

## **The Highland Council**

Minutes of Meeting of the **Community Safety, Public Engagement and Equalities Committee** held in the Chamber, Town House, High Street, Inverness on Wednesday, 25 March 2015 at 10.00 a.m.

### **Present**

Mrs A MacLean  
Ms J Campbell  
Mr A Duffy  
Mr H Fraser  
Mrs D MacKay  
Mr H Morrison  
Mrs M Paterson

Mr M Reiss  
Mr I Renwick  
Mr G Rimell  
Mr G Ross  
Mr R Saxon  
Dr A Sinclair  
Ms J Slater

### **Non-Members also present:**

Mrs M C Davidson

### **Officials in attendance:**

Ms C McDiarmid, Head of Policy and Reform  
Ms R Cleland, Corporate Communications Manager  
Ms R Mackinnon, Equal Opportunities Officer  
Ms F Palin, Head of Adult Services, Care and Learning  
Miss J MacLennan, Principal Administrator  
Ms L Lee, Committee Administrator  
Mr S Taylor, Administrative Assistant

### **Also in attendance:**

T/Chief Superintendent G MacPherson, Police Scotland - Highland  
Detective Inspector P MacKenzie, Police Scotland - Highland  
Sergeant A Goskirk, Police Scotland - Highland  
Sergeant J Hill, Police Scotland - Highland  
Mr S Hay, Local Senior Officer for the Highland Area, Scottish Fire and Rescue Service  
Mr G MacLeod, Scottish Ambulance Service  
Mr I Ross, Board Member, Scottish Police Authority

An asterisk in the margin denotes a recommendation to the Council. All decisions with no marking in the margin are delegated to the Committee.

### **Mrs A MacLean in the Chair**

### **Preliminaries**

The Chairman confirmed that all Members were invited to attend a briefing with the Highland Multicultural Friends Group at 3.00 pm.

### **1. Apologies for Absence Liesgeulan**

An apology for absence was intimated on behalf of Ms G Ross.

## 2. **Declarations of Interest** **Foillseachaidhean Com-pàirt**

The Committee **NOTED** the following declarations of interest:-

Item 8 - Mrs A MacLean and Ms J Campbell (Non-Financial)

## **Public Engagement** **Com-pàirt Phoblach**

## 3. **Corporate Communications Strategy** **Ro-innleachd Chonaltraidh Chorpóra**

There had been circulated Report No. CPE1/15 dated 13 March 2015 by the Chief Executive advising that a Corporate Communications Strategy had been developed which identified 12 core objectives and a number of themes for achieving these objectives.

In discussion, Members gave consideration to the following:-

- communications during the recent winter storms, including the valued contribution of community and third sector groups, and what had been learned;
- the use of the Council's website in providing information and making payments;
- interaction with the public via social media;
- provision of information at an Area level, such as by e-bulletin;
- ensuring Members were informed of issues before these appeared in the press;
- making forms easy to read;
- the need for clarity and transparency in public consultation questions; and
- the need to ensure that press releases were accurate and politically unbiased.

In response to questions raised, the T/Chief Superintendent provided a summary of activity during the winter storms, and the Corporate Communications Manager highlighted that it was hoped to extend the use of social media to gather information which could be used in the decision making process.

The Committee:-

- i. **APPROVED** the Corporate Communications Strategy;
- ii. **AGREED** to review implementation progress in 12 months; and
- iii. **AGREED** that concerns raised regarding the accuracy of press releases in recording Member participation in events, and informing Local Members of issues affecting their ward, be taken forward by officers, with an email response being provided to Members.

## 4. **Plain English Update** **Cunntas as Ùr mu Bheurla Shoilleir**

There had been circulated Report No. CPE2/15 dated 13 March 2015 by the Corporate Communications Manager providing an update on progress against the commitment to provide information to the public in clear language to the 'Crystal Mark' plain English standard, and the proposal to embed this standard in all The Highland Council's communications.

