

The Highland Council

Minutes of Meeting of the **Ross and Cromarty Committee** held in the Chamber, Council Offices, Dingwall on Wednesday, 25 October 2016 at 10.30 am.

Present:

Mrs J Barclay	Mrs M Paterson
Mrs I Campbell	Mr M Rattray
Dr I Cockburn	Mr A Rhind
Mr M Finlayson	Mrs F Robertson
Mr C Fraser	Dr A Sinclair
Mr R Greene	Ms M Smith
Mr G MacKenzie	
Mr A Mackinnon	
Mrs A MacLean	

Officials in Attendance:

Mr I Moncrieff, Roads Operations Manager (Ross and Cromarty) CS
Mr D Gallacher, Business Gateway Service Manager, Business Gateway
Mr K MacKay, Area Business Manager, Business Gateway
Mr R Gerring, Transport Planning Manager (by video conference)
Mr A Puls, Principal Officer - Building Conservation and Environment
Mrs H Ross, Senior Ward Manager, Chief Executive's Office
Dr R Bain, Ward Manager, Chief Executive's Office
Ms S Tarrant, Public Relations Officer, Chief Executive's Office
Mrs A MacArthur, Administrative Assistant, Corporate Development Service
Mr S Taylor, Administrative Assistant, Corporate Development Service

Also in Attendance:

Group Manager Mr M Loynd, Scottish Fire and Rescue Service
Mr G Inkster, Scottish Fire and Rescue Service

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 M Paterson in the Chair

The Chair apologised for the timing of the meeting as Members had previously requested that the meeting should start at 10.00 am.

The Committee **AGREED** that a letter be sent to Dingwall Gaelic Choir congratulating them on their recent success at the MOD in Stornoway.

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

Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of Dr A Alston, Mrs I McCallum (OCB) and Mr J Stone.

2. Declarations of Interest Foillseachaidhean Com-pàirt

There were no declarations of interest.

The Committee AGREED, in terms of Standing Order 18, to take Item 7 before Item 6 to allow time for setting up the video conferencing facilities, the minutes remaining in their correct numerical order for ease of reference.

3. Scottish Fire and Rescue Service Seirbheis Smàlaidh is Teasairginn

There had been circulated Report No RC/031/16 by the Local Group Manager for the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS) which provided an update on the progress against the priorities outlined in the Committee Plan for Ross and Cromarty 2015 - 2016.

The report also contained previously agreed information and performance as requested and a copy of the Performance Report had been circulated separately as Booklet A.

In this regard, an amendment was made at Item d on Page 2 whereby it was confirmed that it should state (13) and not (12) Deliberate Fires.

During discussion, Members raised the following issues:-

- there was a need for clarity on the opening and availability of the portal for recruiting new firefighters as some Members had received queries from potential applicants who had not been able to access the portal;
- on the basis that 'prevention was better than cure', Members were delighted to note that the SFRS still carried out home visits;
- in relation to anti-social behaviour, it was queried whether engagement was still undertaken with youths in the area;
- there was a need for clarity on the location of training for fire staff and the details of the minimum number of crew to a tender vehicle when attending an incident;
- the figures for appliance availability were welcomed; and
- it would be helpful if firefighters could work closely with paramedics and first responders in terms of assisting at accidents until an ambulance arrived.

In response, the Group Manager confirmed as follows:-

- up until now the portal had only remained open whilst the SFRS was actively recruiting, this was due to change and the portal would remain open continually although applications would still be dealt with on a quarterly basis;
- the service was still engaging with youths in the area and various high schools and primary schools had been visited in the current year and would continue to be visited on request;
- the majority of Highland recruits were trained in Invergordon although training in other locations, such as Lochinver, was being considered but this would depend on how many recruits there were in the area;

- the minimum number of tender crew was four comprising two firefighters to enter a building, one incident commander and a driver; and
- firefighters were not trained in first aid to the level of paramedics or first responders although they were trained in out of hospital cardiac arrest treatment.

The Committee **NOTED** the progress report and the updates in the Performance Report as circulated.

4. Development of Local Priorities for Ross and Cromarty Leasachadh Phrìomhachasan Ionadail airson Rois agus Chromba

There had been circulated Report No RC/032/16 by the Depute Chief Executive and Director of Corporate Development which provided an update on the local strategic priorities for Ross and Cromarty.

