

The Highland Council

Minutes of Meeting of the **Black Isle and Easter Ross Area Committee** held remotely on Monday 5 August 2024, at 10.30 am.

Present:

Ms S Atkin
Ms T Collier
Ms L Dundas
Ms L Johnston

Mr D Louden
Ms M MacCallum
Ms M Ross

Participating Officials:

Ms D Ferguson, Senior Community Development Manager
Ms H Ross, Senior Community Development Manager
Mr P Tomalin, Community Development Manager
Ms F Richardson, Community Development Manager
Ms J Young, Community Support Officer (West and Mid)
Mr A Byrne, Principal Housing Officer – East Ross
Mr I Moncrieff, Area Roads Operations Manager
Ms F MacBain, Senior Committee Officer

Also in Attendance:

Chief Inspector Richard Ross, Police Scotland
Ms B Richmond, Project Manager, Black Isle Local Place Plan
Mr N Wright, Nick Wright Planning
Mr C MacPherson, Chief Executive, Inverness & Cromarty Firth Green Freeport

**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. **Apologies for Absence** **Leisgeulan**

Apologies were intimated on behalf of Ms M Smith.

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

There were none.

3. **Recess Powers** **Cumhachdan Fosaìdh**

The Committee **NOTED** that the Recess Powers granted by the Council at its meeting on 27 June 2024 have not been exercised in relation to the business of the Committee.

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

There had been circulated Report No BIER/14/24 by Chief Inspector Calum Smith - Area Commander (North Highland Area Command).

Following a summary of the report, the following issues were raised during discussion:

- Police officers were thanked for their work keeping communities safe, and concern was expressed at recent outbreaks of violence against police officers in other parts of the UK;
- some community council meetings were not receiving police reports or attendance at meetings, and this would be raised with the Area Commander. It was suggested that police officers could attend a 6-monthly community council chairs' meeting to provide updates, and Members suggested that the provision of a list of police liaison officers for each community council would be helpful;
- a request was made for speed monitoring near Arabella and this would be passed on to the relevant police department;
- information was sought and provided on the following topics:
 - the reduction in Looked After children being reported as missing;
 - the lower detection rates of drivers using mobile phones;
 - increasing rates of shop-lifting;
 - how cuckooing was being tackled as part of country lines initiatives; and
 - the ACT Early initiative to help prevent exploitation of young people by extremists;
- clarification was sought and provided on the new police reporting structure;
- reference was made to the potential for people with Council tenancies being exploited for use of their premises;
- the 'coffee with a cop' initiative was popular and welcomed;
- in response to concerns about which organisation dealt with abandoned vehicles, any incidents of concerns could be reported to the police in the first instance; and
- assurance was sought and provided that police officers who were subject to violence in the line of duty were given appropriate support.

The Committee **NOTED** progress made against the objectives set within the Highland Local Policing Plan 2023-2026 Year 1, attached as Annex A to the report, for the period covering 01 April 2023 – 31 March 2024, and the comments made during discussion.

5. Black Isle Place Plan Plana Àite an Eilein Duibh

There had been circulated Report No BIER/15/24 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Place.

A presentation was provided covering the background, funding, preparation, geographic reach, engagement, the vision for the future, the alignment of local and national priorities, transport issues, and ongoing community participation and governance.

During discussion, all involved in the preparation of the plan were thanked for their work and the significant levels of public engagement that had been undertaken. The Plan was a useful exemplar for other areas and, with particular reference to Easter Ross, it was anticipated other area Plans would be presented to committees by the end of the 2024-25 financial year. Delays had occurred due to the importance of ensuring the work was correctly and thoroughly undertaken, including the appropriate level of public participation.

The Committee:

- i. **AGREED** to adopt the Plan, using it as a tool to inform and support decision making about the Black Isle;
- ii. **NOTED** Opportunity Black Isle is both a Local Place Plan in line with national Planning Legislation and an Area Place Plan in line with Highland's Place Based Framework;
- iii. **NOTED** the Plan will be taken into account in preparation of the Highland Local Development Plan (HLDP) as guided by the Planning (Scotland) Act 2019; and
- iv. **NOTED** the next steps for progressing the work set out in the plan.

6. **Winter Service Plan 2024/25** **Plana Seirbheis a' Gheamhraidh 2024/25**

There had been circulated Report No BIER/16/24 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Place.

