

The Highland Council

Minutes of Meeting of the **Black Isle and Easter Ross Area Committee** held remotely on Monday 4 November 2024, at 10.30 am.

Present:

Sarah Atkin
Sinclair Coghill
Laura Dundas
Lyndsey Johnston

Derek Louden
Morven-May MacCallum
Maureen Ross

Participating Officials:

Ms H Ross, Senior Community Development Manager
Ms L Bauermeister, Community Development Manager
Ms I MacMillan, Project Manager, Climate Change and Energy
Mr A Byrne, Principal Housing Officer – East Ross
Ms F MacBain, Senior Committee Officer

Also in Attendance: Station Commander Paul Young, Scottish Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS)

**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 Tamala Collier, John Edmondson, and Maxine Smith.

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

Item 4: Mr D Louden Declaration of interest
Ms S Atkin Transparency Statement

3. **Fire – Area Performance Summary Report Smàladh – Geàrr Aithisg Coileanadh Sgìreil**

There had been circulated Report No BIER/21/24 by the Local Senior Officer for Highland.

During discussion the following issues were raised:

- assurance was sought and provided that reference in the report to ‘Black Isle’ should have been to Black Isle and Easter Ross;

- the improved SFRS response rate in Fortrose was welcomed and a summary was provided of the recruitment and training situation there, including the role of on-call support services;
- information was sought and provided on home fire safety visits and the community response units;
- it was hoped more female SFRS officers would be recruited;
- Members felt Balintore station should be upgraded in light of the industrial development that was being undertaken in the area;
- once the retrofit of housing being undertaken in Balintore was completed, fire safety visits and / or education would be beneficial;
- the new fire appliance at Balintore was welcomed;
- information was sought and provided on the level of information being shared between agencies such as the SFRS and the Council's welfare team following home safety visits;
- efforts being undertaken to educate on the dangers of speeding and the prevention of road traffic collisions were summarised, with particular reference to the Biker Down programme;
- a commemorative service had been held in Fortrose on 23 June 2024 in memory of James Braidwood, described as the 'father of British firefighting';
- the engagement being undertaken with schools was welcomed; and
- clarification was sought and provided on terminology in the report, such as appliance availability and medium weight rescue pumps.

The Committee **NOTED** the Area Performance Report.

**4. Housing Performance Report – 1 April 2024 to 30 September 2024
Aithisg Coileanaidh Taigheadais – 1 Giblean 2024 gu 30 Sultain 2024**

Mr D Louden, as the owner of a third share of a rented property, declared an interest and left the meeting for the duration of Item 4.

Ms S Atkin declared a connection to Item 4 as her partner was a private landlord but, having applied the objective test, did not consider that she had an interest to declare.

There had been circulated Report No BIER/22/24 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Place.

During discussion the following issues were raised:

- in relation to tackling rent arrears, assurance was sought that a supportive approach was employed and that efforts were made to pursue low levels of arrears, to try to prevent tenants increasing their level of arrears to an unmanageable level. Referrals were made to the Council's welfare team, or Citizen's Advice Bureau, as appropriate. Reference was made to the possible existence of an app to assist with rent management;
- it was important to ensure housing tenants felt able to report incidences of anti-social behaviour and that a multi-agency approach was taken;
- there was significant demand for one-bed properties and it was hoped this information was provided to housing developers; and
- good working relations between Council and private landlords was beneficial to all.

The Committee **NOTED** the information provided on housing performance in the period 1 April 2024 – 30 September 2024.

5. Utilising the Great British Insulation Scheme to tackle fuel poverty in Black Isle & Easter Ross Social Housing
A' Cleachdadh Sgeama Teas-ghleidhidh Mòr Bhreatainn gus dèiligeadh ri bochdainn connaidh ann an Taigheadas Sòisealta an Eilein Duibh agus Rois an Ear

There had been circulated Report No BIER/23/24 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Place.

During discussion, the following issues were raised:

- the prioritisation of Black Isle and Easter Ross for this initiative was welcomed;
- an explanation was sought and provided of the various acronyms in the report; and
- an explanation was sought and provided on some of the eligibility criteria and, due to their complexity, people were advised to email their application for assessment, with one email address for Council tenants, and one for private tenants, both of which would be shared with the Committee after the meeting.

