

The Highland Council

Minutes of Meeting of the **Ross and Cromarty Committee** held in the Chamber, Council Offices, Dingwall on Tuesday, 15 August 2017 at 10.30am.

Present:

Mr G Adam	Mr A MacKinnon
Mrs J Barclay	Mrs A MacLean
Ms I Campbell	Mr D MacLeod
Dr I Cockburn	Ms P Munro
Mr M Finlayson	Mrs M Paterson
Mr C Fraser	Mrs F Robertson
Mr D Louden	Ms M Smith
Mr G MacKenzie	Ms K Stephen

Officials in Attendance:

Mrs H Ross, Senior Ward Manager, Chief Executive's Office
Ms D Agnew, Ward Manager, Chief Executive's Office
Mr R Bain, Ward Manager, Chief Executive's Office
Mr J Holden, Housing Manager (North), Community Services
Mr C Sharp, Repairs Manager (North), Community Service
Mr I Moncrieff, Roads Operation Manager, Community Services
Ms A Macrae, Committee Administrator, Corporate Development Service

Also in Attendance:

Chief Inspector I MacLelland, North Highland Area Commander, Police Scotland
Mr D Kilday, Programme Manager, Police Scotland

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

1. Apologies for Absence Leisgeulan

An apology for absence was intimated on behalf of Mrs C Wilson.

2. Declarations of Interest Foillseachaidhean Com-pàirt

There were no declarations of interest.

Thereafter, the Committee congratulated the community of Avoch on the accolade of being shortlisted for Village of the Year 2017 as part of a new Channel 4 series.

Congratulations were also conveyed to the Ross and Cromarty Pipes & Drums School (Novice A) and Lochalsh Junior Pipe Band (Novice B) on their success in becoming World Pipe Band Champions in their respective grades at the recent competition held in Glasgow.

3. Minutes Geàrr-chunntas

The Committee **NOTED** the Minutes of the last meeting which had been held on 19 June and had been approved by the Highland Council on 29 June.

Arising from this item, and in response to the Chair, Members confirmed that they were content with the format of the 'action tracker' which would be circulated following each meeting.

4. Police – Area Performance Summary Poilis – Geàrr-chunntas an Dèanadais Sgìreil

There had been circulated Report Nos RC/015/17 and RC/016/17 by the North Area Commander for Police Scotland which updated Members on progress with reference to the local priorities within the Highland 2014 - 2017 Policing Plan.

The Chair explained there would be a presentation on the review of Area Control Rooms to allow for Member consultation on the proposals prior to the meeting of the Scottish Police Authority (SPA) Board on 28 September 2017.

It was also proposed that the presentation from the Public Protection Unit be deferred until the next appropriate meeting.

During discussion, Members raised the following issues:-

- the action being taken in response to telephone and online frauds in the area, it being reported that this was a national issue and the focus locally was on education and prevention;
- Officers in Skye and Lochalsh should be commended both on their proactive response to speeding in the area and on alerting the public to rogue traders operating in communities;
- Police Scotland and the organisers of the Black Isle Show and Belladrum should be congratulated on the successful traffic management operation during this year's events;
- there was concern in relation to issues with the traffic management at a specific road traffic collision near Kyle;
- there were reports of emergency vehicles being delayed by campervans on the North Coast 500 route and also issues with drivers parking on pavements and laybys on the route;
- in response to a query as to whether advances in technology and communications were reducing the length of road closures following road accidents, it was confirmed there was local scrutiny of road closures and in general timescales were being reduced where possible;
- clarification was sought and provided in regard to issues with recent road accidents at Kilcoy and a point raised as to whether there was a database which identified locations of repeat road collisions which could be accessed e.g. by Planning and other Officials;
- the challenges associated with measuring the outcomes from the Rock Challenge in relation to alcohol and drug misuse, noting the positive impact on the young people involved; and

- reference to local concerns in relation to increased shoplifting and intimidating behaviour in Tain on court days; the Area Commander advised that he would take forward as an action the local concerns on this matter and report back to local Members.

