

The Highland Council

Minutes of Meeting of the **Sutherland County Committee** held in the Chamber, Council Offices, Drumbuie, Golspie on Tuesday 23 January 2024 at 10.30am.

Present:

Mr M Baird

Mr R Gale

Mr J McGillivray

Mr H Morrison (remote)

Ms L Niven (remote)

In attendance:

Mr P Tomalin, Ward Manager

Ms J Sutherland, Roads Operation Manager

Ms M Grant, Principal Housing Officer

Ms P Betts, Project Officer (Community Regeneration)

Ms A Macrae, Senior 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 R Gale in the Chair

Business

1. Apologies for Absence Leisgeulan

An apology for absence was intimated on behalf of Ms M Hutchison

2. Declarations of Interest Foillseachaidhean Com-pàirt

Item 6: Mr R Gale

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

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

In discussion, Members raised the following main points:

- clarification was sought and provided that no correlation had been observed between the increase in speeding detections and the introduction of 20mph speed zones;
- the increase in mobile phone offences and the measures being taken by Police Scotland to educate drivers;
- noting that improvements in technology in terms of ease of access to information may have contributed to the increase in detections of vehicles being driven without a MOT;

- further information was sought and provided on the preventative messaging issued by Police Scotland to tackle fraud and the proactive approach taken to prevent repeat cases involving the same victim;
- in relation to targeting first time drivers, confirmation was provided that Police Scotland allocated a school liaison officer to each secondary school, albeit resourcing challenges had impacted on the level of activity compared to previous years. Police Scotland also had other schemes designed to reinforce safety messaging for young drivers;
- the rural Police stations at Lochinver, Rhiconich and Tongue were vitally important to North and West Sutherland and officers be thanked for the work undertaken in the area; and
- commending Police Scotland on the significant reduction in missing persons cases.

The Committee **NOTED** the:

- 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. change in format necessitated by a reduction in back office capacity to prepare additional area committee reports.

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

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

In discussion, Members requested that their thanks be conveyed to the Roads Team for their efforts and hard work within the available resources in responding to the recent storm and heavy snow conditions in Sutherland.

Thereafter, the following main points were raised;

- concern at the anticipated Capital budget allocation for roads in 2024/25, while recognising the budget for the next financial year had not yet been confirmed;
- the Embo streets project was welcomed and confirmation provided that the Highland Broadband scheme was being factored into the scheduling of the works;
- the challenges in determining the priority list within the Programme and the need to accept the professional engineering judgement of officers in this regard;
- the Programme and priority list was published on the Council's website and this could help inform public expectations once the final budget was confirmed; and
- an update was sought and provided on progress with the Capital Programme for the current financial year in relation to the level of spend and benefits delivered to the area. A report on the projects completed and spend would be brought to the next Area Business Meeting.

The Committee **APPROVED** the proposed prioritised Area Roads Capital Programme for the Sutherland Area for 2024/25.

**5. Housing Revenue Account: Garage Rents 2024/2025
Cunntas Teachd-a-steach Taigheadais: Màil Gharaidsean 2024/25**

There had been circulated Report No SCC/03/24 by the Executive Chief Officer Housing and Property.

During discussion, it was proposed that a 10% rent increase be applied to garages and garage sites in Sutherland in 2024/25 on the grounds that a small increase had been applied in the current financial year in recognition of cost of living increases and as a result there had been limited investment in garages in the area. This proposal would result in an increase in garage rents for Council tenants of 75p per week which was not considered to be excessive and recognised the need for significant maintenance works to be carried out to some garages.

The Committee **AGREED** that a 10% rent increase apply to Sutherland Garages and Garage Sites in 2024/25.

**6. Community Regeneration Funding – Assessment of Applications
Maoinachadh Ath-nuadhachadh Coimhearsnachd – Measadh Iarrtasan**

Declaration of Interest: Mr R Gale declared an interest in the application by the Go Golspie Development Trust on the grounds he was Trustee of the organisation and he left the meeting for the determination of this application. Mr H Morrison, Vice Chair, took the Chair for Go Golspie Development Trust’s application.

There had been circulated Report No SCC/04/24 by the Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure, Environment and Economy.

The Committee **APPROVED** the applications presented for a funding award from the Community Regeneration Fund as follows:

Applicant	Project	Grant awarded
Lairg & District Community Initiatives	Ferrycroft Playpark Development	£60,000
Golspie Golf Club	Climate Mitigation Water Management Project	£18,765
Strathnaver Museum	Exploring the Archives	£5,755.20
Assynt Development Trust	Lochinver Glebe housing design stages 4a & 4b	£90,000
Durness Community Group	Durness Play Park	£56,899.01
Helmsdale Heritage and Arts Society (Timespan)	People’s Mobile Archive	£31,964
Assynt Development Trust	Development Officer Post	£21,600
Brora Development Trust	Development Officer Post	£29,163
Brora Development Trust	Visitor Information Point Officer	£20,250

