The Highland Council
Sutherland County Committee

Minutes of Meeting of the Sutherland County Committee held the Chamber, Council Offices, Drummuie on Tuesday, 9 February 2016 at 10.30am.

Present:

Mr G Farlow
Mrs D Mackay
Mr J McGillivray
Ms L Munro
Mr G Phillips

Officials in attendance:

Mrs C McDiarmid, Head of Policy and Reform, Chief Executive's Office (by video conference)
Mr P Mascarenhas, Community and Democratic Engagement Manager, Chief Executive's Office (by video conference)
Mr H Ross, Senior Ward Manager, Chief Executive's Office
Mr G Cameron, Ward Manager, Chief Executive's Office
Mr A Gunn, Head of Revenues and Business Support, Finance Service (by video conference)
Mr C Stewart, Area Community Services Manager, Community Services
Mr G Mackenzie, Assistant Area Community Services Manager, Community Services
Mr S Graham, Project Manager, Chief Executive's Office (by video conference)
Ms L Mackellaich, Road Safety Officer, Community Services (by video conference)
Mr K Masson, Policy Coordinator – Climate Change, Chief Executive's Service (by video conference)
Ms A Macrae, Committee Administrator, Corporate Development Service

Also in Attendance:

Item 7: Chief Inspector I MacLelland, Police Scotland

The Senior Ward Manager took the Chair pending the appointment of the Chair of the Committee at item 3 below.

1. Apologies for Absence
Liesgeulan

An apology for absence was intimated on behalf of Mr H Morrison.

2. Declarations of Interest
Foillseachaidhean Com-pàirt

Item 5: Mr G Farlow (non-financial)
Item 12: Mr J McGillivray (non-financial)

3. Appointment of Chair of Sutherland County Committee
Suidheachadh Cathraiche airson Comataidh Siorrachd Chataibh

The Senior Ward Manager invited nominations for the Chair of the Committee.

Mr G Farlow seconded by Ms L Munro moved that Mr G Phillips be appointed Chair of the Committee.

On there being no other nominations, Mr G Phillips was duly appointed as Chair.

4. Appointment of Vice Chair of Sutherland County Committee
Suidheachadh Iar-Chathraiche airson Comataidh Siorrachd Chataibh

The Chair then invited nominations for the post of Vice Chair of the Sutherland County Committee.

Mr G Phillips seconded by Ms L Munro moved that Mr H Morrison be appointed as Vice Chair of the Committee.

On there being no other nominations, Mr H Morrison was duly appointed Vice Chair of the Sutherland County Committee.

5. Localism Action Plan Update
Plana-gnìomh Ionadaileachd

Declaration of Interest:- Mr G Farlow declared a non-financial interest in this item as a member of the Caithness and North Sutherland Regeneration Partnership, but having applied the test outlined in Paragraphs 5.2 and 5.3 of the Councillors' Code of Conduct, concluded that his interest did not preclude him from taking part in the discussion.

There had been circulated Report SCC/01/16 dated 28 January 2016 by the Head of Policy and Reform which highlighted the new devolved powers for the Committee and the further powers likely to be devolved in 2016. It provided an up-date of work with partners on local community planning arrangements which Members would be involved in during 2016.

During discussion, Members raised the following issues:-

- it was important that communities in Sutherland had a broad understanding of the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015 and were aware of role and remit of the new County Committee in this regard;
- an assurance was sought and provided that the agendas and minutes of meetings would be published and made available on the Council's website so that they could be accessed by communities;
- it was also important there be good media coverage of the Committee through the Council's Corporate Communications team;
- it was suggested that understanding of the Committee's role and remit would evolve over time and careful consideration and a methodical approach was required to be taken in regard to local community planning and the work to be undertaken with communities at a local level, to develop a plan for the Sutherland economy going forward;

- the above should include consideration of what was required and any gaps that needed to be addressed in different localities to make them less fragile and more successful; this could then form an agenda and basis on which to have further discussions with partners;
- consideration should also be given as to how the Committee worked with the District Partnership going forward given that the Partnership operated under a reducing inequalities agenda which included the economy;
- that further guidance was required on the elements that should be included in locality plans;
- that deprivation in Sutherland tended to be spread across the area and reference was made to the need for more statistical information at a local level in this regard;
- in regard to the above that NHS Highland had a wealth of intelligence in terms of deprivation which drilled down to individual communities, and it was suggested this needed to be cross referenced to the intelligence held by the Council on the basis this would provide important data in regard to the issues relevant to Sutherland;
- it was suggested that while recognising the work of the Caithness and North Sutherland Regeneration Partnership, that there was a need to establish an equivalent organisation in Sutherland and to ensure the area received an equitable allocation of economic development funds.