In response to a number of the other points, the Area Commander advised that:-

- appropriate traffic management plans should be in place to respond to road traffic collisions and he would follow up on the issues in respect of the specific incident in the Kyle area;
- Police Scotland were also part of a multi-agency group being led by the Council in relation to the North Coast 500, and he undertook to feedback Members comments to this forum; and
- he would take forward as an action the potential to raise awareness of specific locations where there had been repeat collisions.

Following on from the above, Mr D Kilday, Police Scotland gave a presentation on the ongoing review of Area Control Rooms in Scotland and advised that the strategic direction had been set by the SPA and his role was to provide information on how the proposed changes would be delivered safely and securely.

Thereafter, Members expressed their serious concerns in relation to the closure and transfer of the Control Room from Inverness to Dundee and at the impact of the SPA's strategic direction on the Highlands. It was suggested that there were no benefits associated with the proposals that could not be realised by retaining the Control Room in Inverness. In addition, concern was expressed that the assurance previously provided to the Council that there would be one National Database Enquiry Unit located in Inverness had been changed with no consultation to a proposal for a two centre model shared with Govan.

Further points raised by Members included:-

- concern that calls would not be answered by local handlers with local knowledge of the Highlands;
- there was a need to focus on ensuring the number of abandoned calls were reduced in view of the potential serious consequences associated with such calls;
- the importance of having trained floor walkers within Control Rooms to provide support and reassurance to call handlers was highlighted; it was important that training also focused on the listening skills of staff and accurate information gathering; and
- the promised uplift of jobs in Inverness had not been realised, there were a number vacancies in Inverness and an assurance was required that these posts would be filled.

Thereafter, Mr Kilday issued an invitation for all Members to visit the Service Centre at Bilston Glen to view systems at first hand and the Area Commander confirmed he would liaise with the Chair in regard to the arrangements for this visit.

The Committee;-

- i. **NOTED**, following scrutiny, the progress report and updates in relation to the 4 Priorities; and
- ii. **AGREED** that the presentation from the Public Protection Unit be deferred to the next appropriate meeting.

5. **Housing Performance Report** **Aithisg Dèanadais a thaobh Taigheadais**

There had been circulated Report No RC/017/17 by the Director of Community Services.

The Chair referred to the paper circulated separately to Members which listed proposed capital environmental works in the area to provide for Member scrutiny and requested that amendments be made to the format so that it included information on progress with works, spend to date and any balances. It should also contain proposals for works in the event of slippage towards the end of the financial year to ensure that monies were retained in the area.

Following on from the above, concern was expressed that Members had not been consulted in relation to the works set out in the document or the allocation of the budget between Wards. In response, it was clarified that the paper was an initial list of works and was not presented for the Committee's approval and there would be further consultation with Members on Ward priorities and funding.

In regard to disused garages which were in a state of disrepair, it was confirmed that the Council's policy on garages was to be reviewed and a report brought back to Members in due course. The opportunities to use the Landbank Fund to build housing units on former garage sites would also be investigated.

During further discussion, Members raised the following issues:-

- in response to a question, it was confirmed that Mr C Fraser would be provided with clarification on the figures shown in Appendix 1 in relation to rent collected as a percentage of rent due;
- there was concern at the significant additional cost of upgrading listed Council properties located in conservation areas and the potential for more flexibility to be exercised in such cases; it was confirmed this issue would be investigated and a response provided to Mr C Fraser in respect of specific properties in his Ward;
- the importance of a joined up approach between Services to ensure that works were progressed without undue delay was highlighted;
- the potential for an annual inspection regime of Council houses to be introduced; the Housing Manager advised that he had been tasked to review the volume and effectiveness of inspections in the area, together with any budget implications, and that a report would be brought back to Members in due course;
- concern was expressed that Universal Credit would have a significant impact on rent arrears going forward which in turn could lead to more evictions and an increase in the number of homeless presentations;

- increasing rent arrears would also have an impact in terms of income to the Council's Housing Revenue Account and the level of expenditure available for housing;
- confirmation was sought and received that works would be carried out to upgrade a property at Murray Square, Lochcarron and an assurance given that the issues in relation to the adjacent park would be investigated;
- Members should be provided with addresses and specific details of the improvements to be undertaken to Council houses in the area under the HRA Capital Programme in the current year and if possible the following financial years; and
- in response to a question, it was confirmed that Ms M Smith would be provided with details of the number of private properties leased by the Council and rented on to Council tenants in her Ward.