Assynt Development Trust	Administrative Staff Post	£9,600
Dornoch Heritage SCIO	Historylinks Heritage Hub – Community Programme	£18,985
Go Golspie Development Trust	Ross Street Playpark Project	£85,000
Assynt Development Trust	Lochinver Main Street Playpark Green Space Enrichment Phase 1	DEFER to next meeting for further information on costings and match funding.
Farr North Community Development Trust	Delivery of Farr Community Action Plan	£30,360.90
Assynt Development Trust (ADT) on behalf of NW2045	NorthWest2045 Place Plan Coordination	£50,110
Carbisdale Castle Community Interest Company Limited	Carbisdale Community Centre	DEFER to next meeting for further information on the fire tender and equipment element of the application.
TOTAL		£528,452.11

The Committee **AGREED** subject to consideration at the next meeting of the applications that had been deferred, to ringfence the 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. Dornoch Business Improvement District – Member Appointment
Roinn Leasachadh Gnothachais Dhòrnaich – Cur Ball an Dreuchd**

Members were advised that following the successful ballot in favour of the creation of a Business Improvement District in Dornoch, a new Dornoch BID company was being established with a Board comprising representatives from Dornoch businesses. There was also a place on the Board for a Highland Council representative.

The Committee **AGREED** to appoint Mr J McGillivray from the East Sutherland and Edderton Ward as detailed.

8. **Dornoch Common Good - Annual Report 2022/23, Proposed Budget 2024/25 and Quarterly Monitoring Statement 2023/24**
Math Coitcheann Dhòrnaich – Aithisg Bhliadhnail 2022/23, Buidseat ga Mholadh airson 2024/25 agus Aithris Sgrùdaidh Ràitheil 2023/24

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

In discussion, it was noted that the Fund was being well managed including the risks such as the Dornoch Burn, and reference made to the benefits it was delivering for the Dornoch area, The increase in rental income from Royal Dornoch Golf Club was also welcomed.

The Committee:-

- i. **AGREED** the Dornoch Good Fund Statement of Accounts (**Appendix 1**) and Quarter 4 monitoring report for 2022/23 (**Appendix 2**), subject to the approval of the 2022/23 Highland Council accounts;
- ii. **NOTED** the position of the Dornoch Common Good Fund, as shown in the Q3 monitoring statement (**Appendix 3**) against budget for 2023/24; and
- iii. **AGREED** the Dornoch Common Good Fund Annual Budget for 2024/25 (**Appendix 4**).

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
North West Training Centre - Learning Programme 23-24	£1,750.00
TYKES - Programme of Residential Respite	£1,240.00
Farr Edge 2000 - Continue Service	£2,500.00
Culrain Hall – Heating upgrade	£1,200.00
Scourie Community Devt Co. – Safe Parking for Affordable Housing and School	£1,000.00
North West Schools PC – Extra-curricular Activities	£1,000.00
East Sutherland Schools Sports Association – Transport	£1,000.00
Total	£14,730.00

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
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
Tykes - Programme of Respite Residential	£3,000.00
Embo Trust (Urras Euraboil) - Embo Community Centre Resilience	£999.99
East Sutherland Schools Sports Association – Transport	£2,560.00
Golspie Youth Action Project - Office	£2,215.00
Helmsdale PS Parent Council – Crossing Patroller Shed	£850.00
Total	£15,999.99

10. Minutes Geàrr-chunntas

There had been circulated and **NOTED** the Minutes of the Sutherland County Committee held on 31 October 2023, which had been approved by the Council on 14 December 2023.

11. *ADDITIONAL URGENT ITEM WINTER MAINTENANCE

The Chair advised that he wished to raise an urgent item on the grounds that following the recent spell of storms and heavy snowfall experienced across the Highlands, it was important the following item be addressed as soon as possible.

The efforts of the Roads team in clearing the main arterial routes and other roads according to priority and resource availability was greatly appreciated and it was appropriate Members expressed their gratitude to everyone involved. However, in spite of the Team's best efforts there were some roads that could not be cleared given the resource available.

As a result of one particular road not being cleared, residents had been unable to leave their homes for 5 days and had no way of getting food or essential medication. This was only one example and the Chair advised he was aware there were many others.

It was well known that farmers and contractors had approached the Council to offer their services, but this had been rejected for various reasons. It was time for the Council to take a more practical and flexible approach and bring in assistance to clear roads in such difficult times.

* The Committee therefore **AGREED** to call upon the Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure, Environment and Economy to arrange an urgent review of current resources and to look at developing a partnership arrangement with the many farmers and contractors who have machinery capable of clearing snow from the roads that are not prioritised across Sutherland and any of the remote and rural parts of the Highlands. One way that this could be done was by a simple memorandum of understanding with anyone with the appropriate equipment who is willing to be called in as necessary.

The meeting concluded at 12.45pm.