

The Highland Council

Minutes of Meeting of the **Nairnshire Committee** held in the Chamber, The Court House, High Street, Nairn/Remotely on 13 May 2024 at 10.30am

Present:

Mr L Fraser
Mr M Green
Ms B Jarvie
Mr P Oldham

In Attendance:

Mr J Mitchell, Housing Manager, Housing and Property
Ms F Shearer, Area Education & Learning Manager, Education and Learning
Mr M Greig, Community Development Manager, Communities and Place
Mrs L Dunn, Joint Democratic Services Manager, Performance and Governance
Mr M Nixon, Committee Officer, Performance and Governance

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 M Green 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

The Committee **NOTED** the following Transparency Statement:-

Item 6 – Mr M Green

3. Good News Naidheachdan Matha

The Committee **NOTED** the following items of Good News:-

- the inaugural meeting of the Nairn Common Good Stakeholder Engagement Group had been a great success and attracted people from across Nairn;
- the Taste of Nairn Street Market had been a very successful event, and thanks were extended to the Business Improvement District and the Nairn Community and Arts Centre; and
- congratulations were extended to Mr Mike Davis, Club Chairman of Nairn County Cricket Club, who had played at the Over 60s World Cup in India as a member of the Rest of the World team which won the competition.

4. Housing Performance Report – 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024 Aithisg Coileanaidh Taigheadais - 1 An Giblean 2023 gu 31 Am Mart 2024

During discussion, the following points were raised:-

- although the level of rent arrears had improved, concern was expressed that they were still significant, and it was recognised that this was a legacy from Covid. The Housing Team was commended for their efforts to reduce the arrears whilst endeavouring to avoid using evictions which was a last resort; and
- the homelessness presentations appeared to be on an upward projection, but it was clarified that the figures shown in Table 5 (paragraph 8.4) of the report were representative of households rather than people. This emphasised the need for housing within Nairn. It was further confirmed that although single person accommodation was most in demand, there remained a need for family accommodation as well.

Thereafter, the committee **NOTED** the information provided on Housing Performance for the period 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024

5. Nairn Academy Associated School Group Overview Foir-shealladh Buidheann Sgoiltean Co-cheangailte Acadamaidh Inbhir Narann

During discussion, the following points were raised: -

- disappointment was expressed that the report did not contain descriptions for the many acronyms that were used throughout the report which would have been particularly helpful for members of the public. As this was a set report template, the Area Education & Learning Manager advised that she would pass on this feedback. It was also confirmed that the Area Education & Learning Manager was the author of the report;
- reference was made to Cawdor Primary School and the outstanding Standards and Quality reports received;
- it was asked that following Rosebank School's attendance at a Ward Business meeting, whether it would be possible to have other Schools within the area attend future meetings and that Cawdor Primary School should be invited next;
- confirmation was provided that Headteachers across the Nairn Academy Associated School Group met up regularly to enable staff time to share learning and best practice to increase attainment;
- concerns were raised regarding poor attendance levels and whether the reason for absence had any connection to children missing key vaccines. It was explained that the Attendance Policy had recently been updated and assurance was provided that attendance data was monitored with a view to supporting schools and providing intensive individual support if required;
- Exclusions were not necessarily a reason to view a School negatively, and they could be used as a tool for Schools and the pupil to receive appropriate support;
- further information was sought and provided on the improvements that had been made to raise attainment in literacy and numeracy. The Area Education & Learning Manager explained that this was undertaken continuously throughout the year via the Local Authority Tracking and Monitoring system. There was a focus on data to observe where interventions might be required, and senior management met regularly with teachers to discuss this;

- credit was given for the good work creating career fairs and confirmation was provided that after leaving school young people proceeded onto a range of further education courses and employment opportunities to suit all needs. The Area Education & Learning Manager advised that the Nairn Academy Headteacher would be able to attend a future Ward Business Meeting to provide more detail on the positive destination data;
- clarification was sought and provided on the confidential information in Table 6 of the report which had been withheld and it was clarified that this information would be made available;
- in regard to using external benchmarks, it was explained that comparisons were made at a national level using a virtual comparator and also against Highland wide data. It was suggested that UK comparators would be helpful. The Area Education & Learning Manager advised that there was an overall improvement but if a school fell below the national or Highland average then intensive support was provided; and
- it was requested that future reports include information on staff absence and recruitment. It was clarified that this information would be submitted to the Education Committee.

Thereafter, the Committee **NOTED** the content of the report and **AGREED** that:

- a representative from each of the schools in the Nairn Academy Associated School Group be invited to attend the Ward Business Meeting on a quarterly basis commencing with Cawdor Primary School; and
- the information that had been withheld in Table 6 of the report be provided.

6. Ward Discretionary Budget Buidseat Fo Ùghdarras Uàird

Transparency Statement: Mr M Green made a Transparency Statement as a Co-Chair of Nairnshire Community Newspaper. However, having applied the objective test, he did not consider that he had an interest to declare.

The following Ward Discretionary Fund payments had been made:-

- Cawdor Primary School, Reading Culture, £1,000
- NICE, Nairn Area Local Place Plan – Gap funding, £3,000
- Nairn Bowling Club, Supporting Junior Bowlers, £1,000
- Nairn Coastal Rowing Club, 2024 Regatta, £250.68
- Auldearn FC, Recreation Ground changing facilities, £30.00
- Nairnshire Community Newspaper, Establishment of Newspaper, £3,000
- Nairn BID, Town Centre Improvements, £2,724.98

During discussion, the following points were raised: -

- the Chair clarified that he took no part in the discussion/decision to award funding to Nairnshire Community Newspaper; and
- reference was made to the positive support the Ward Discretionary Fund provided to local communities even though the level of funding available had decreased over the years.

The Committee **NOTED** the position.

7. Minutes
Geàrr-chunntas

The Committee **NOTED** the Minutes of the Meeting of the Nairnshire Committee held on 22 January 2024 and 4 March 2024 which were approved by the Council on 20 March 2024.

The meeting concluded at 11am.