It was confirmed that Police continued to pro-actively patrol those areas in a bid to prevent crime, and Members would be informed of any significant Police concerns via the Ward Manager;
- information was sought, and provided, regarding accidents and near misses at the Mineral Bridge on the A862 road to Arduillie, and the B9169 Mulbuie and the B9162 Conon Bridge junctions with the A835 road to Tore. It was indicated that a statistics report would be provided to Members;
- it was emphasised that communities felt they were becoming distanced from the Police and that bringing together a number of wards and community councils for a presentation or question and answer session would be well received. This would take place once a standardised report template was completed and a protocol in place, expected around summertime. Topics would include Driving Ambitions, adult support and protection, county lines and partnership working;
- it was felt that while the report was positive, it was more of an overview and it was thought that communities would ask how it would affect them;
- information was sought, and provided, regarding Police Liaison Officers in terms of missing young people;
- an enquiry into the partnership with social work and housing in terms of county lines confirmed that Police did work with multi agencies to identify vulnerable people but no further information had been provided due to operational reasons;
- information was sought, and provided, regarding anti social behaviour and reporting concerns, and Members were reminded that Police were always looking for public support; and
- a link to statistical crime data would continue to be provided in future reports.

The Committee:-

- i. scrutinised and **NOTED** the North Highland Scrutiny Report covering the reporting period 1 April to 31 December 2023; and
- ii. **AGREED** a statistics report be provided to Members regarding accidents and near misses at the Mineral Bridge on the A862 road to Arduillie, and the B9169 Mulbuie and the B9162 Conon Bridge junctions with the A835 road to Tore.

4. Area Roads Programme 2024/25 Prògram Rathaidean Sgìreil 2024/25

There had been circulated Report No DSA/02/24 by the Executive Chief Officer, Infrastructure, Environment and Economy.

While introducing the report, the Roads Operations Manager advised that the budget for 2024/25 was not yet allocated so the previous year's baseline capital had been used as an estimate to allow the programme to be developed.

Members shared concern that the report itself was difficult to read and sought clarification as to the budget available. The works to be carried out in 2024/25 were the same as shown in 2023/24 budget.

It was stated in the report that the budget was allocated to the disaggregated area of Ross and Cromarty and there was no specific amount delegated to the individual wards of Dingwall and Seaforth, Wester Ross, Strathpeffer and Lochalsh, and Black Isle and Easter Ross. However, at the end of section 5.3 of the report, an allocation of 8% and an amount of £155,205 was specified, which led to concern from Members.

In response, the Roads Operations Manager advised that he would clarify the financial allocation and provide a report of schemes undertaken in 2023/24.

During discussion, further points were raised:-

- a workshop on allocation of road funding had been abandoned due to poor weather and it was hoped that it would be rearranged soon. Meanwhile Ward 8 roads continued to deteriorate, and ditches, verges, street signs and bollards had not received attention for some time, despite Ward 8 roads being significantly busy;
- cyclical revenue funded works such as ditching, signs and pothole fixing had been impacted due to the fact that capital funding (being received at short notice) had heavily influenced other works, as there was no guarantee capital funding would be carried over to the following year;
- potholes –
 - information was sought, and provided, regarding pothole claims, and it was stated that the community was voicing concerns about the amount of potholes in Dingwall and the damage being caused to their vehicles;
 - a trial of externally contracted thermal pothole repair was expected to be undertaken in Dingwall before the end of March. Members were under the impression that they were to be consulted prior to the trial but it was confirmed that a list of potholes had already been decided. Members asked for a copy of the list. Members also enquired where the budget came from to pay for the trial; and
 - the benefit of the pothole pro machines and a list of the works completed were requested, given that Members were not aware of them being used in Ward 8;
- Members expressed interest in site visits and wished to include a visit to Mineral Bridge; and
- information was sought regarding the temporary metal plate on the bridge over the River Conon and it was confirmed that, although no longer under his

remit, the Roads Operations Manager would obtain an update from the Structures Team.

The Committee:-

- i. **APPROVED** the following works only, from the proposed 2024/2025 Area Roads Capital Programme for the Dingwall and Seaforth area;-
 - a) A862 Conon Bridge to Muir of Ord Surface Dress
 - b) U3027 Gairloch Crescent, Conon Bridge Surface Dress
- ii. **AGREED** to hold a meeting with the Roads Operations Manager to further discuss the matters raised, to be held prior to the next Dingwall and Seaforth Area Committee in May.