The Committee:

- i. **NOTED** the contents of this report; and
- ii. **AGREED** to support the development of externally funded projects and the opportunity to scale up; and
- iii. **AGREED** the email addresses to be used to check eligibility be shared with the Committee.

6. Waste Management
Stiùireadh Sgudail

This agenda note provided Members with updated information on the phased implementation of the Recycling Improvement Funded Waste and Recycling service change project.

Since the commencement in April 2024, over 90,000 household bins had been delivered, and the new service had been successful introduced into the areas

of Ross and Cromarty, Nairn, Inverness and B&S. Additionally, HC Business Waste Customers in these areas had received new recycling bins.

Black Isle and Easter Ross was the first area where service change was introduced, (April/May). A new grey 140 litre non-recyclable waste bin and silver food waste caddies were delivered to properties in food waste areas:

Muir of Ord 1251, Strathpeffer 497, Munloch 264, Avoch 531, Fortrose and Rosemarkie 1158, Culbokie 337, Invergordon 1767, Alness 2816, Dingwall 2396, Evanton 612, Maryburgh & Conon Bridge 1491, North Kessock 608.

In other non-food waste areas, a new grey 180 litre non-recyclable waste bin was provided. In all areas, the green bin was successfully changed to a mixed plastics, metals and food and drink cartons recycling bin, and the blue bin was changed to a paper, card and cardboard recycling bin.

The overall response from householders and businesses was very positive, demonstrating the communication and engagement with the public has been well received and understood.

Early data shows an encouraging reduction in non-recycling waste being sent for disposal. Since the service change, there has been a reduction of around 30% on the amount of kerbside residual waste collected in Easter Ross. A high food waste participation rate of over 70% was being achieved in areas where the service was being provided.

The Committee **NOTED** the completion of Recycling Improvement Funded (RIF) collection service changes in Black Isle and Easter Ross Area.

7. Scottish Government Play Funding Allocation
Riarachadh Maoineachadh Cluiche Riaghaltas na h-Alba

There had been circulated Report No BIER/24/24 by the Assistant Chief Executive - Place

The Committee **AGREED** to homologate £3,605.07 of funding to the project identified for Chapel Street Play Park, Portmahomack.

8. Common Good Funds
Maoin Maith Choitchinn

a. Cromarty Common Good Fund
Maoin Math Coitcheann Chromba

There had been circulated Report No BIER/25/24 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Place.

Information was sought on progress with East Church Hall, and this would be followed up and reported to a future Area Business meeting;

The Committee **NOTED** the position of Cromarty Common Good Fund (CCGF) as shown in the 2023/24 Quarter Two Monitoring Statement, and **AGREED** an update on East Church Hall would be provided to a future Area Business Meeting.

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

There had been circulated Report No BIER/26/24 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Place.

The Committee **NOTED** the position of Fortrose & Rosemarkie Common Good Fund (FRCGF) as shown in the 2023/24 Quarter Two Monitoring Statement.

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

There had been circulated Report No BIER/27/24 by the Chief Officer Community and Housing, and the Chief Officer Corporate Finance.

During discussion, information was sought and provided on the measures in place to ensure community engagement was undertaken on the uses of the CGFs, along with the rules governing the CGF.

The Committee **NOTED** the Quarter 2 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/28/24 by the Chief Officer Community and Housing, and the Chief Officer Corporate Finance.

During discussion, the following issues were raised:

- clarification was sought and confirmed that the Community Development Manager for the area, who was currently on leave, was the best contact for a community group interested in pursuing the construction of a pathway from Glenmorangie to Tain;
- with regard to monies that had previously been provided to the community for small projects such as a Christmas event for the elderly and for the storage of Christmas lights, it was explained that there was currently no community grants budget; and
- ongoing concern was expressed by Mr Loudon that the issue of landownership between the Council and the CGF for land at Blarliath Industrial Estate had not yet been resolved despite the information having been requested on more than one occasion. This was due to the pressure of work on the Common Good Fund officer. A brief summary was also provided of what charges for officer time were made against the CGF.

The Committee **NOTED** the Quarter 2 monitoring statement for the Tain Common Good Fund.

**9. Ward Discretionary Awards
Duaisean fo Ùghdarras Uàird**

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

**10. Minutes
Geàrr-chunntas**

There had been circulated and were **NOTED** Minutes of Meeting of the Black Isle and Easter Ross Area Committee held on 5 August 2024.

The meeting ended at 12.15pm.