

The Highland Council

Minutes of Meeting of the **Communities and Partnerships Committee** held in the Council Chamber, Council Headquarters, Glenurquhart Road, Inverness on Thursday 9 June 2016 at 10.30 am.

Present:

Mr A Baxter	Ms A MacLean
Miss J Campbell	Mrs M Paterson
Dr J Davis	Mr I Renwick
Mr N Donald	Mr G Ross
Mr H Fraser	Dr A Sinclair
Mr L Fraser	Ms J Slater
Mr R Laird	Ms M Smith
Mrs L MacDonald	Mr J Stone

Non-Members also present:-

Mrs G Coghill	Mr G MacKenzie
Mrs M Davidson	Mr T MacLennan
Ms J Douglas	Mr F Parr
Mr D Millar	

Officials in attendance:

Ms A Clark, Acting Head of Policy, Chief Executive's Office
Mrs R Cleland, Corporate Communications Manager, Chief Executive's Office
Mr P Mascarenhas, Community and Democratic Engagement Manager
Ms R Mackinnon, Equal Opportunities Officer, Chief Executive's Office
Miss J MacLennan, Principal Administrator, Corporate Development Service
Miss J Green, Administrative Assistant, Corporate Development Service
Mr S Taylor, Administrative Assistant, Corporate Development Service

Also in attendance:

Chief Superintendent P MacRae, Highland and Islands Divisional Commander, Police Scotland
Mr S Hay, Local Senior Officer, Scottish Fire and Rescue Service
Dr M E M Foxley, Board Member, Scottish Fire and Rescue Service Board
Ms F Miller, 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.

Mr H Fraser in the Chair

Business

1. Apologies for Absence Liesgeulan

Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of Mrs D MacKay, Mr D Mackay, Mr H Morrison, Mr M Reiss, Mr G Rimell and Mr R Saxon.

2. Declarations of Interest Foillseachaidhean Com-pàirt

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

Item 9 – Ms J Douglas and Ms A MacLean (both non-financial)

At this point in the meeting, the Chairman welcomed Chief Superintendent Philip MacRae to his first Committee as Highland and Islands Divisional Commander for Police Scotland.

The Chairman also drew attention to the revised format in the presentation of reports from the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS) and Police Scotland, during which he explained that the main scrutiny at this meeting would be on the SFRS Quarterly Performance Report and that the Police Scotland Performance Against the Highland Local Policing Plan 2014-2017 would be a summary report. He informed Members that scrutiny of the services would alternate between meetings; therefore, the main scrutiny at the next meeting of the Committee would be on the Police Performance report with a summary report provided by the SFRS.

The Committee was also informed that, in relation to Item 4 on the agenda, a workshop would be held immediately following the meeting to capture the views of members on the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service Strategic Plan for 2016-2019.

Community Safety Sàbhailteachd Phoblach

3. Fire and Rescue Service Quarterly Performance Report for Quarter 4 2015/16 Aithisg Dèanadais Ràitheil na Seirbheis Smàlaidh agus Teasairginn airson Ràith 4 2015/16

There had been circulated Report No CP/10/16 by the Local Senior Officer for Fire and Rescue, together with accompanying quarterly performance report (QPR), providing detail on Fire and Rescue Service performance across a range of Intervention, Prevention and Protection activities for Quarter 4, 2015/16.

During discussion, the following issues were raised:-

- the 100% availability of the Dingwall Fire Station 1st Appliance was welcomed;
- gratitude was expressed at the quick response by all emergency services to an accident in Skye the previous evening;
- concern was expressed that whilst Cannich Station had been specifically targeted during the previous recruitment process, other stations within Aird and Loch Ness had not and that a consequence of this was that individuals looking to become retained fire fighters in specific stations within this ward, such as Foyers, had not been recruited. Concern was also expressed individuals could lose interest in becoming a retained fire fighter due to the length of time taken between expressing an interest and recruitment. In response, the Local Senior Officer provided an explanation in relation to the Retained Duty System recruitment process and that all stations with known vacancies were being targeted;
- a previous commitment by the Service to train retained fire fighters locally was highlighted and reassurance sought, and received, that future training earmarked for later in the year would be undertaken in Highland. The next Highland course was commencing in Invergordon the following week, 13 June 2016;

