

**The Highland Council  
Sutherland County Committee**

Minutes of Meeting of the Sutherland County Committee held in the Chamber, Council Offices, Drummuie on Tuesday, 27 February 2018 at 10.30am.

**Present:**

Ms K Currie

Mr H Morrison

Mr J McGillivray

Ms L Munro (Chair)

**Officials in attendance:**

Ms H Ross, Senior Ward Manager, Chief Executive's Office

Mr R Bamfield, Additional Support Needs Manager, Care and Learning Service

Mr M Dent, Access Officer, Development and Infrastructure Service

Ms A Macrae, Committee Administrator, Chief Executive's Office

**Also in Attendance:**

Mr R Kirk, Area Manager, Highlands and Islands Enterprise

Chief Inspector I MacLelland, North Area Commander, Police Scotland

**1. Apologies for Absence  
Leisgeulan**

Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of Mr R Gale and Mrs D Mackay

**2. Declarations of Interest  
Foillseachaidhean Com-pàirt**

There were no declarations of interest.

**3. Highlands and Islands Enterprise Presentation: Update on the Potential Launch site in Sutherland  
Taisbeanadh Iomairt na Gàidhealtachd 's nan Eilean: Cunntas às Ùr mun làraich chur air bhog ann an Cataibh air a bheilear a' beachdachadh.**

Mr Roy Kirk, Highlands and Islands Enterprise (HIE) reported that the UK Space Agency (UKSA) was currently considering three possible locations in the Highlands and Islands for the development of a potential satellite vertical launch site, one of which was at The Moine in Sutherland. He explained that Sutherland had been identified as a potential location for a number of reasons including its natural advantages and skilled workforce. In terms of the economic impact, it was estimated that 150 direct jobs could be created with local staff given opportunities to develop their skills while further indirect jobs attracting new people into the area would also become available along with numerous supply chain opportunities. The project had the potential to create skilled and well-paid employment, and generate wider economic and community benefits. It also had the potential of making the North Highlands a centre for science and technology.

During discussion, Members raised the following issues:-

- it had been suggested locally that HIE were mainly focused on larger high profile projects;

- the need for public safety to be paramount in relation to the development and a point as to whether there had been any joint working with Police Scotland to date;
- clarification was sought on the consultation undertaken with local communities to date, reference being made to the importance of communities being engaged at this early stage of the development;
- an assurance was also sought that local communities would be central to and involved in all stages of the development and their views would be respected as the project advanced;
- a point in relation to whether there was a notional short list of preferred launch sites and in relation to the level of infrastructure that would be required on the ground;
- clarification was sought on the measures to be taken to protect the environment around the development site;
- the potential for young people in Sutherland to have prospects of apprenticeships for skilled jobs in the fields of science, technology and engineering within their local area be welcomed;
- the Access Officer be invited to attend a future ward business to provide an update on the issues in relation to public access rights.

In response, Mr Kirk:-

- provided an assurance that HIE was focused on small, medium and large opportunities, and he provided examples of HIE's involvement in smaller scale projects in the area involving communities, local organisations and social enterprises;
- confirmed that safety was considered to be of paramount importance and initial discussions had been held and would continue with Police Scotland, and also other relevant agencies. HIE would also welcome the opportunity to widen the discussions in due course;
- provided an absolute assurance that as soon as there was more certainty and information around the project that HIE would be arranging for public meetings to be held in the area and that the views of communities would be taken into account as the project advanced and prior to any planning application being lodged;
- advised that in terms of infrastructure this would essentially involve an access road and launch complex which would include a control room, assembly building, strongback, launch pad, and fuel storage area;
- environmental studies and ecological work was already being undertaken and HIE was working closely with Scottish Natural Heritage in relation to the project. HIE was concerned to ensure that any mitigation required in terms of the environmental impacts would be included in the proposal. He also advised that the type of site proposed could be conducive to the environment and nature on the basis launches would not take place on a daily basis.

In conclusion, the Chair suggested that in the first instance Members should engage with and listen to the views of their communities at this early stage of the project, and thereafter and as more details of the project emerged that arrangements be made for the Committee to receive a further update from HIE on the proposals.

The Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the presentation;

- ii. **AGREED** that arrangements be made for a further update to be provided to Members at the appropriate time; and
- iii. **AGREED** that the Access Officer be invited to a future ward business meeting to provide an update on the issues in relation to public access rights.

#### **4. Police – Area Performance Summary Poileas – Geàrr-chunntas air Coileanadh Sgìreil**

There had been circulated Report No SCC/01/18 dated 19 February 2018 by the North Area Commander.

The Chief Inspector advised that Police Scotland's online safety campaign leaflet had been circulated with the report, and that it would be helpful if the leaflet could be circulated to all community councils in Sutherland.

