

The Highland Council

Minutes of Meeting of the **Nairnshire Committee** held in the Chamber, The Courthouse, High Street, Nairn on 7 December 2016 at 10.30 am

Present:

Mr L Fraser
Mr M Green

Mrs L MacDonald

In attendance:

Ms L Cowie, Ward Manager, Nairn and Badenoch and Strathspey
Ms F Daschofsky, Highland LEADER Development Officer
Mr D Gallagher, Business Gateway Service Manager
Ms L MacKellaich, Road Safety Officer
Mr R Porteous, Roads Operations Manager
Ms S MacLennan, Housing Manager (South)
Mr S Taylor, Administrative Assistant, Corporate Development Service

Also in attendance:

Mr F Nixon, Group Manager – Highland Central, 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.

Mr M Green in the Chair

Business

1. Apologies for Absence Leisgeulan

An apology for absence was intimated on behalf of Mr S Fuller.

2. Declarations of Interest Foillseachaidhean Com-pàirt

The Committee **NOTED** the following Declarations of Interest:-

Item 5 – Mrs L MacDonald (non-financial)
Item 10 – Mr L Fraser (non-financial)

3. Scottish Fire and Rescue Area Committee Performance Report for 2016-17 Aithisg Coileanaidh Comataidh Sgìreil Smàlaidh agus Teasairginn na h-Alba airson 2016-17

There had been circulated Report No N/23/16 dated 18 November 2016 by the Local Senior Officer for Highland providing an update on the progress in Nairnshire against the priorities outlined in the Area Committee Plan for Nairnshire 2016 - 2017. Priority areas had been identified through a range of Intervention, Prevention and Protection activities delivered in partnership to reduce risk to the communities of Nairnshire.

In speaking to the report, Mr F Nixon informed Members that he would shortly take up the post of Scottish Fire and Rescue Service Group Manager for Highland-West and thanked the Committee for their support during the year.

During discussion, Members raised the following:-

- the inclusion of comparative statistics since 2012 for the Nairnshire area and the comparison in relation to performance figures for the whole of Highland within with the report was highlighted;
- clarity was sought, and received that the figure of 86% availability at Nairn Second Appliance had been due to the minimum number of crew not being available to cover the appliance during the outstanding 14%;
- in highlighting an increase in deliberate fires, clarification was sought, and received that these had not resulted from antisocial behaviour and that that whilst they had been described as deliberate fires in the report, this did not mean that they had been either maliciously set or that they had been started with intent to cause harm;
- in the context of community partnership working, it was requested that contact details for the Nairn Area Drug and Alcohol Forum be provided to the new Group Manager for the area, Mr Derek Wilkie, to enable distribution of information on the Service's Festive Safety campaign including safety at home (fire and alcohol) and cooking safety; and
- in welcoming staffing levels being up to compliment, further information was requested on how the Service actively encouraged potential female staff to join as retained firefighters, this was duly provided.

The Chair thanked Mr Nixon for his report and, on behalf of the Committee, wished him well in his new post.

Thereafter, the Committee **NOTED** and scrutinised the Area Performance Report.

4. Developing Local Priorities for Nairnshire A' Leasachadh Phrìomhachasan Ionadail airson Siorrachd Inbhir Narann

There had been circulated Report No N/24/16 dated 18 November 2016 by the Depute Chief Executive/Director of Corporate Development presenting the final draft local strategic priorities for Nairnshire for approval by Members.

During discussion, Members raised the following issues:-

- It was requested that a report be brought back to the Committee outlining how the Inverness City and Region deal could be used to benefit Nairn through initiatives such as providing wi-fi in main towns, the economic development of land and investment in infrastructure to protect and improve the environment. In response, it was confirmed that senior officers from the City-Region deal would be asked to attend the next meeting of the Committee to address issues raised by Members in relation to maximising the benefits of the deal to Nairnshire;
- In highlighting the ambition of the City-Region deal to deliver innovation, two opportunities to seek funding from both the City-Region deal and LEADER were suggested:-
 - With regard to the coastal paths network, it was highlighted that the dualling of the A96 would soon free up other local roads infrastructure and it was suggested that the opportunity to seek funding to improve signage and road markings should be explored; and
 - Working with environmental groups could bring environmental improvements through alternative ways of thinking about the environment, in particular, the

investigation of Biomatrix Living Machine methods of improving marine environment to protect bathing waters and rivers around Nairn.