- concern was expressed regarding the suitability, or otherwise, of housing stock for people with a disability and whether the Fire Service provided an input to plans for building development. In response, the Committee was advised that the Service was a recognised statutory agency during the consultation process for housing schemes. In the event of a change in occupancy, the Service, in partnership with the Council and housing associations, offered Home Fire Safety Visits and could offer advice prior to the occupant moving in;
- it was highlighted that individuals were required to spend up to a fortnight away from families and jobs in order to complete training and this could be a stumbling block in recruiting more retained fire fighters. In response, the Local Senior Officer informed Members that there was a degree of flexibility and that this was progressing nationally;
- concern was expressed regarding the availability of appliances and staff at some fire stations, in particular, a recent event in Skye when all fire stations on the island were unavailable for a period of time. In response, reassurance was provided that the Skye event had been unprecedented but Portree had now been reassigned as a strategic station so that, in the event of unavailability of staff or appliances, a crew and fire engine would be despatched to Portree station to ensure operational coverage for Skye;
- the sharing of information regarding common themes which had been identified in relation to fire fatalities with partner agencies was welcomed;
- concern was expressed regarding the number of false alarm call-outs within the Inverness Central ward and it was suggested that a way to help reduce this could be the enforcement of a no-smoking policy within corridors and stairwells of flats;
- clarity was sought on what specific types of “other operational activity” were included within the quarterly performance report in relation to special services activity figures. In response, the Committee was advised that this related to a broad spectrum of non-road traffic collision incidents including domestic flooding, people trapped e.g. in machinery and non-fire domestic, industrial and commercial incidents; and
- concern was expressed that, given the forthcoming change in procedure in the issue of public entertainment licenses, a prospective reduction in the number of publicly-organised bonfires might occur but give rise to ad-hoc bonfire and fireworks displays and a potential increase in risk to public safety. The Local Senior Officer advised that based on previous incidents of this type over previous years that this was not a concern.

The Committee **NOTED** and scrutinised the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service delivery and performance contained within the Report and accompanying Quarterly Performance Report for Quarter 4, 2015/16.

4. Scottish Fire and Rescue Service Strategic Plan 2016-19 Plana Ro-innleachdail Seirbheis Smàlaidh agus Teasairginn na h-Alba 2016-2019

The Local Senior Officer provided a verbal update on progress of the new Scottish Fire and Rescue Service Strategic Plan for 2016-2019, during which he advised that the Plan’s content would be shaped by the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS)’s external environmental influences and by the views and opinions of its stakeholders. These would be gathered through extensive engagement with a whole range of different groups including the Fire Board, key partners and, crucially, communities. The new strategic plan would be published in October 2016.

In this regard, Dr M Foxley, Board Member of the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service emphasised the importance of the Council’s response to the consultation as this would provide the Scottish Government with the information on how the SFRS should

operate. He advised that the Board and the Service were working to make recruitment quicker, provide greater flexibility in the availability of people and ensure training would be undertaken locally. He drew attention to the current state of public finances and highlighted that the Board was currently looking at transformational changes to the service provide to reduce the number of deaths caused by fires. He also highlighted Board discussion regarding the lack of fire fighter capacity at sea, in coastal waters and in harbours around Scotland. The Service's efforts in raising public awareness of out of hospital cardiac arrest and SFRS support for attendance was emphasised and he highlighted that two key issues going forward would be in relation to falls prevention and greater involvement in rural health.

Thereafter, the Committee **NOTED** the update and that a workshop would be held immediately following the Committee to capture the views of members on the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service Strategic Plan for 2016-2019.

5. Fire and Rescue Framework for Scotland Consultation Co-chomhairle Frèam Smàlaidh agus Teasairginn na h-Alba

There had been circulated Report No CP/11/16 by the Acting Head of Policy outlining the Council's draft response to the Fire and Rescue Framework for Scotland Consultation. The Chairman thanked Members who had recently attended a workshop to discuss the Council's response to the Consultation and had provided an input into the draft response.

During discussion, the following comments were made:-

- in relation to section 4 of the response "Managing Risk", the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS) it was important to recognise the benefits of partnership working in relation to carers, the NHS and voluntary bodies;
- in relation to Section 11 "Telecommunications", the SFRS should ensure a high-level of communication links that, if possible, could be capable of sourcing a call from out-set; and
- in relation to Section 13 "Managing Performance", the importance of local reporting and scrutiny to ensure the continuing delivery of a high-quality service was highlighted.

Thereafter, the Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the content of the Fire and Rescue Framework Consultation; and
- ii. **AGREED** the draft response as set out in Appendix 1, subject to amendment to take into account comments made during discussion as set out above as the Council's response to the consultation .

