

The Highland Council

Minutes of Meeting of the Isle of Skye and Raasay Committee (Comataidh an Eilein Sgitheanaich agus Ratharsair) held remotely on Monday, 3 June, 2024 at 10.30 am.

Present:

Mr J Finlayson
Mr D Millar

Mr C Munro
Mr R Stewart

Officials in attendance:

Mr J Mitchell, Housing Manager (North), Housing & Property Service
Mr C Sharp, Repairs Manager (North), Housing & Property Service
Mr W MacKinnon, Community Development Manager, Communities and Place
Mr A MacLeod, Policy Officer, Performance & Governance
Ms F Cameron, Programme Manager, Community Regeneration, Infrastructure & Environment
Ms M Gray, Project Officer Community Regeneration, Infrastructure & Environment
Mr A MacInnes, Senior Committee Officer, Performance & Governance

Also in attendance:

Mr J Geary, Treasurer, Ms C Davis, Ms N Morrison, Community Coordinators
Broadford and Strath Community Company

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 J Finlayson in the Chair

**1. Apologies for Absence
Leisgeulan**

There were none.

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

Item 7 – Mr C Munro (Transparency Statement)

**3. Minutes
Geàrr-chunntas**

There had been circulated for information, Minutes of Meeting of the Isle of Skye and Raasay Committee (Comataidh an Eilein Sgitheanaich agus Ratharsair) held on 12 February, 2024 which were approved at the Highland Council meeting held on 14 March, 2024, the terms of which were **NOTED**.

**4. Community Trust Presentation
Taisbeanadh Urrais Choimhearsnachd**

By way of introduction, the Chair acknowledged that community companies were very active across many areas in Skye and Raasay and had been in receipt of community regeneration funding from the Council through this Committee to support various projects. It was important that this Committee should hear of the

work on projects being progressed by community companies/trusts and it was the intention to invite them to local committee meetings.

Representatives from Broadford and Strath Community Company (BSCC) were in attendance to give a presentation in relation to projects that the company deliver in the community. The company was formed in 2003 and were an environmental group and had purchased a community forest which had been transformational in terms of the development of the site and the various projects arising from this. The company currently had 33 live projects, such as Broadford and Elgol toilets, Elgol path and Skye event space. They organised activities such as Corry Capers outdoor learning, Community Gardener and undertook fundraising, supporting people and projects as well as community engagement & communications. There were around 11000 volunteer hours over the year and the activities were funded from a mix of sources such as public sector, donations and from its own activities such as fees from the campsite. The Council were thanked for their support to the company particularly through funding from the community regeneration fund.

Members were impressed with the diversity and number of projects the BSCC were involved in, as was the number of volunteer hours to support projects which was commended. It was acknowledged that funding was a continuing pressure on the company to ensure there were enough funds for all the activities. It was noted that the company had a 5 year strategic plan to ensure that it was sustainable in future.

It was noted the BSSC partnership working with Council officers was very important and was of great benefit to the community. The company represented a point of contact for the community which was an important role and the importance of Members interacting with the company was highlighted. The benefit to young people taking part in various activities was welcomed and engagement with young people would help with succession planning in driving forward the various projects of the company in future.

Having congratulated the BSSC on their work, the Committee **NOTED** the presentation from Broadford and Strath Community Company in relation to projects that the Company deliver in the community.

5. Housing Performance Report Aithisg Choileanaidh Taigheadais

There was circulated Report No. SR/10/24 by the Executive Chief Officer Property and Housing which provided information on how the Housing section performed in relation to Scottish Social Housing Charter and other performance indicators up to 31 March 2024.

In discussion, it was noted that homelessness presentations shown in the report were those managed by the Skye team for wards 10 (Skye and Raasay) and 5 (Wester Ross, Strathpeffer and Lochalsh. The data between the 2 wards would be split in future reports as it was misleading in terms of the numbers of presentations shown for Skye and Raasay. It was clarified that homelessness presentations on Skye/Raasay were similar to those in previous quarters (32 in quarter 4). The process for supporting people who presented themselves as homeless was explained and all housing options were looked at in this process.

Further, it was positive to see the good progress being made on performance targets, particularly rent arrears were reducing. There was a concern that amenities work was not being aligned with housing work with the consequence of creating an environment for rodents and it was noted that this was partly due to a reduction in grass cutting due to the team concentrating on essential works. A meeting with Members to discuss works to be undertaken under the environmental budget for the area was to be held later in June.

Also, maintenance issues over council houses at Seafield Place, Broadford, Cullin Drive, Portree were raised and in respect of Macfarlane buildings, Portree there appeared to be no drying facilities for residents and there were safety issues with a steep slope at that site. Officers undertook to look at these various issues and do what they could to alleviate them. The housing team had been concentrating on emergency and routine maintenance and were trying to do things in innovative ways for the best outcomes for tenants.

The pressures the housing team were under to re-let properties and the maintenance work required was acknowledged and a reassurance was sought that properties were brought up to an acceptable standard before they were re-let. It was advised that all houses being re-let had to meet the empty home standard. Also, it was queried if the team were having difficulty obtaining the services of external contractors to do work on properties. It was advised that there was difficulty in obtaining electricians and air source engineers when servicing and maintenance was required. There was better provision in the area with other trades for maintenance. The difficulty in recruiting trades staff to the in house team was highlighted.