During discussion, Members raised the following issues:-

- it was vital that measurable outcomes were in place for local priorities and actions monitored to allow scrutiny and development of each priority;
- new Education school projects that had been approved at a Strategic Committee should come to the Local Committee as a recurring item so that Members could monitor progress;
- there were several issues with the prevention of flooding under the priority of transport and infrastructure and an action column should be added so that when these items appeared at the Planning, Development & Infrastructure Committee, or other Strategic Committees, they were then reported back to the Local Committee and the “action” column would highlight progress;
- there was a need to take account of the considerable knowledge of the Local Members in the area, especially in terms of the wide geographical area;
- the Community Partnership was now up and running and it was up to Members to ensure that issues were raised as required in order that the Partnership could take priorities further;
- it was important for Members to take the lead on each priority as this was the way forward;
- it was the duty of Members to prioritise how money was spent although it had to be recognised that flexibility was limited given the requirement for savings and the ring fencing of funding in certain areas, such as Education; and
- the agreed Area Priorities should be linked to the ‘Highland First’ Programme and consideration given to them by the Leader and Depute Leader of the Council and the Chief Executive.

The Committee **AGREED** to forward the agreed priorities to the Leader and Depute Leader of the Council and the Chief Executive for consideration within the ‘Highland First’ Programme on the basis that it would be important to measure progress for each priority.

5. Business Development: Ross and Cromarty Update Leasachadh Gnothachais: Cunntas às Ùr Rois agus Chromba

There had been circulated Report No RC/033/16 by the Director of Development and Infrastructure which updated Members on the performance of the Council's business development services in Ross and Cromarty.

The report also summarised the delivery of Business Gateway over the first two quarters of 2016 and informed on progress with Council involvement in local business development activity in Ross and Cromarty during the first two quarters of 2016/17.

In this regard, it was confirmed that this was a new reporting process and reports would be brought twice yearly to the Local Committee.

During discussion, Members raised the following issues:-

- the Business Gateway Manager should take account of the local priorities outlined in the previous agenda item/report;
- it would be helpful if future reports could add figures for outcomes;
- it would be beneficial to have links to the support provided to young people under Deprived Area funding to business development;
- there was concern that there had been an item in the media stating that Highland had lost out on ERDF funding due to a late application;
- there was a need to consider whether it would be possible to improve the plaques given to visiting cruise ships for their maiden voyage to the Highlands and it would be helpful if they were re-designed to be Highland specific;
- there was concern that employers were not aware that funding and assistance was available from Business Gateway;
- in view of the potential issues surrounding Brexit, it was important to promote jobs in the Highland area and for Business Gateway to work closely with Highland and Islands Enterprise (HIE);
- there was a need for clarity on the budget for Business Gateway and the remit and relationship between the Council's employability work and Business Gateway work.

In response, the Business Gateway Manager confirmed as follows:

- the issues within the report and also those raised by Members at the meeting would be taken forward in relation to local priorities;
- in relation to young people, businesses would be actively encouraged to take on young people in the future;
- the business development also made use of the Graduate Placement Scheme to both give graduates work experience and grow businesses;
- Highland had in fact received ERDF funding as their application had been timeous;
- part of the remit of Business Gateway was to ensure that businesses were aware of funding and all assistance available;
- Business Gateway and HIE had a very good working relationship and the Area Business Manager was involved in monthly meetings;
- details on the budget for the Business Development Service would be brought back to the Committee in due course; and

- a member of the Employability Team could be asked to provide information on the services delivered for a future meeting.

The Committee **NOTED** the Business Development Service performance in Ross and Cromarty for the first half of 2016/17 as detailed in the report.

6. **Potential to Re-open the Evanton Railway Station** **Comas Stèisean Rèile Bhaile Eòghainn Ath-fhosgladh**

There had been circulated Report No RC/034/16 by the Director of Development and Infrastructure which presented the background to railway station re-openings and asked Members to provide direction on how they wished the potential infrastructure investment to be taken forward with clarity on funding that could be allocated towards an initial pre-STAG Feasibility Study.