The Committee:-

- NOTED**, following scrutiny, the information provided on housing performance in the period from 1 April to 30 June 2017; and
- AGREED** that Officers should follow up on the specific issues raised in discussion as detailed and where appropriate responses provided.

6. Ross and Cromarty Local Road Maintenance Programmes Prògraman Càradh Rathaidean Ionadail Rois agus Chromba

There had been circulated Report No RC/018/17 by the Director of Community Services.

During discussion, Members raised the following issues:-

- there was a need for consultation to be undertaken with all Community Councils in the area in respect of next year's Programme and that this should be undertaken in writing;
- details should be provided to Mr C Fraser on the proposals for the next phase of the works on the A832 at Fairy Glen;
- the need for works to be carried out on the road through Jemimaville and discussions held with the local Community Council on this matter was highlighted;
- there was concern at the effectiveness of the pothole repairs being undertaken during the Stromeferry Bypass works; it was confirmed this matter would be raised with the contractor undertaking the works;
- concern was expressed at the condition of the A832 Braemore to Dundonnell and A896 Kinlochewe to Sheildaig/Kishorn Hill roads, and the road west from Achnasheen, all located on the North Coast 500 route; it was confirmed these would be investigated and considered for the following year's Programme, taking into consideration the available budget;
- further information was sought on the procurement of the Jetpatcher by the Council on the basis that it was understood that the machine was inferior to that trialled in the previous year. In this respect, this matter had been raised with the Director of Community Services and an assurance provided that a machine to a higher specification was to be acquired going forward and staff consultation undertaken;

- it was important that the works at Craig Road, Dingwall addressed noise issues associated with gulleys which had been the subject of complaints from local residents;
- in the interests of safety, there was a need to undertake repairs to a wall on a paved section of the A862 Arduillie to Dingwall road; it was reported that efforts would be made to identify the landowner and to progress appropriate action;
- it would be helpful if more information could be provided to Members in relation to works to roads in housing schemes in response to the level of enquiries received from the public on this matter; it was confirmed that Officials would have further discussion on how this could be progressed;
- it was confirmed that Mrs I Campbell would be provided with an update on the outcome of applications to the Scottish Timber Transport Scheme in respect of forestry extraction roads within her Ward;
- Members should be provided with a breakdown by Ward on the number of kilometres of A,B and U roads in area; and
- Members should also be provided with a copy of the Works Programme for the Jetpatcher for each individual Ward within Ross and Cromarty.

The Committee:-

- APPROVED** the Maintenance Programmes for Roads and Bridges for the Ross and Cromarty Area for 2017/18;
- AGREED** that the following be circulated to Members:
 - schedule of works for the Jetpatcher in respect of each individual Ward within the area; and
 - a breakdown on a Ward basis of the number of kilometres of roads by category in the area; and
- AGREED** that Officers should follow up on the other specific issues raised in discussion as detailed and where appropriate responses provided.

7. **Street Naming – New Housing Developments** **Ainmeachadh Sràide - Leasachaidhean Ùra Taigheadais**

There had been circulated Report No RC/019/17 by the Depute Chief Executive/Director of Corporate Development.

The Committee **HOMOLOGATED** the naming of the new development in Alness as 'Dr Stewart Campbell Court'.

8. **Common Good Funds** **Maoin Maith Choitchinn**

There had been circulated Reports Nos RC/020/17 – RC/024/17 dated 2017 by the Depute Chief Executive/Director of Corporate Development which provided information on the following Common Good Funds:-

- Cromarty Common Good Fund RC/020/17;
- Dingwall Common Good Fund RC/021/17;
- Fortrose and Rosemarkie Common Good Fund RC/022/17;
- Invergordon Common Good Fund RC/023/17; and

e. Tain Common Good Fund RC/024/17.

The Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the updated information provided in relation to each Fund; and
- ii. **APPROVED** further funding requests to be drawn from useable reserves for Pefferside Park, Dingwall for the Dingwall Common Good Fund.

The meeting ended at 1.30pm.