The Committee **NOTED** and welcomed the:-

i. the new powers devolved to the Committee and the planned further devolution of powers subject to Council approval in March 2016, and that further changes are likely during 2016; and
ii. work underway with partners to establish community planning arrangements for Sutherland and that they will be involved further in this area of work in 2016.

6. Local Committees - Webcasting
Roghainnean Craoladh-lìn

There had been circulated Report No SCC/02/16 dated 28 January 2016 by the Director of Finance which sought a decision on whether the Sutherland County Committee meetings should be webcast and, if so, the funding source/s of the additional costs that webcasting would incur.

During discussion, Members raised the following comments:-

- it was suggested that it would be a retrograde step not to have at least a visual or oral recording of meetings available as a matter of public record to meet public expectations;
- that while Members supported the webcasting of meetings in principle, given the costs involved, the significant financial challenges facing the Council and the poor viewing figures for the previous Caithness and Sutherland Area Committee the webcasting of meetings could not be justified;
- that formal minutes were taken, circulated and retained and this provided a public record of meetings; in addition meetings were open to the press and public;

- the expectation was that as the Committee and the local community planning arrangements developed there would be a greater number of issues of interest to a wider public and therefore the potential for webcasting to be available on request in exceptional circumstances using the existing equipment should be explored;
- that the Committee should have the ability to take a decision on webcasting at a local level and without reference back to the Resources Committee;
- a contrary view that once each of the local committees had taken a decision on webcasting it was important that the Resources Committee had the opportunity to consider the full cost implications to the Council;
- a point that the Scottish Government funding for participatory budgeting should also be available for use to fund webcasting on the basis this would enhance community empowerment; it was confirmed that this funding could only be used for participatory budgeting events;
- issues in regard to broad band width and upload speeds to support webcasting in different venues around the County and the impact of the arrival of superfast broadband in this regard; and
- it was suggested the option of an oral recording being made of the meeting and thereafter uploaded to the Council's website for public access be explored.

Following a short adjournment, the Chair seconded by Mr G Farlow **MOVED**: (i) not to webcast meetings in the light of viewing figures and costs unless all other Area Committees decided they wished to be webcast; and (ii) to explore the request that at least an oral record of the meeting be made available on the Council's website after the event and to support the costs involved by allocating up to £218 per annum from the Ward Discretionary Budget.

Mrs D Mackay seconded by Mr J McGillivray moved as an **AMENDMENT** that given that a formal minute is taken, circulated and retained that continued webcasting could not be justified given the dire financial settlement and challenges facing The Highland Council combined with the poor viewing figures.

On a vote being taken, the **MOTION** received 3 votes and the **AMENDMENT** received 2 votes with no abstentions and the **MOTION** was therefore **CARRIED**, the votes having been cast as follows:-

For the Motion:
Mr G Farlow, Ms L Munro, Mr G Phillips.

For the Amendment:
Mrs D Mackay, Mr J McGillivray.

Decision

The Committee **AGREED**:-

i. not to webcast meetings in the light of viewing figures and costs unless all other Area Committees decided they wished to be webcast; and
ii. to explore the request that at least an oral record of the meeting be made available on the Council's website after the event and to support the costs involved by allocating up to £218 per annum from the Ward Discretionary Budget.

7. Police – Area Performance Summary
Poileas – Geàrr-chunntas air Coileanadh Sgìreil

There had been circulated Report No SCC/03/16 dated 28 January 2016 by the North Highland Area Commander which provided a local summary update to Committee Members on progress with reference to the local priorities within the Highland 2014-2017 Policing Plan.