In discussion, Members supported the use of Plain English and wished to see the principles also applied to the design and layout of forms and their ease of completion on line. Particular documents which constituents found difficult to follow were highlighted and these included some letters and forms. It was also suggested that it would be helpful for minute writers to be given Plain English training and the inclusion of staff from Police, Fire, NHS Highland and other partners in Council's training sessions had its merits and should be explored further.

Having been assured that funding for the promotion of Plain English was in place until 2017, the Committee **NOTED** the progress made to date in the Council's commitment to embed staff training and corporate standards for Plain English and **AGREED** that:-

- i. the Plain English training include minute writers and staff involved in the design of forms; and
- ii. the feasibility of offering the training to Community Planning partners be investigated.

**5. Audit Scotland Report: Community Planning- Turning Ambition into Action Aithisg Sgrùdadh Alba: Dealbhadh Coimhearsnachd – A' Tionndadh Mòr-mhiann gu Gnìomh**

There had been circulated Report No. CPE3/15 dated 17 March 2015 by the Head of Policy and Reform summarising the key findings from the national Audit Scotland report into community planning. It identified the implications for the Highland Community Planning Partnership (CPP) and provided an up-date for Members on the views of the CPP in taking forward the recommendations in the audit report.

Members generally welcomed the report and emphasised the importance of grass roots/community input to community planning, and, supported by the Local Senior Officer for Fire and Rescue, highlighted the need to avoid duplication and address gaps, and to have a clear understanding of who did what. It was acknowledged that learning to work together was taking time but positive progress was being made and results were being achieved. Ward forums had been found to be a useful way to bring partners together locally but, given the breadth of some issues such as health, there might also be benefits from holding longer sessions. The forthcoming review of Area Committees and local community planning arrangements would help to progress arrangements in Highland.

The Committee **NOTED** that:-

- i. for some areas the Highland CPP could demonstrate it had made good progress, particularly around leadership and challenge in the CPP and the ability to absorb national structure changes into our CPP processes;

- ii. the CPP Board recognised it needed to continue to work on the CPP priorities around joint resourcing and performance reporting as set out in the SOA Development Plan;
- iii. the CPP Board had agreed that new work would focus on local community planning and how that influenced and reflected the SOA priorities. This would include consideration of the issues in paragraphs 3.5 to 3.7 of the report over the period to 2017/18;
- iv. the review of Area Committees locally agreed at the Council meeting on 12 March offered opportunities for improving local community planning arrangements. This could be in broadening Member scrutiny of partner services locally, in streamlining meetings and reporting, in providing better information for Members in their local decision-making, scrutiny and problem-solving roles and in encouraging more community participation;
- v. there was no planned audit or inspection of the Highland Community Planning Partnership for 2015/16; and
- vi. the Audit findings would also be considered by the Council's Audit and Scrutiny Committee.

## **6. Community Planning Board - Minutes Bòrd Dealbhadh Coimhearsnachd – Geàrr-chunntas**

Following approval at the Community Planning Board meetings held on 5 December 2014 and 4 March 2015 respectively, there had been circulated and were **NOTED** minutes of meetings of the Community Planning Board held on 13 October and 5 December 2014.

The Committee also **NOTED** that the Community Planning Board Minutes would be available on line from April 2015.

### **Equalities Co-ionannachdan**

## **7. Fairer Highland Plan - Progress with Equalities Outcomes and Mainstreaming Equality Plana Gàidhealtachd nas Cothromaiche – Adhartas le Builean Co-ionannachd agus Ag Àbhaisteachadh Co-ionannachd**

There had been circulated Report No. CPE4/15 dated 17 March 2015 by the Head of Policy and Reform providing a summary of the requirements on the Council, the Education Authority and the Licensing Board to publish reports on how equality was mainstreamed in the organisation and progress towards achieving our Equality Outcomes. The Council's Mainstreaming Report and the Equality Outcomes Progress Report were circulated as Appendices 1 and 2 to the report respectively.