During discussion, Members raised the following issues:-

- there had already been 300/400 signatures received from the College and UHI in support of the re-opening of the railway station at Evanton;
- in addition, 150/200 signatures had been received from approaches made to people visiting Cornerstone in Evanton;
- this was the first step in a long process to re-open the railway station, everything was moving forward and the Community Council had put forward a suggestion that planning gain be requested in the form of car parking from an application to build houses at a site near to the railway station;
- an initial consultation would be beneficial to gain support for the project from people in Evanton and the surrounding area, including Dingwall, Alness and Invergordon, utilising social media and the internet as a very economical form of raising support and letters to the neighbouring Community Councils;
- a possible application for funding for an initial consultation could be made to the Evanton wind farm community benefit;
- the benefit of a railway station in a small village could be seen in Conon Bridge;
- the bus links from Evanton were poor and the railway station would fill the gap and would be well used; and
- HITRANS had been very helpful with the Conon Bridge railway and it was suggested that their support should be sought for this project.

The Committee **NOTED** the background information on railway station opening/reopening and **AGREED** its support for the promotion of the re-opening of Evanton Railway Station.

It was also **AGREED** that a consultation be undertaken with the wider community, including Alness, Invergordon and Dingwall, utilising social media and the internet, on their anticipated use of a railway station in Evanton on the basis that this could be discussed by Local Members at the next Ward Business Meeting.

It was further **AGREED** to investigate potential funding sources, including the potential for funding the consultation from community benefit in relation to local wind farms, and that following the outcome of the wider community consultation, clarity on funding be sought for the Pre-STAG Feasibility Study to be taken forward in partnership with HITRANS.

7. Historic Environment Scotland Consultation Co-chomhairle Àrainneachd Eachdraidheil na h-Alba

There had been circulated Report No RC/035/16 by the Director of Development and Infrastructure which outlined details of a Historic Environment Scotland (HES) consultation in relation to Seabank Tank Farm, Invergordon.

In this regard, the Principal Officer (Building Conservation and Environment) confirmed that if Historic Environment Scotland proceeded to list the building, only the owner of the tank farm could appeal the decision.

During discussion, Members raised the following issues:-

- there was real concern Historic Environment Scotland had brought this forward for listing as Invergordon had been held back from further development for years by the tank farm which was considered to be a burden on the area;
- approximately two years ago, money had been received from the Scottish Government under the Vacant Land Fund Scheme to look at potential uses of the tank farm land which had highlighted uses such as hotels, industry, leisure, tourism, housing or as a park;
- this tank farm was at the entrance to Invergordon and this was one of only two local areas which had been identified for housing in the Highland-wide Local Development Plan;
- there was disappointment that the Council had known in 2015 about this situation but had not informed the Local Members;
- cruise ships came into Invergordon as it had a deep harbour and cruise passengers visited Highland castles and other places of interest outside Invergordon but this site would not promote additional visitors;
- for the site to be a tourist attraction, it would first have to be decontaminated and it was unlikely that money would come forward for this from Historic Environment Scotland;
- currently a pilot to remove four tanks was ongoing to assess the contamination in the area and the associated cost to decontaminate;
- a meeting involving Historic Environment Scotland, the Principal Officer (Building Conservation and Environment) and Local Members to discuss the listing would be beneficial;
- there was a need to consider whether the listing of any tanks should be supported;
- whilst understanding the historic significance of the site, it was also a large blot on the landscape of Invergordon which could not move forward until the site was developed;
- it was unfortunate that the Royal Navy had sold this site and the responsibility for it, leaving the huge responsibility and onus on a new owner to clear the site; and

- a letter should be sent to the UK and Scottish Governments, including the Culture, Tourism and External Affairs Cabinet Secretary, to ask for payment for decontamination of the site and the removal of the tanks.

The Committee **AGREED** that the response to the consultation be amended, in consultation with Local Members, to reflect the concerns regarding the proposed listing.

It was also **AGREED** that the Principal Regeneration Officer, in consultation with Local Members, should write to the Prime Minister to ask the Ministry of Defence to consider funding the decontamination of the Seabank Tank Farm in Invergordon.

It was further **AGREED** that a meeting between the Principal Officer (Building Conservation and Environment), Local Members and Historic Environment Scotland should be organised as soon as possible to discuss issues in relation to the proposed listing of this site and that the Principal Officer (Building Conservation and Environment), again in consultation with Local Members, should write to the UK and Scottish Governments and the Culture, Tourism and External Affairs Cabinet Secretary in relation to the proposed listing of the Seabank Tank Farm, Invergordon by Historic Environment Scotland.

8. Winter Maintenance Obair-gleidhidh Geamhraidh

There had been circulated Report No RC/036/16 by the Director of Community Services which provided Members with information on winter maintenance preparations and arrangements for the 2016/17 winter period.