At this juncture, on behalf of the Committee, the Chairman made a presentation to Local Senior Officer Scott Hay who was due to retire shortly. Tribute was paid to his huge contribution to the safety of Highland communities and to his many achievements.

6. **Performance Against the Highland Local Policing Plan 2014-2017 – Summary Report**
Coileanadh mu Choinneamh Plana Obair-phoillis Ionadail na Gàidhealtachd 2014-2017

There had been circulated Report No CP/12/16 by the Divisional Commander for Police providing a summary on the progress with reference to the objectives outlined in the Highland Local Policing Plan 2014-2017.

During discussion, the following issues were raised:-

- a significant increase in the number of checks in licensed premises was welcomed;
- in congratulating the Chief Superintendent for the attendance and reports provided by officers at Community Council meetings, it was requested that contact details for replacement officers be provided as soon as possible when the previous officer had moved out of the area;
- concern was expressed regarding an increase in a number of categories including drink/drug driving offences, detection of speeding and the supply of drugs;
- with regard to test purchasing operations, it was highlighted that by giving prior warning that the operation would be taking place, premises would be more alert to anyone underage attempting to purchase alcohol and therefore would defeat the purpose of identifying premises which sold alcohol illegally;
- with regard to the utilisation by Police Scotland of a ward trending tool covering antisocial behaviour/disorder, a request was made for more information on the highlighted level of incidents within the top 3 beats. In response, the Chief Superintendent advised that he would welcome discussion with local communities and Members to discuss their concerns;
- concern was expressed regarding the long term effect of sexual crimes and that an increase in reporting of sexual crimes could be a result of trends other than greater public confidence in reporting this type of crime;
- concern was expressed regarding a specific ongoing situation in Tain and that a joint agency approach should be taken to resolve concerns locally. It was also suggested that if current law could not resolve the issue, representations should be made by the Police and Council to Scottish Government to bring forward legislation to address this;
- Operation Notebook was highlighted as a means of escalating concerns raised regarding tenants causing problems;
- a request was made for statistics in relation to crime and detection rates across the Highlands and what was being done to deal with any trends identified. In response, the Committee was advised that this information could be included in future reports;
- the success of the Driving Ambition Programme in 2015 was emphasised and details regarding the launch of the 2016 programme were requested; and
- in highlighting an increase in membership of Rural Watch to over 600, a request was made for further information on whether this had reduced farm crime.

Thereafter, the Committee **NOTED** and scrutinised the summary report against Highland Policing Plan Objectives from April 2015 to March 2016.

Equalities
Co-ionannachdan

7. Corporate Communications Strategy Update
Cunntas às Ùr mu Ro-innleachd Conaltraidh Corporra

There had been circulated Report No CP/13/16 by the Corporate Communications Manager which provided an update on the Corporate Communications Strategy 2015-17 which was agreed in March 2015. The Strategy identified 12 core objectives and a number of themes for achieving these objectives.

During discussion, the following issues were raised:-

- Members acknowledged that there had been many communications achievements;
- in recognising that the Communications team had reduced levels of resources both in previous years and in the budget cuts this year, concern was expressed regarding the Council's perceived response times to journalist enquiries and, for the Council to receive the best possible coverage through the media, it had to ensure that, in addition to providing an initial response, the Council could provide efficient response times to any supplementary questions submitted;
- the Council had made impressive progress in social media activities and following; however, the Council's approach to social media required greater recognition of the two-way approach the platform presented and that a lack of response to enquiries through social media undermined the confidence of the public to use this as a means of communicating with the Council. It was suggested that a dedicated resource to this would be desirable;
- Members welcomed the new accounts such as @corranferry which had been created in response to public requests for information and it was suggested that more Services should have access and training on twitter to deal with requests from the public;
- the increase in the number of staff trained in plain English was acknowledged; however, more could be done to promote plain English training, particularly in regard to report writing. Reports, such as those to Community Councils, were sometimes not clear and the language and technicalities used could be difficult to understand;
- the Council had responded to concerns raised regarding access to information on service disruptions to the Corran Ferry and regularly provided updates through social media. However, concern was expressed that this information was difficult to access on the Council's website and should be given greater prominence;
- concern was expressed that some Services were relying specifically on social media to promote events and consultations and that the Council should be more active in promoting these in a variety of ways as some communities had not been made aware of them;
- disappointment was expressed at the time taken to answer telephone calls to the Council. Ideally, unattended telephones should be transferred;
- it was important to get basic communication right as a Council, the lack of timetables at community transport stops being cited as one example;
- listening was an important part of communication and it was important to take on board the views and opinions of the public, particularly in consultations; and
- Digital Platforms had been designed to improve communication with communities and was a useful tool and an update was sought, and received, as to how the Council was progressing with this technology.