- Whilst welcoming the research undertaken regarding environmental improvements, it was the role of SEPA and Scottish Water to come forward with proposals for improving the marine environment and that this investigative work could be raised with both organisations;
- It was highlighted that housing development was a feature of the City-Region deal that could be applicable to Nairn and it was anticipated that this could be discussed with officers at the next meeting of the Committee in February 2017;
- It was emphasised that the local strategic priorities would be reviewed annually and that there was active engagement in relation to a number of projects identified within the priorities;
- The Business Improvement District (BID) Nairn had agreed funding agreed from the Scottish Government, the Council and, following signing off from HIE, it was anticipated that the BID would be operating within the next 15-18 months;
- Concern was expressed regarding the Ship to Ship oil transfer scheme proposed for the Moray Firth by the Cromarty Firth Port Authority and that it did not represent a positive development in the context of the local strategic priorities identified for Nairnshire, in particular with regard to the implementation of a tourism action plan and the regeneration of the harbour area. In this respect, it was recommended that The Committee:-
 - wishes to put on record its total opposition to the Ship to Ship Oil Transfer Scheme proposed for the Moray Firth by the Cromarty Firth Port Authority; and
 - requests that the Highland Council express their opposition to the Ship to Ship Oil Transfer Scheme proposed for the Moray Firth by the Cromarty Firth Port Authority.
- The Chair encouraged individuals opposed to the proposed Ship to Ship oil transfer scheme to make their views known by writing to their MEP, MP and MSPs;
- Concern was expressed that the Council had not expressed strong enough opposition to the proposed Ship to Ship oil transfer scheme during the consultation process and the Council should take into consideration evidence gathered locally. It was emphasised that Members should also be given the opportunity to provide their own input into the representation process; and
- It was suggested that protection of Nairn beaches and marine environment should be included under the Community/Localism section of the local strategic priorities.

The Committee **APPROVED** the local strategic priorities for Nairnshire as outlined in Appendix 1 to the report and **AGREED** to:-

- i. put on record its total opposition to the Ship to Ship Oil Transfer Scheme proposed for the Moray Firth by the Cromarty Firth Port Authority"; and
- * ii. **RECOMMEND** that the Highland Council express its opposition to the Ship to Ship oil transfer scheme proposed for the Moray Firth by the Cromarty Firth Port Authority".

5. LEADER Funding Programme Prògram Maoineachaidh LEADER

Declaration of Interest: Mrs L MacDonald declared a non-financial interest in this item as a Member of the Inner Moray Firth South Local Area Partnership but, having applied the test outlined in Paragraphs 5.2 and 5.3 of the Councillors' Code of Conduct, concluded that her interest did not preclude her involvement in the discussion.

There had been circulated Report No N/25/16 dated 23 November 2016 by the Director of Development and Infrastructure which provided updates on the Highland LEADER

Programme and LEADER in the Inner Moray Firth South area, and invited Members to support the promotion of the fund at a local level for Nairn and Nairnshire.

During discussion, Members raised the following issues:-

- It was emphasised that there was longevity to the Highland LEADER Programme and that the opportunity for potential applicants to apply for funding was available up until March 2019;
- In highlighting the significant amounts of LEADER funding available, it was emphasised that the wide range of applicable criteria meant that the Programme was available to a large number of businesses and projects and that it was up to Members to help promote this locally;
- It was highlighted that assistance was available from the Highland LEADER Development Officer to help potential applicants if there were any issues during the application process; and
- The availability of funding for Local Area Partnership projects was welcomed and clarity was sought, and received that, with regard to applications in Nairn, one draft application was currently being processed and another two were at the expression of interest stage.

The Committee **NOTED** the contents of the report and **AGREED** to:-

- i. promote the availability of LEADER funds and encourage applications to come forward from the Nairn and Nairnshire area;
- ii. signpost potential applicants to the LEADER Development Officer for the Inner Moray Firth South area; and
- iii. contact the LEADER Development Officer regarding access to promotional materials to distribute/circulate locally.