5. **Community Regeneration Fund (CRF) – Assessment of Applications** **Maoin Ath-bheothachadh Coimhearsnachd (CRF) – Measadh Iarrtasan**

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

During discussion, the following points were raised:-

- background to the 2023/24 allocation of funds was provided and information was sought regarding next year's allocation. It was said that the allocation was not confirmed so far. It was asked if the remainder of 2023/24 funding would be rolled over and it was confirmed that the funds needed to be spent by March 2025 to avoid being clawed back by the Scottish Government;
- information was sought, and provided, regarding the status of an application for a Project Manager post and it was confirmed that the Project Officers would arrange a separate meeting to discuss; and
- in terms of the CRF budget, it was questioned if it could be loosened off from the direct ring-fencing.

Following general discussion on the specific projects, the Committee:-

- i. considered and **AGREED** to approve the applications;
- ii. **AGREED** that funding be awarded from the CRF as follows:
 - Dingwall Men's Shed - £5,500
 - High Life Highland Dingwall Youth Club - £8,830
 - Dingwall and District Angling Club - £6,800;
- iii. **AGREED** to ringfence the remaining grant funds of £172,311.62 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; and

- iv. **AGREED** to hold a meeting with the Community Regeneration Project Officers regarding the status of an application for a Project Manager post.

6. Dingwall and Seaforth Ward Discretionary budget applications approved since last meeting
Iarrtasan buidseat fo Ùghdarras Uàrd Inbhir Pheofharain agus Shìophort air an aontachadh bho choinneamh mu dheireadh

The Committee **NOTED** the following Dingwall and Seaforth Ward Discretionary Budget applications approved since its last meeting.

- i. Conon Bridge Amenities Association - Conon Bridge Old Age Pensioners' Christmas Party - £500
- ii. Lady Haig Poppy Factory - Poppy Wreaths for Remembrance Sunday 2023 - £83.11
- iii. Conon Bridge Lunch Club - Christmas Lunch 15 December 2023 - £300
- iv. Dingwall Community Council - Providing Christmas Dinners to residents of Dingwall - £1,000
- v. Muir of Ord Development Trust - Senior Citizens Christmas Dinner Delivery - £850

7. Dingwall Common Good Fund
Maoin Math Coitcheann Inbhir Pheofharain

There had been circulated the Dingwall Common Good Fund 2022/23 Annual Accounts and Final Monitoring, 2023/24 Quarter Three Monitoring Statement and 2024/25 Proposed Budget by the Executive Chief Officer, Communities and Place, and Head of Corporate Finance.

In terms of section 3.5 of the report, it was confirmed that non-essential spends covered community grants and property repairs required (both planned and unplanned) to keep assets in good order. Information was also sought, and provided, regarding the staff costs.

The Committee:-

- i. considered and **AGREED** the Dingwall Common Good Fund Statement of Accounts (Appendix 1a) and Quarter 4 monitoring report for 2022/23 (Appendix 1b);
- ii. scrutinised and **NOTED** the position of the Dingwall 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.

8. Attainment Overview Dingwall ASG
Foir-shealladh Buileachaidh Buidheann Sgoiltean Co-cheangailte Inbhir Pheofharain

There had been circulated Report No DSA/04/24 by the Executive Chief Officer, Education and Learning.

Information that might have led to the disclosure of individuals had not been included in the report but Members were advised an area meeting could be arranged, where the relevant Head Teacher could be asked to attend, should Members have questions relating to an individual school.

Head Teachers for both Dingwall Primary School and Dingwall Academy had recently attended a ward business meeting where topics within the report were covered.

Information was sought, and provided regarding:-

- the number of exclusions and it was confirmed that the number did not differentiate between one pupil being excluded more than once or a group of pupils being excluded for being involved in one incident. Further comment was not appropriate via this public forum;
- section 4.2 of the report, and it was confirmed that Head Teachers self-assessed Standards and Quality Reports with support from Collaborate Leads. Head Teachers worked to the six point scale framework and lead on best practice with peers; and
- school leavers and their destinations, particularly those who seemed to drop off the radar. It was confirmed that it was a team effort, working alongside Skills Development Scotland and other Council services although it was difficult to find out what happened if a young person left the area.

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

9. Minutes Geàrr-chunntas

The Committee **NOTED** the Minutes of Meeting of the Dingwall and Seaforth Area Committee held on 6 November 2023 which were approved by the Council on 14 December 2023.

10. Housing Revenue Account: Garage Rents 2024/25 Cunntas Teachd-a-steach Taigheadais: Màil Gharaidsean 2024/25

There had been circulated Report No DSA/06/24 by the Executive Chief Officer, Property and Housing.

Information was sought, and a summary provided, regarding garage rents.

The Committee **AGREED** a level of rent increase of 7.95% to apply to Dingwall and Seaforth Garages and Garage sites.

The meeting ended at 1.00 pm.