Thereafter, the Committee **NOTED** progress against the Corporate Communications Strategy 2015-17 and **AGREED** that a report be presented to the next meeting detailing Page Insights of the Highland Council's Facebook page.

The Committee adjourned for lunch at 1.05pm and resumed at 1.45pm.

At this point, Members were informed that a Members' Workshop to gather views on the National Strategic Police Priorities consultation would take place on Tuesday, 2 August 2016.

**8. Dementia Friendly Highland Working Group – Progress and Draft Action Plan
Buidheann Obrach Freagarrach do Dementia na Gàidhealtachd**

There had been circulated Report No CP/14/16 by the Acting Head of Policy which summarised the Council's commitment to work towards becoming a Dementia Friendly Highland and presented an update on progress to develop an associated action plan.

The Chair congratulated and commended the work of the Dementia Friendly Working Group.

The Chair of the Dementia Friendly Working Group provided an update on the progress of the group, during which she explained that the group had agreed to focus on key issues involving identifying and learning from examples of good practice across Scotland to create an action plan to develop Dementia Friendly Communities. It was recognised that creating inclusive and accessible communities would benefit everyone and make the Highlands a better place. She further explained a number of themes which had been identified with Members taking a lead role for each of them and encouraged Members to provide feedback to the group on these issues.

During discussion, it was suggested that, to gain knowledge and experience the frustrations of dementia and to help develop dementia friendly communities, the Council arrange for relevant Officers to visit the Iris Murdoch Centre, a centre of excellence for care and treatment for dementia in Scotland, following the success of a visit from Lochaber. Furthermore, the video 'May's Story' was described, including how low-cost technology could help dementia carers at home and it was proposed that this be shown to Members.

Thereafter, the Committee:-

- i. **AGREED** the scope of the draft action plan contained in the Appendix;
- ii. **NOTED** that actions would cut across Council services as well as working together with Alzheimer Scotland and Community Planning Partners;
- * iii. **AGREED** to recommend to the Council the launch of the action plan at the meeting on 8 September 2016; and
- iv. **AGREED** that the video 'May's Story' about low-cost technology to help dementia carers at home be shown to Members.

9. Highland Violence Against Women Strategy Group – Minutes
Buidheann Ro-innleachd Fòirneart An Aghaidh Bhoireannach– Gearr- Chunntas

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

The Committee **NOTED** the Minutes of Meeting of the Violence Against Women Strategy Group which had been held on 22 December 2015.

Community Empowerment and Localism
Ughdarrachadh Coimhearsnachd agus Ionadaileachd

10. The Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015 – Taking Forward Local Partnership Arrangements
Achd Ùghdarrachadh na Coimhearsnachd (Alba) 2015 – A’ Toirt Air Adhart Ullachaidhean Com-pàirteachais Ionadail

There had been circulated Report No CP/15/16 by the Acting Head of Policy which provided an update on the discussions held to date around developing local community planning arrangements within the context of the new duties contained within the Empowerment Act but also other local planning responsibilities contained within the Public Bodies (Joint Working) (Scotland) Act 2014 and the Requirements for Community Learning and Development (Scotland) Regulations 2013.

Thereafter, the Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the new duties for community planning contained within the Empowerment Act but also other local planning responsibilities contained within the Public Bodies (Joint Working) (Scotland) Act 2014 and the Requirements for Community Learning and Development (Scotland) Regulations 2013;
- ii. having considered the discussions to date to take forward local partnerships, **AGREED** the proposals set out in Section 3 of the report, taking into account the verbal update from the City of Inverness Area Committee, to enable a recommendation to be made to the meeting of the Highland Council on 29 June 2016; and
- iii. **NOTED** that the final decision would be made at the Highland Community Planning Partnership Board on 30 June 2016.

11. The Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015 – Draft Responses to Scottish Government Consultations
Achd Ùghdarrachadh na Coimhearsnachd (Alba) 2015 – Dreachd Fhreagairtean do Cho-chomhairlean Riaghaltas na h-Alba

(a) Part 2 Community Planning
Pàirt 2 Dealbhadh Coimhearsnachd

There had been circulated Report No CP/16/16 by the Acting Head of Policy outlining the draft response to the Scottish Government Consultation on the Draft Guidance and Regulation for Part 2 Community Planning under the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015.