In discussion, the following issues were raised:-

- the importance of equalities training for Members and officers, especially those officers involved in the preparation of Committee reports, was emphasised;
- the information provided would assist the Council in terms of workforce planning and would help to develop strategies throughout the Council;
- details of the Council's current policy for the employment of disabled people was sought;

- information was requested on the Highland Council's position in relation to equal pay and job evaluation; and
- all domestic abuse was unacceptable, whether perpetrated by men or women.

Issues such as the gender pay gap and the Council's policy with regard to allocating work to in-house staff or contractors were also raised although it was pointed out that this fell within the remit of the Resources Committee and could be raised with the Chair of that Committee.

Members having commended the substantial and detailed information provided, particularly given the limited resources available to the Equal Opportunities Officer, the Committee **AGREED** to:-

- approve the Mainstreaming Report at Appendix 1 of the report for publication; and
- approve the Equality Outcomes progress report at Appendix 2 of the report for publication.

**8. Violence Against Women Strategy Group - Minutes**  
**Buidheann Ro-innleachd Fòirneart An Aghaidh Bhoireannach– Geàrr-Chunntas**

**Declarations of Interest: Mrs A MacLean and Ms J Campbell declared non-financial interests in this item as Directors of Ross-shire Women's Aid and Inverness, Nairn, Badenoch and Strathspey Women's Aid respectively but, having applied the test outlined in Paragraphs 5.2 and 5.3 of the Councillors' Code of Conduct, each concluded that their interests did not preclude their involvement in the discussion.**

The Minutes of the Violence Against Women Strategy Group meetings held on 5 November 2014 had been circulated and were **NOTED**.

Following an update on progress made to date and arising from the Minutes, Members referred to Item 4 (Equally Safe and Commercial Sexual Exploitation Development Day) and the development of a questionnaire which, it was hoped, would help form policy on supporting women to exit prostitution. There had been concerns from Women's Aid relating to confidentiality between agencies and it was important that this was resolved. In addition, in relation to the Group's membership, Members sought information as to attendance by Police Scotland and a GP representative.

**Community Safety**  
**Sàbhailteachd Poblach**

**9. Performance Against the Highland Local Policing Plan 2014-2017**  
**Coileanadh mu Choinneamh Plana Obair-phoilis Ionadail na Gàidhealtachd 2014-2017**

There had been circulated Report No. CPE5/15 dated 13 March 2015 by the Divisional Commander for Police providing an update on the progress with reference to the objectives outlined in the Highland 2014-2017 Policing Plan.

During discussion, the following issues were raised:-

- confirmation was sought, and received, that there had been no evidence of an increase in traffic on alternative routes south of Inverness following the introduction of average speed cameras on the A9;
- concern was expressed that a number of licensed premises in Inverness had been staying open longer than permitted;
- the removal of “the curfew” in licensed premises in Inverness had helped reduce crime;
- concern was expressed at the conduct of cyclists, in particular multiple cyclists riding together, on main roads;
- information was requested on the number of Penalty Charge Notices currently being issued in Inverness City Centre;
- the potential of issuing ‘signpost’ letters to people found in possession of legal highs was raised;
- the dangers of using a mobile phone whilst driving was emphasised;
- a reduction in crime had been achieved through established pro-active strategies and preventative measures within local communities;
- it was important to educate children about the consequences of crime from a young age;
- there was a perception that anti-social behaviour was not being addressed by officers due to the length of time taken to respond to incidents;
- the reduction in sexual crimes and the establishment of the National Child Abuse Investigation Unit based in Inverness was welcomed;
- following the recent bad weather, rural communities had taken a greater interest in the emergency planning process;
- the absence of statistics relating to stop and search for alcohol and drugs was highlighted and a suggestion was made that figures be included in future reports with a proviso that they could be open to variation;
- it was unrealistic to expect police officers to routinely take on duties previously undertaken by traffic wardens; and
- whilst there had been a reduction in people caught drink driving, the continued high-levels of pro-active work undertaken had provided reassurance that the issue was being dealt with appropriately.