6. Business Development Update **Cunntas às Ùr mu Leasachadh Gnothachais**

There had been circulated Report No N/26/16 dated 25 November 2016 by the Director of Development and Infrastructure providing an update on the performance of the Council's business development services in Nairnshire. The report summarised the delivery of Business Gateway over the period from April to October 2016, and informed Members on progress with Council involvement in local business development activity in Nairnshire during that time.

During discussion, the Committee raised the following issues:-

- It was emphasised that there were significant amounts of funding available from the Council's Business Development services and that local Members should help to promote and publicise the service to businesses in Nairn;
- It was suggested that further engagement with local communities, in conjunction with the Nairn BID Steering Group to help promote Business Gateway should be investigated with a view to holding an event in relation to Marine Tourism in Nairn in Spring 2017; and
- In highlighting Start-up Activity and the Scottish Employer Recruitment Incentive (SERI), clarity was sought, and received, that promotion and marketing of the Employment Grant Scheme was made to businesses.

Thereafter, the Committee **NOTED** Business Development Service performance in Nairnshire for the period from April to October 2016.

7. Nairn Common Good Fund Maoin Math Coitcheann Inbhir Narann

i. Audited Accounts, Annual Report 2015/16 and Quarter 2 Monitoring Aithisg Sgrùdaidh Cairteil 2

There had been circulated joint report No N/27/16 dated 28 November 2016 by the Director of Finance and Inverness City Manager presenting the audited accounts and annual report for financial year 2015/16 and the position of the Nairn Common Good Fund (NCGF) as shown in the Quarter 2 monitoring statement.

During discussion, Members made the following comments:-

- At the meeting of the Community Services Committee held on 3 November 2016, a discrepancy had been identified in relation to the annual maintenance charge applied to the Nairn Common Good Fund whereby the Fund had not been charged for work. Reassurance was sought, and received, that measures have been taken to address this within the budget outturn statement and that further work would be undertaken with Community Services and Finance to ensure all charges were applied timeously;
- With regard to the ownership of Nairn fishings, concern was expressed at the tight turnaround for the Committee, following its next meeting on 20 February 2017, to report to the Council on findings. In response, reassurance was provided that every effort was being made regarding the issue of ownership of Nairn fishings and that this would be addressed for consideration at the next meeting of the Committee; and
- The position of the Nairn Common Good Fund, having moved from an annual deficit to an annual surplus, was welcomed.

The Committee **NOTED**:-

- a) the Nairn Common Good Fund Annual Report for 2015/16;
- b) the position of the Nairn Common Good Fund and outturn as shown in the Quarter 2 Monitoring Statement against budget; and
- c) that a draft Asset Register would be brought to the next meeting of the Nairnshire Committee.

ii. Investment Strategy Ro-innleachd Tasgaidh

There had been circulated report No N/28/16 dated 24 November 2016 by the Director of Finance proposing an investment strategy for the current cash balances held by the Nairn Common Good Fund and outlining the governance around how those investments will be managed.

During discussion, the Chair highlighted the good track record Adam and Co. held with the Inverness Common Good Fund and the returns which had been generated of between 11-13% over the previous five years. Whilst acknowledging that past performance was not necessarily an indicator of future performance, the Chair expressed the view that he was comfortable with the options available to the Committee for the investment to be managed by Adam and Co and that the Nairn Common Good Fund would soon be in a position to engage locally. In highlighting the invitation presented to Nairn Committee Members to attend the Investment Sub-

Committee, he emphasised the need for a Member of the Committee to be included on the Sub-Committee as a matter for course.

The Committee:-

- a) **APPROVED** an investment of £0.4m to be managed by Adam and Co.; and
- b) **AGREED** to confirm that investments were commensurate with a risk category in the middle of the medium risk category.

8. **Nairn 20mph Speed Limit Casg Astair 20msu Inbhir Narann**

There had been circulated report No N/29/16 dated 28 November 2016 by the Director of Development and Infrastructure inviting Members to approve the making of the Draft Road Traffic Regulation Order entitled 'The Highland Council (Nairn) (20mph Speed Limit) Order 2016'.