During discussion, Members welcomed the new format of the report and raised the following issues:-

- clarification was sought and provided in relation to the deployment of camera vans by Network Rail/Transport Scotland at railway crossings in the area;
- a query in relation to whether the increase in the number of people detected for drink/drug driving offences reflected specific campaigns or a general trend and whether drivers were more likely to take a risk in rural areas where they may have to travel outwith their communities to a licensed premises over the winter months. The Chief Inspector explained this was a general trend being observed across all areas of the Highlands and Islands and there was a continued focus by the Police on raising awareness that enforcement was being carried out and in terms of the consequences of such behaviour;
- it was suggested the figures shown for the number of offences reported in relation to the supply of drugs was low in view of reports locally that consignments were being brought in through ports in the area. The Chief Inspector outlined the specific action being taken to patrol the ports in rural areas and establish links with communities, noting that Police Scotland encouraged the public to report any information in this regard;
- at the last Sutherland Drug and Alcohol Forum meeting it had been reported that a large volume of drugs were being purchased via internet orders which was extremely difficult to police. The Chief Inspector advised that the Police were aware of the use of the internet to obtain drugs and that he would link in with the Forum on this issue;
- whether the increase in the figures shown for acquisitive crime was potentially linked to the roll out of universal credit, it being confirmed that there was no evidence of any link, and that such crimes tended to be opportunist or involve substance/alcohol misuse; and
- while there had been a reduction in the number of people detected for seat belt offences, the figure was surprisingly high, particularly given the warning alerts in vehicles.

Thereafter, discussion followed on the fact that a significant proportion of incidents that the Police were required to deal with involved people with mental health issues and that this could be linked for example to an ageing population, alcohol

and anxiety issues. The Chief Inspector advised that a paper to the Sutherland Community Partnership showed there was a particular problem with alcohol misuse in the area, a copy of which he could make available if Members required. He also provided details on the action being progressed by the Partnership in relation to social prescribing and the links and sharing of information with permission, between the Police, NHS Highland and other partners particularly in relation to vulnerable people.

On hearing further from the Chief Inspector, Members confirmed they would welcome a presentation from Police Scotland's Public Protection Unit to the next appropriate meeting.

The Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** following scrutiny, the progress made against the objectives set within the Highland and Islands Local Policing Plan 2017-20 Year 1, attached as Annex A to the report, for the period covering 1 April 2017 - 31 December 2017;
- ii. **AGREED** that the online safety campaign leaflet be circulated to all community councils in the area; and
- iii. **AGREED** that the Public Protection Unit be invited to attend the next appropriate meeting.

## **5. Farr Associated School Group Overview Sealladh Coitcheann air Buidheann Sgoiltean Co-cheangailte Dhòrnaich**

There had been circulated Report No SCC/02/18 dated 16 February 2018 by the Director of Care and Learning.

During discussion, Members raised the following issues:-

- it was reported that a senior member of staff at Farr High School had indicated to a local Member that staff were finding it difficult to get through the curriculum at the moment and concern was expressed that appropriate support be provided to the School in this regard;
- concern was expressed that the schools within the new ASG models in Sutherland had not received an inspection for a considerable period of time and the need for Members to be provided with an insight from Education Scotland as to the why more regular inspections were not being undertaken.
- in regard to the above, it was understood that an inspection was anticipated in the Dornoch ASG in the near future
- concern was expressed that the condition of all the School buildings within the ASG were rated as being 'poor' and clarification was sought on the steps being taken by the Service in relation to the replacement and upgrading of schools so they were fit for purpose;
- the Chair advised that she was aware significant work was programmed for Farr High School in the current year, a new nursery was programmed for Tongue and there was a move towards a new nursery in Melvich.

In responding to the above, the Area Additional Support Needs Manager confirmed he would feedback the points raised by Members to the Area Care and Learning Manager and the Education Quality Improvement Manager as appropriate.

Thereafter, Members further commented as follows:-

- clarification was sought and provided in relation to the staffing provision at nursery schools within the ASG;
- a request that more up to date figures be provided in future reports in relation to positive destinations, and that in addition to the percentages the figures also be expressed in terms of numbers of pupils to provide a clearer understanding of this item; and
- the Youth Development Officer and Active Schools Coordinator be commended on significantly increasing the number of contacts with young people and for the level of work being undertaken within the ASG area, including involvement in the Rock Challenge event.

The Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** following scrutiny, the content of the report; and
- ii. **AGREED** to request that more recent data be provided in future reports in relation to positive destinations, and that the figures also be expressed in terms of numbers of pupils.

**5. Dornoch Common Good Fund – Annual Report 2016/17, Q3 Monitoring 2017/18 and Budget Report 2018/19  
Maoin Math Coitcheann Dhòrnaich – Aithisg Bhliadhnail 2016/17, Sgrùdadh Q3 2017/18 agus Aithisg Buidseit 2018/19**

There had been circulated Joint Report No SCC/03/18 dated 8 February 2018 by the Depute Chief Executive/Director of Corporate Resources and Head of Policy and Reform.

In discussion, it was reported that there was an increased level of activity in relation to Dornoch Common Good and it was anticipated the outcome of ongoing discussions on valuations would be reflected in the next report.

The Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the Dornoch Common Good Fund Annual Report and Accounts for 2016/17;
- ii. **NOTED** the Dornoch Common Good Fund - Third Quarter, 2017/18 Monitoring Report;
- iii. **APPROVED** the Dornoch Common Good Fund- Annual Budget for 2018/19; and
- iv. **NOTED** the financial strategy outlined.

**6. Minutes  
Geàrr-chunntas**

There had been circulated and **NOTED** Minutes of the Sutherland County Committee held on 29 November 2017, which were approved by the Council on 14 December 2017.

The meeting closed at 11.55am.

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