During discussion, Members raised the following issues:-

- the content and structure of the report was extremely helpful and the fact that Police Scotland's operational priorities for Sutherland reflected what mattered to communities in the area be welcomed;
- an explanation was sought and provided in regard to the increase in the statistics around drink driving and the impact of the lower drink driving limit;
- the seasonal closure of Hotels in the more rural areas of Sutherland resulted in people taking increased risks by making more frequent journeys and travelling greater distances to licensed premises given the lack of taxis and public transport in the area;
- in regard to the above it was suggested this was an issue that should be addressed by the Committee in conjunction with its community planning partners;
- a point in regard to the incidents reported in regard to vandalism and whether information was available on detection rates; the North Highland Area Commander confirmed that figures for detection rates were not currently available but that the potential for these to be produced would be explored;
- a query in regard to how the initiatives being progressed throughout the year in terms of raising awareness and educating young people on the dangers of New Physoactive Substances were to be funded;
- an explanation was sought and provided on the reasons for the significant increase in the number of domestic abuse incidents shown in the report and the relationship with specific campaigns and continuing partnership work in this regard; and
- that clarification be provided in regard to the liaison undertaken by Police Scotland with the mountain rescue services and the coastguard in Sutherland.

During further discussion, reference was made to the Council's policy to welcome Syrian refugees to the Highlands and discussion followed on the engagement by the Council and other partners which had taken place with Police Scotland to make sure they had a safe and secure environment on arriving into the area. It was also stated as a matter of record that the Committee looked forward to welcoming Syrian refugees into the Highlands and Sutherland.

Thereafter, the Committee **NOTED** the progress report and updates in relation to the 4 Priorities; Road Safety, Substance Abuse/Misuse, Antisocial Behaviour and Public Protection.

8. Request by Community for Speed Limit Reduction from 40 mph to 30 mph on A836 through Edderton
Iarrtas bhon Choimhearsnachd airson lùghdachadh caisg astair bho 40 msu gu 30 msu tro Eadardan

There had been circulated Report No SCC/04/16 dated 21 January 2016 by the Director of Community Services which invited Members to consider a request for a 30 mph speed limit on the A836 through Edderton, with the recommendation from officers to reject the request and as a result agree to the introduction of a standardisation/upgrade of 40 mph repeater signs within the existing 40 mph limit.

In presenting the report the Area Community Services Manager provided detailed information as to the reasons why officers recommended the request be refused. This included information on the relevant advice and guidelines with specific reference to the speed surveys undertaken; characteristics/density of the village; minimum length of road required for a speed limit; and statistical analysis of accident rates. In addition, he reported that if Members were minded not to accept the officer advice then good reasons for that decision must be provided.

During discussion, Members raised the following issues:-

- concern at the road safety issues associated with the passage of children from the village across the A836 to and from Edderton Primary School which was located outwith the main part of village and the fact that children attending Tain Royal Academy were also picked up and dropped off by school buses on the road;
- in view of the above that the request by Edderton Community Council for the imposition of a 30mph speed limit on the A836 through Edderton should be supported;
- issues around whether further enforcement work by Police Scotland would be required if a 30mph speed limit was imposed; in relation to this it was noted that at a recent meeting of Edderton Community Council, the Police Scotland representative in attendance had confirmed there had been recent enforcement activity on the road in this area;
- concern that the flow of traffic in this area may increase when the Struie road was closed and reference was made to implications for child safety associated with the road being used by timber extraction vehicles in such circumstances;
- that the issue of precedent should not be a factor in determining this matter and that the imposition of a speed limit should be progressed if it was considered appropriate in this location;
- there had been a considerable strength of feeling within the community in support of a reduced speed limit for a number of years and it had been a recurring them at community council meetings over the past four years;
- in terms of the advice and guidance issued on speed limits and driver perceptions, it was suggested that a legally enforceable 30mph speed limit

sign was the most effective mechanism in terms of ensuring drivers adhered to that limit; and

- this was a difficult and emotive issue; however it was important that the Committee were mindful of the long expressed concerns of the community on this matter and had regard to the individual circumstances relating to Edderton, as outlined in the discussion.