During discussion, Members raised the following issues:-

- The proposed introduction of a 20mph speed limit was welcomed and the potential to extend the scheme along routes into other areas of Nairn was highlighted; and
- Following the relocation of John Gordon & Son Sawmill's office, it was suggested that the Road Traffic Regulation Order be extended to cover the section of Balblair Road from the southern boundary of the Sawmill to the junction with Cawdor Road, referred to as Option 2b within the report. In response, the Road Safety Officer advised that the cost of funding for Option 2b could be prohibitive in terms of the allocated budget as speed data evidence gathering would be required to be undertaken and could necessitate the use of traffic calming measures on this section of road. The Chair suggested that further investigative work should be undertaken on Option 2b to establish whether the proposed Road Traffic Regulation Order could be extended and whether this would be financially viable.

The Committee:

- i. **NOTED** the background to the proposed 20mph speed limit order and the representations received;
- ii. **APPROVED** the making of the Road Traffic Regulation Order; and
- iii. **NOTED** the intention to carry out speed surveys on Balblair Road with a view to bringing back a further report to Committee regarding a separate Road Traffic Regulation Order covering the 536 metre section of Balblair Road from its junction with Cawdor Road, and **AGREED** that the report should encompass Option 2b.

9. **Winter Maintenance Plan for 2016/17 Plana Obair-gleidhidh Geamhraidh airson 2016/17**

There had been circulated Report No N/30/16 dated 20 November 2016 by the Director of Community Services providing information on winter maintenance preparations and arrangements for the 2016/17 winter period.

During discussion, the following issues were raised:-

- in welcoming the report, it was highlighted that the Council had taken a proactive approach with regard to winter maintenance and a number of examples of this within the report provided assurance that any problems would be addressed;
- it was highlighted that there were now three additional pedestrian gritters allocated within Nairn; and

- in acknowledging the reduced availability of resources and the Council's "Winter Resilience" scheme, emphasis was made on the need for communities to work together and for engagement with community councils on winter maintenance.

Thereafter, the Committee **APPROVED** the Winter Maintenance Plan for the Nairn Area, including the priority road maps presented at Appendix B to the report.

10. Housing Performance Report – 1 April 2016 to 30 September 2016 Aithisg Dèanadais Taigheadais – 1 Giblean 2016 gu 30 T-Sultainn 2016

Declaration of Interest: Mr L Fraser declared a non-financial interest in this item as a Sub-Contractor for the Housing Service in Nairn 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 his involvement in the discussion.

There had been circulated Report No N/31/16 dated 23 November 2016 by the Director of Community Services providing information on how the Housing Section performed in relation to Scottish Social Housing Charter and other performance indicators up to 30 September 2016.

During discussion, the following issues were raised:-

- The work undertaken by housing staff during what had been a difficult period was commended and the importance of retaining staff in local areas was emphasised;
- It was requested that Members be provided with a list of options available for environmental improvements to developments within the 2016 Housing Revenue Account Capital Programme for the Nairnshire Area;
- It was requested that figures for average re-let times at Table 3 be split to reflect separately housing availability following emergency repairs and non-emergency repairs. In response, Members were advised that re-let times had to be reported in a standard charter indicator format; however, additional information could be provided on figures for individual cases; and
- Concern was expressed that, due to welfare reform and other factors, some tenants were struggling to pay rent and that it was essential that individuals in this situation engage with council officials in the first instance and with the Citizens Advice Bureau as soon as possible.

The Committee **NOTED** and scrutinised the information provided on housing performance in the period 1 April to 30 September 2016.

11. Minutes Geàrr-chunntas

There had been circulated Minutes of Meeting of the Nairnshire Committee held on 21 September 2016, which were approved by the Council on 27 October 2016.

In relation to recommendation (iv) of Item 10 in the Minutes, it was highlighted that at its meeting on 3 November 2016, the Community Services Committee had agreed to establish an in-house operation of Amenity Services, including grass-cutting, from 2017/18.

Thereafter, the Committee **NOTED** the Minutes

The meeting concluded at 12.15 p.m.