Thereafter, the Committee **NOTED** the progress made against the objectives set within the Highland Local Policing Plan 2014-2017 and **AGREED** that:-

- i. appropriate information on the work of the National Child Abuse Investigation Unit based in Inverness be incorporated in the quarterly performance reports to Committee; and
- ii. copies of the Scottish Police Authority/Police Scotland Joint Agreement on Policy Engagement be re-circulated to Committee Members.

#### **10. Police Scotland Consultation – Stop and Search Co-chomhairle Poilis Alba – Stad is Sgrùd**

A verbal update was given by the Temporary Chief Superintendent for Highland on Police Scotland’s national consultation on stop and search. Timescales had not permitted the consultation to be considered at the Committee but a full report, including statistics, would be brought to the June meeting.

During discussion, the following issues were raised:-

- a request was made for information on the number of sniffer dog searches carried out to be included within the next report to the Committee;
- the consensual approach to stop and search served a purpose within the appropriate setting, an example cited being at music festivals;
- it was important to emphasise to Police Scotland that the approach taken by police officers in the Highlands to stop and search might not be suitable in other areas of Scotland;
- it was a positive reflection on local police officers that some questions within the consultation did not necessitate comment as there had been no issues to highlight;
- information was requested as to the age limit of consensual stop and searches in the Highlands – it was confirmed that no consensual stop and search would take place with anyone under the age of 12;
- the complaints process in relation to stop and search was highlighted;
- criticism was expressed at the language used in recent media releases by Police Scotland and it was suggested that this should be simplified;
- it was important that front line officers dealt with the absolute minimum amount of paperwork to enable them to undertake the maximum amount of practical work;
- a request was made that stop and searches figures include whether the outcome of these searches had been positive or negative;
- a suggestion was made that a standard form of words be used when young people were asked to do a consensual stop and search as they might not be aware of their right to refuse;
- clarity was sought, and received, on whether it was illegal to possess alcohol; and
- as stop and search was an operational matter, it should be scrutinised by the appropriate bodies and was not used politically.

The Committee **NOTED** the information given and **AGREED** that a report including statistics on Stop and Searches would be brought to the June meeting.

#### 11. **Serious and Organised Crime – Update** **Droch Eucoir agus Eucoir fo Rianachd – Cunntas as Ùr**

A verbal report was given by Detective Inspector MacKenzie on a recent cross-border operation led by the Organised Crime Counter-Terrorism Unit with assistance from Highland and Islands Division, Specialist Crime Division and officers in Merseyside.

The report had provided reassurance that the length of time taken to deal with reports of serious crime was due to the gathering of intelligence required to provide a successful outcome and the creation of a single force had enabled greater information sharing and closer working between divisions. Members did ask for further information on what they should look out for when reporting suspicious activity.

Following discussion, the Chair, on behalf of the Committee, thanked Detective Inspector MacKenzie for his verbal report.

The Committee **NOTED** the information given.

## 12. Fire and Rescue Service Reports Aithisgean Seirbheis Smàlaidh is Teasairginn

### i. Quarterly Performance Report for Quarter 3, 2014-2015 Aithisg Dèanadais Ràitheil airson Cairteal 3, 2014-2015

There had been circulated Report No. CPE6/15 dated 13 March 2015, and the corresponding Quarterly Performance Report for Quarter 3, by the Local Senior Officer for Fire and Rescue, which detailed fire and rescue service performance across a range of Intervention, Prevention and Protection activities for Quarter 3, 2014-2015.

Prior to discussion, the Chair expressed her appreciation for the hospitality she received during a recent visit to Cannich Fire Station. She also welcomed the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service's commitment to recruiting more retained fire fighters.