During discussion, Members commented that the 2023-24 Plan had worked well, and they thanked front line staff for their hard work during severe winter weather. It was pointed out that some members of the public remained unsure what statutory services the Council provided in relation to winter maintenance, and attention was drawn to the leaflet and web information that was available and for which a link would be sent to Members.

The Committee:

- i. **APPROVED** the Winter Service Plan for 2024/25;
- ii. **AGREED** the Area Roads Operations Manager would provide Members with a link to the winter maintenance information on the Council's website; and
- iii. **AGREED** the Area Roads Operations Manager would relay the Committee's appreciation and gratitude to the winter maintenance operatives for their hard work during challenging winter conditions.

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

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

There had been circulated Report No BIER/17/24 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Place.

The Committee **NOTED** the Q4 monitoring statement for the Cromarty Common Good Fund.

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

There had been circulated Report No BIER/18/24 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Place.

During discussion, reference was made to the Council’s current land audit to produce a definitive digital record known as a “Terra Tracker” of all its land and property assets, and assurance was sought that liaison took place if it transpired that land was owned by a Common Good Fund.

The Committee **NOTED** the Q4 monitoring statement for the Fortrose and Rosemarkie Common Good Fund and **AGREED** the Senior Community Development Officer would provide details on the Terra Tracker to Members.

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

There had been circulated Report No BIER/19/24 by the Head of Community Support and Engagement and the Head of Corporate Finance & Commercialism.

Assurance was provided to the committee that they would be kept updated with progress on the sale of the Bouchardon Bust, as discussed at the previous meeting and by the full Council.

The Committee **NOTED** the Quarter 4 monitoring statement for the Invergordon Common Good Fund.

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

There had been circulated Report No BIER/20/24 by the Head of Community Support and Engagement and the Head of Corporate Finance & Commercialism.

During discussion, Mr Loudon sought an update on progress identifying ownership of land at the Blarliath Industrial Estate, and pointed out that he had enquired about this on previous occasions. Mr Loudon also sought

clarification on the money that had been set aside for the replacement of the mussel fishing boats, and the level of interest that investment was earning. These details would be provided to Mr Loudon outwith the meeting.

The Committee

- i. **NOTED** the Quarter 4 monitoring statement for the Tain Common Good Fund;
- ii. **AGREED** to provide information to Mr Loudon on progress with work to establish ownership of land at the Blarliath Industrial Estate; and
- iii. **AGREED** to provide information to Mr Loudon on the funds set aside to provide replacement mussel fishing boats, including the interest being earned.

8. Ward Discretionary Awards Duaisean fo Ùghdarras Uàird

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

9. Inverness and Cromarty Firth Green Freeport Update Cunntas às Ùr mu Shaor-phort Uaine Inbhir Nis agus Chaolas Chromba

Mr Calum MacPherson, Chief Executive of Inverness and Cromarty Green Freeport, gave a presentation to the Committee on the Inverness and Cromarty Firth Green Freeport including the following:

- the Full Business Case had been submitted to the UK and Scottish Governments in June 2024;
- work was being undertaken with ports and harbours in the area, as well as with community councils;
- a workforce development plan was being compiled, in partnership with the Council, Skills Development Scotland, and others, to attract to and retain workforce in the Highlands;
- regular communication was being undertaken with Members and communities;
- myth busting about the green freeport was vital; and
- a supporting document had been circulated to the Committee.

During discussion the following issues were raised:

- Members welcomed the opportunities the initiative would bring to the Highlands;
- assurance was sought and provided that connections were being made in relation to the use of ex-Armed Forces personnel. Ms MacCallum offered to provide an introduction to Mr MacPherson in this regard;
- it was hoped Members would be invited to a future Cromarty Harbours meeting and Mr MacPherson offered to investigate this;
- the importance of introducing the career opportunities to pupils in S1 and S2 were emphasised, as was the need to inform parents and carers of the opportunities that were available and the likely subjects and qualifications that might be required. Engagement with schools and with UHI was important, as was the need for funding to provide scholarships. A workforce

- strategy for the region would be helpful. It was also proposed that connections be made with High Life Highland and Youth Highland; and
- Mr MacPherson offered to attend a Black Isle community council chairs 6-monthly meeting.

The Committee **NOTED** the presentation and the points made during discussion.

10. Ward Minutes Geàrr-chunntas

There had been circulated and were **NOTED** Minutes of Meeting of the Black Isle and Easter Ross Area Committee held on 13 May 2024, which had been approved by the Council on 27 June 2024.

The meeting ended at 12.30pm