During discussion, Members raised the following issues:-

- concern was expressed regarding the competing priorities and different opinions of community planning partners, particularly in relation to contributing resources. It was therefore essential that there was guidance on resolving disputes between partners;
- in relation to the principles of Community Planning it was important that partners had a mutual respect for each other and that there was a method for holding partners to account; and
- in terms of leadership the process should recognise the unique role of Local Authorities, the only public agency with elected representatives who were accountable to local people.

Thereafter, the Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the content of the consultation on the Draft Guidance and Regulation for Part 2 Community Planning under the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015; and
- ii. **APPROVED** the draft response to the consultation at Appendix 1 to the report, subject to the inclusion of the comments raised in discussion.

(b) Part 3 Participation Requests
Pàirt 3 Iarrtasan Com-pàirteachaidh

There had been circulated Report No CP/17/16 by the Acting Head of Policy outlining the draft response to the Scottish Government Consultation on the Draft Regulations for Participation Requests under the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015.

During discussion, Members raised the following issues:-

- it was hoped there were lessons learned from the Community Challenge Fund to support the participatory requests process;
- there was agreement with the response that a local form should be developed instead of a national form. Furthermore, it was felt that the same form should be used by all highland community planning partners in scope of this part of the Act;
- in the response to questions five and seven, 'young people' should be identified;
- it was disappointing that there was not a question in the consultation on the draft guidance about the terminology used. The need to ensure it was written in a language easily understandable was critical to its success;
- there were some concerns regarding the readiness of the Council to operate under the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015 especially considering the significant cultural change that would be required within the Council;
- assurance was sought, and received, that the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015 would be taking into account as part of the Re-Design of the Council;
- in terms of the shared values of the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015 and the Re-Design of the Council, using simple language, not patronising communities and listening was a higher level skill that should be aspired to;

- officers were encouraged to utilise Elected Members' experience of the Community Challenge Fund process;
- it was important that the application form was simplified;
- it was felt the size of localities should be smaller than the maximum limit of 30,000 to reflect the size of communities; and
- there was a need for a robust process for participation requests to ensure that community bodies were capable, in terms of skills and finance, to manage an asset and ensure staff time was not unnecessarily wasted on projects that were not likely to succeed.

Thereafter, the Committee:-

- NOTED** the content of the consultation on the Draft Guidance and Regulation for Part 3 Participation Requests under the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015; and
- APPROVED** the draft response to the consultation at Appendix 1 to the report, subject to the inclusion of the comments raised in discussion.

(c) Part 5 Asset Transfer
Pàirt 5 Glusad So-mhaoin

There had been circulated Report No CP/18/16 by the Acting Head of Policy outlining the draft response to the Scottish Government Consultation on the Draft Regulations for Asset Transfer under the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015.

During discussion, Members raised the following issues:-

- the provision for Asset Transfer under the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act could really change not just how communities reacted to the public sector but also how the public sector managed their own property because it allowed community bodies to request ownership of public owned buildings even if they were still in use. The Scottish Courts and Tribunals were one of the public bodies in scope of this part of the Act and it would have been useful previously to request ownership of Inverness Castle;
- Common Good assets were owned by the community and the role of the Council was regarded as safeguarding the assets. Therefore, the Scottish Government needed to carefully consider how Common Good assets were handled and what they wanted to achieve so that community bodies did not have to go through a complex process to take ownership of an asset which they already owned;
- concern was expressed in relation to the status of assets held under the Housing Revenue Account and the prospect of tenants being subjected to an asset transfer request. It was understood that occupied properties would be excluded from the scope. However, it was important that the Scottish Government provided clarification on what they wanted to do with properties that were surplus;
- compiling a register of land would be a costly and time consuming exercise. However, it was unacceptable that the Council was not already aware of the land and buildings it owned and used and an exercise should be undertaken to do so, regardless of the expense; and
- concern was expressed in relation to the disposal of assets. In this regard, in the event an organisation failed or obtained a windfall development, it was important that, to prevent the transfer to a third or fourth party, there

was a process in place which allowed the Council to reclaim or benefit from the asset.

Thereafter, the Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the content of the consultation on the Draft Guidance and Regulation for Part 5 Asset Transfer under the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015; and
- ii. **APPROVED** the draft response to the consultation at Appendix 1 to the report, subject to the inclusion of the comments raised in discussion.

The meeting concluded at 2.45 pm.