The issues with recruiting key workers to this area were well known and one of the biggest barriers to recruitment was the lack of accommodation for key workers, particularly in the NHS. The housing team had discussions with other services and partner agencies about this issue and the difficulty was the limited housing stock the Council had and in the right locations to alleviate the situation. However, there were a small number of new properties being built in Portree and Sleat which would help.

The Committee **NOTED:-**

- i the information provided on housing performance in the period 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024 and that the number of homeless presentations managed by the Housing team on Skye would be split between Wards 10 and 5 in future reports; and
- ii that various property maintenance issues raised by Members would be looked into by Officers.

6. Islands (Scotland) Act 2018 Achd nan Eilean (Alba) 2018

There was circulated Report No. SR/11/24 by the Executive Chief Officer Performance & Governance which provided an update on the implementation of the Islands (Scotland) Act 2018 as it related to the Highland Council area for the financial year 2023/24.

In discussion, it was disappointing that no funding had been received last year for Skye and Raasay roads infrastructure improvements from Islands programme funding, as the local Committee were being responsive to the communities requests and Skye was the 2nd most popular tourist destination and 2nd biggest Island in Scotland and this should be recognised. Also, it was concerning that a significant number of people in communities new little about the Islands plan.

Continuing, there was a need for a more local approach to ensure that solutions were tailored to each Islands specific circumstances. The new Islands plan should reflect some of the significant issues being faced on Skye and Raasay such as housing, tourism and roads and it was hoped that this area would be more successful in its funding applications next time around.

It was noted that The Islands Strategic Group met quarterly and it was important that local members had sight of the agendas for these meetings so they could give briefings to the Council's representatives on that Group. The next meeting of this Group was on 12 June. Also, an update on the new place based investment framework for the area known as Skye and Raasay Future would be helpful in order to understand the benefits this would bring to the area.

The Committee **NOTED** the update and acknowledged the work that had taken place.

7. Community Regeneration Fund Assessment of Applications Measadh Iarrtasan Maoin Ath-bheòthachaidh Coimhearsnachd

Transparency Statement - Mr C Munro declared a transparency statement in relation to the application from Skye and Lochalsh Council for Voluntary Organisations. Mr Munro was a Director of Skye and Lochalsh Council for Voluntary Organisation, by means of being a Council appointee. He had no financial benefit or incentive to the application and having applied the objective test he did not consider that he had an interest to declare

There was circulated Report No. SR/9/24 by the Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure, Environment & Economy. The report detailed community regeneration fund allocations received. There were 3 applications for consideration at the meeting and a total request of funding of £72,952.81 with an available budget of £163,941.54. All 3 applications were eligible for support.

The Committee decided on the applications to be considered as follows:-

i Skye and Lochalsh Council for Voluntary Organisations (Empower Skye & Lochalsh Programme – **approved** £30,767.57

ii Skeabost Memorial Hall Association (Re-roofing Skeabost Memorial Hall) – **approved** £7,185.24

iii Skye Connect (Tourism Strategy Project Manager). Changes to the RAG rating and grant requested since the report was published were highlighted. The applicant had now increased the grant requested to the full project cost (£35,000). The Committee **deferred this application** for further information on the Visitor Economy Sustainable Tourism Strategy and an update on any match funding for the application.

The Committee also **agreed** to ringfence up to the balance of remaining funding for a project to repair the River Rha Foot Bridge, in Uig, subject to a full application being brought to a future committee meeting for consideration.

Urgent Item

The Chair, drew Members attention to an urgent item of additional business that had been raised in relation to a previously approved Community Regeneration Fund (CRF) project – CRF 2176, Skye Connect Sustainable Transport, which was approved CRF funding by the Committee at its meeting on 12 February, 2024. Match funding for this project was to be sourced from this Committee's share of parking income. Members agreement was sought to ringfence £57,081.20 from parking income as match funding for this project, to ensure it can deliver the approved outcomes over a two year period as outlined in the original application.

The Committee **agreed** to ringfence £57,081.20 from parking income as match funding for the Skye Connect Sustainable Transport project (CRF 2176).

8. Ward Discretionary Budget Buidseat Fo Ùghdarras Uàird

The Committee **NOTED** the following Ward Discretionary Fund Grants for Ward 10 in the financial year 2023/24:-

Highlife Highland Skye & Lochalsh Archive Centre £500
Skye and Lochalsh Mental Health Association (2) £500
Skye Youth Pipe Band £1,000
Waternish Community Garden £500
Portree & Braes Community Trust £1,500
New Pads for Tigh na Sgìre Defibrillator £55
Helping Hands Skye & Lochalsh £2000
Skeabost & District Community Council £530
Poppy Scotland Wreaths £160
Portree & Braes Community Trust £6000
Skye & Lochalsh Care Forum £500
Portree & Braes Community Trust £1995
CFINE £760

The meeting ended at 12.20 p.m.