In this regard, the Roads Operations Manager (Ross and Cromarty) circulated further papers which had been omitted from the report.

During discussion, Members raised the following issues:-

- the Back Road from Dingwall to Evanton was a school route and used frequently following accidents on the lower shore road and this needed to be looked at and upgraded to a priority route to ensure that it was gritted on a regular basis;
- the Back Road to Evanton often had diversions from the A862 following accidents and Police Scotland should be asked to implement the weight limit on this road when used as a diversion as heavy goods vehicles could be stacked to await the reopening of the main A862 road;
- a request had been made previously to have Delny Road upgraded to a secondary route to ensure that it was gritted before 9.00am and this needed to be taken forward;
- the letters to farmers requesting help with the gritting in their areas did not appear to have been sent and this needed to be expedited;
- Officers' names had to be added to the staff establishment list as with the constant turnover of staff it was difficult for Members to keep track of staff and it would be helpful if this could also be taken back to Ward Business Meetings;

- this report also had to go to Community Councils for discussion, both now and in future;
- on the coloured map, the route from Kindeace Road running from Tomich to Tullich Muir had been marked as a secondary route but this route was not on the current list and therefore needed to be added;
- in response to a query on standby gritting vehicles for when there was a vehicle breakdown, it was confirmed that there were standby gritting vehicles at Inverness, Lochaber and Thurso; and
- there was a need for “road liable to icing” signs to be placed at known accident spots to warn drivers of icy conditions, ie Newhall Bridge and other locations at Rosemarkie and Cromarty.

The Committee **APPROVED** the Winter Maintenance Plans for Ross and Cromarty, which included the priority road lists and maps presented in Appendix B and C, subject to the following amendments - Delny Road to be upgraded to a Secondary Route to ensure that it was gritted before 9:00 am and the back road from Evanton to Dingwall to be upgraded to a Primary Route.

The Committee also **NOTED** the following - a request that the weight restriction on the back road from Evanton to Dingwall be enforced by Police Scotland when traffic was diverted from Shore Road, a request that Officer names be added to the Staff Establishment list and circulated to Members at their Ward Business Meetings, that farmers would be contacted as part of Community Self-help to assist with gritting in their local community and that amendments to the resurfacing programme in Ward 8 would be made following agreement with Local Members.

9. Education Scotland Report Sgrùdaidhean le Foghlam Alba

There had been circulated Report No RC/037/16 by the Director of Care and Learning which provided details of Education Scotland’s report of Kyleakin Primary School and Nursery Class of 10 May 2016.

In this regard, the Committee **NOTED** that this report had been included on the agenda in error and would instead be submitted to the local Ward Business Meeting and the appropriate Local Committee.

10. Common Good Funds Maoin Maith Choitchinn

There had been circulated Report Nos RC/038/16 – RC/042/16 by the Depute Chief Executive/Director of Corporate Development and Director of Finance which provided information on the following Common Good Funds:-

- a. Cromarty Common Good Fund RC/038/16
- b. Dingwall Common Good Fund RC/039/16
- c. Fortrose and Rosemarkie Common Good Fund RC/040/16
- d. Invergordon Common Good Fund RC/041/16
- e. Tain Common Good Fund RC/042/16

The Committee **NOTED** the updated information provided in relation to each Fund and **AGREED** the following:-

Dingwall Common Good Fund - increase in funding for improvements in Pefferside Park

Fortrose and Rosemarkie Common Good Fund - increase in budget for Grants and Safeguarding of Common Good Assets

Tain Common Good Fund - that the decision on the bids received for the lease of the fishery, with or without an option to lease the boat, be delegated to the Director of Development and Infrastructure in consultation with the Area Chair and Ward Members. Also, that the decision as to whether or not the mussel boat should be repaired and an MCA inspection requested be delegated to the Director of Development and Infrastructure in consultation with the Area Chair and Ward Members.

11. Minutes Geàrr-chunntas

The Committee **NOTED** the Minutes of the Ross and Cromarty Committee meeting which had been held on 3 August 2016, which had been approved by the Highland Council on 8 September 2016.

12. Any Other Business

The Committee **NOTED** concerns regarding the inadequate microphones, the video-conferencing facilities and the lack of heating in the Chamber.

The Committee also **AGREED** that a report be requested for the next meeting on the decriminalisation of parking and how it was being implemented in the area.

The meeting ended at 1.05 pm.