During discussion, the following issues were raised:-

- concern was expressed at a recent call-out by the Thurso fire unit due to difficulties with staffing in Wick;
- it was unrealistic for small businesses to release employees for a 4 week period to undertake basic fire training;
- concern was expressed that fitness level requirements were unrealistic;
- fire crews should be given more scope to decide whether to undertake a particular course of action, in particular, with regard to the use of breathing apparatus;
- a request was made for greater detail on response times;
- it was suggested that there was benefit in extending The High Fires programme for young people, which had been undertaken in Caithness, to other parts of Highland;
- closer scrutiny of recruitment and training levels was required to prevent station closures;
- a suggestion was made that the current 2 week schedule for initial training be spread across a longer period to allow greater flexibility;
- the option of cross-over station work should be encouraged;
- concern was expressed regarding crew availability in Lochinver; and
- greater emphasis on the incentives available to retained fire fighters should be included in recruitment adverts.

The Committee otherwise **NOTED** SFRS service delivery and performance contained within the Report and the corresponding QPR for quarter 3, 2014-2015.

### ii. Review of Specialist Resources in the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service Ath-sgrùdadh air Stòrasan Sònraichte ann an Seirbheis Smàlaidh is Teasairginn na h-Alba

There had been circulated Report No. CPE7/15 dated 13 March 2015 by the Local Senior Officer for Fire and Rescue providing an overview of the Scottish Fire and Rescue's review of specialist resources for Scotland. The



Report set the background and provided a summary of the analysis, benefits and recommendations.

The transfer of the urban search and rescue and mass decontamination equipment from Inverness to Elgin was questioned. However, other Members pointed out that the transfer of this equipment removed the burden of training on equipment which had, in fact, never been used in Inverness and allowed training to concentrate on equipment that was regularly used.

The Committee **NOTED** the report.

### **13. Scottish Ambulance Service Performance Report Aithisg Dèanadais Seirbheis Charbadan-eiridinn na h-Alba**

There had been circulated performance report by the Scottish Ambulance Service for the Highland area for the period December 2014 to February 2015 and Members' attention was drawn to the main points.

Prior to discussion, the Chair expressed Members' appreciation for the visit to the Ambulance's Service's Inverness Control Room. The professionalism of staff had been evident and Members had witnessed the scope of operation and had been afforded the opportunity to speak with staff and to witness how the various types of calls were dealt with. For those Members who had been unable to attend it was hoped that another visit could be arranged at a future date.

Other points raised during discussion included:-

- the level of achievement was welcomed, particularly bearing in mind the impact the considerable distances involved in Highland had on response times;
- clarification was sought, and received, as to the reasons why there were fewer journeys actually provided by the Ambulance Service (referred to as Journey Count) in comparison to the number of journeys requested (referred to as Registered Journey Count);
- assurance was sought that the closure of the Endoscopy Unit in Skye and Lochalsh was not putting additional pressure on the Ambulance Service in terms of transporting patients to Fort William or Inverness. If this arose in the future, Members asked that they be advised accordingly;
- details of the location and numbers of Community First Responder Units and defibrillators was requested. In recognising that the mapping of defibrillators had its challenges as not all were in the control of the Ambulance Service, Members suggested that Ward Managers and Community Councils be approached as they might have better local knowledge;
- information was requested, and provided, as to Ambulance Service staffing arrangements for Ward 1 (North, West and Central Sutherland) and that patient transport would still be provided from Kinlochbervie. In addition, clarification was sought as to what precisely was meant when the Scottish Ambulance Service referred to the North Division;
- the work being undertaken by the Scottish Ambulance Service in relation to the development of Falls pathways was welcomed and it was hoped that this could be extended beyond the Inverness and Caithness areas. The

- assistance of the British Red Cross, who had provided a “sitting” service for the pilots, was also commended; and
- it was hoped that there would be no further rationalisation of the Ambulance Service Control Rooms.

Thereafter, the Committee **NOTED** the Performance Report.

The meeting ended at 2.50 p.m., having adjourned for lunch between 1.20 p.m. and 2.00 p.m.