Following a short adjournment, Mr J McGillivray seconded by Mrs D Mackay **MOVED** that the process for the introduction of a 30mph speed limit on the A836 through Edderton be commenced on the grounds that:-

i. Scottish Executive Circular No 1/2006 ("Setting Local Speed Limits") Section 6.3 Paragraph 100 explains in general terms that fear of traffic can affect people's quality of life in villages and that villages should have comparable speed limits to similar roads in urban areas;
ii. if there are fewer than 20 houses, Traffic Authorities should make extra allowances for any other key buildings, such as a church, shop or school;
iii. Edderton has both a church and school and also bus stops on the A836; and
iv. the strength of community feeling over many years has been evidenced to the satisfaction of all Ward Members continually since 2008.

Ms L Munro moved as an **AMENDMENT** approval of the recommendations set out in the report but on failing to find a seconder the amendment fell, and accordingly the **MOTION** became the finding of the meeting.

Decision

The Committee **AGREED** that the process for the introduction of a 30mph speed limit on the A836 through Edderton be commenced on the grounds that:-

i. Scottish Executive Circular No 1/2006 ("Setting Local Speed Limits") Section 6.3 Paragraph 100 explains in general terms that fear of traffic can affect people's quality of life in villages and that villages should have comparable speed limits to similar roads in urban areas;
ii. if there are fewer than 20 houses, Traffic Authorities should make extra allowances for any other key buildings, such as a church, shop or school;
iii. Edderton has both a church and school and also bus stops on the A836; and
iv. the strength of community feeling over many years has been evidenced to the satisfaction of all Ward Members continually since 2008.

9. Cycling, Walking and Safer Streets Update
Fios Às Ùr air Rothaireachd, Coiseachd is Sràidean nas Sàbhailte

There had been circulated Report No SCC/05/16 dated 12 January 2016 by the Director of Community Service which invited Members to approve the project delivered through the Scottish Government funding for Cycling, Walking and Safer Streets for the Sutherland County Committee, as set out in **Appendix 1**.

The Roads Safety Officer advised that confirmation had been received that the works could be undertaken by Community Services at considerably lower cost than the tender quote received and therefore Members approval for an amended grant of £23,000 was being sought. In response to a question she confirmed that the

timing of the works would not be affected and that they would be completed by the end of the financial year.

The Committee:-

i. **APPROVED** the CWSS/SRTS project detailed in Appendix 1 to improve safety at Dornoch Academy and Dornoch primary School subject to an amended grant of £23,000 being awarded; and
ii. **NOTED** that the Road Safety Unit will continue to work with schools to develop further SRTS Projects for future years.

10. Transport Programme
Pròg ram Còmhdhalach

There had been circulated Report No SCC/06/16 dated 29 January 2016 by the Director of Community Services which advised that as part of the Council's Transport Programme, mainstream school transport and public bus service contracts have been retendered in Sutherland. The report presents an update on the outcomes of the retendering process. The report also updated Members on the promotion of the revised timetable for Route 906, Lairg – Helmsdale.

The Project Manager reported that he had received confirmation that corrected/updated information on the revised Lairg-Helmsdale service had been placed at the relevant bus stops and shelters with timetable cases and also distributed to libraries, and service points details of which he provided. In addition any gaps in terms of where the information had been previously available would be addressed in the course of the next couple of days.

During discussion, Members raised the following issues:-

- the collaborative working which taken place to resolve a number of the issues in regard to key bus provision as part of the retendering process be welcomed;
- it was noted some issues remained in the area between Brora and Helmsdale and therefore it was requested that a composite timetable be produced encompassing the different forms of public transport available in that area to meet the needs of the public; and
- it would be helpful if Members could meet with a representative of Stagecoach at a ward business meeting to discuss concerns around timetabling and ticketing issues; the Project Manager confirmed that he would refer this matter to the Council's Transport Unit to make the necessary arrangements.

The Committee is invited to note the:-

i. **NOTED** the Sutherland retendering process results;
ii. **NOTED** the revision to the Lairg-Helmsdale timetable;
iii. **NOTED** the contractor's timetable promotion activity;
iv. **AGREED** to investigate the potential for a composite timetable to be produced encompassing the different forms of public transport available for the area between Brora and Helmsdale; and

v. **AGREED** that a representative of Stagecoach be invited to meet with Members at a ward business meeting to discuss timetabling and ticketing issues.

11. Participatory Budgeting
Buidseat Compàirteachaidh

There had been circulated Report No SCC/07/16 dated 1 February 2016 by the Head of Policy and Reform which highlighted progress in the development of participatory budgeting (PB) in Highland. The report sets PB in the context of the requirements of the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015 particularly the requirements to develop local democratic structures and involve communities in decision-making around resources. It asked Members to consider how PB might be piloted in Sutherland and offered options for doing this. It also asked Members to agree to utilise Scottish Government funding of £15K and consider adding Ward Discretionary funding to this amount to develop the process.

During discussion, Members raised the following issues:-

- It was suggested that a pan Sutherland participatory budgeting event be held 2016 and it was suggested this be held in Lairg given its central location within the County;
- that the Scottish Government match funding of £15k be utilised towards this event;
- consideration should be given at ward business meetings to adding ward discretionary funding towards the event once Members received confirmation of the budgets for 2016/17;
- it was suggested that a maximum funding limit of £3,000 per application be set; and
- that the first event be used to learn lessons for future arrangements going forward.

The Committee **AGREED**:-

i. that a pan Sutherland participatory budgeting event be held in Lairg in 2016;
ii. to set a maximum funding limit of £3,000 per application; and
iii. to utilise Scottish Government funding of £15,000 towards this event and to consider at ward business meetings adding Ward Discretionary funding once the budgets for 2016/17 had been confirmed.

12. Carbon CLEVER Community Grant Fund
Sgeama Thabhartasan Coimhearsnachd Càrboin Ciallaich

Declaration of Interest:- Mr J McGillivray declared a non-financial interest in this item as Chair of The Embo Trust, and left the Chamber for the determination of this item.

There had been circulated Report No SCC/08/16 dated 25 January 2016 by the Head of Policy and Reform which sets out the applications received for the Carbon CLEVER community grant fund in Sutherland for 2015-16. It detailed the background to the Fund, together with a summary of applications, the assessments and funding recommendations.

In discussion a point was raised in regard to the potential for a modified version of the Fund's assessment criteria to be used for ward discretionary funds. It was suggested that a more simplified model would be appropriate in this regard and that this matter be explored further at ward business meetings.

The Committee:-

i. **AGREED** the funding recommendations as shown below;

Ref. No.	Applicant Organisation	Recommended Award
11801	Ardgay Public Hall Committee	£658.48
11932	Tongue Village Hall	£5,852.12
11952	The Embo Trust (*Urras Euraboil*)	£15,989.40
	Total	**£22,500**

ii. **NOTED** that Ward Discretionary Grant for Ward 1 and Ward 5 may provide an additional source of funding to support the projects further; and

iii. **AGREED** to explore at ward business meetings the potential for a modified version of the Fund's assessment criteria scoring matrix to be used for ward discretionary funds.

13. Dornoch Common Good Funds – Annual Report 2014/15, Q3 Monitoring 2015/16 and Budget Report 2016/17
Maoin Math Coitcheann Dhòrnaich – Aithisg Bhliadhnail 2014/15, Sgrùdadh Q3 2015/16 agus Aithisg Buidseit 2016/17

There had been circulated Joint Report No SCC/09/16 dated 26 January 2016 by the Director of Finance and Head of Policy and Reform which invited Members to scrutinise and note both the Dornoch Common Good Annual Report and Accounts for 2014/15 and the monitoring statement to December 2015. Members were also asked to approve the Dornoch Common Good Fund Annual Budget for 2016/17 along with five year strategy.

In discussion, Members welcomed the report and in particular the financial strategy given the longer term view it provided in terms of risks to the Fund's reserves.

The Committee:-

i. **NOTED** the Dornoch Common Good Fund – Annual Report and Accounts for 2014/15;

ii. **NOTED** the Dornoch Common Good Fund – Third Quarter, 2015/16 Monitoring Report;

iii. **APPROVED** the Dornoch Common Good Fund – Annual Budget for 2016/17; and

iv. **NOTED** the financial strategy outlined.

The meeting ended at 1.10pm.

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