

## The Highland Council

Minutes of Meeting of the **Isle of Skye and Raasay Committee (Comataidh an Eilein Sgitheanaich agus Ratharsair)** held in the Chamber, Tigh na Sgìre, Park Lane, Portree on **Monday, 3 September, 2018 at 9.30 am.**

### Present:

Mr J Finlayson  
Mr R MacDonald

Mr C MacLeod

### In attendance:

Mr W MacKinnon, Ward Manager, Chief Executive's Service  
Mr B Crawford, Temporary Inspector, Police Scotland  
Mr D Esson, Quality Improvement Manager, West, Care and Learning Service  
Mr J Henderson, Housing Investment Officer, Community Services  
Mr G MacDonald, Senior Engineer, Community Services  
Mr C Simpson, Principal Officer – Europe, Tourism & Film, Development & Infrastructure Service  
Mr A MacInnes, Administrative Assistant, Chief Executive's 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.**

## Business

### Preliminaries

In the absence of the Cathraiche (Chair), Mr J Finlayson was unanimously appointed as Interim Cathraiche (Chair) for this meeting.

#### 1. Apologies for Absence Leisgeulan

An apology for absence was intimated on behalf of Mr J Gordon.

#### 2. Declaration of Interest Foillseachaidhean Com-pàirt

There were no declarations of interest.

#### 3. Minutes Geàrr-chunntas

There were circulated for information, Minutes of Meeting of the Isle of Skye and Raasay Committee (Comataidh an Eilein Sgitheanaich agus Ratharsair) held on 4 June, 2018, which were approved at the Highland Council meeting held on 28 June, 2018, the terms of which were **NOTED**.

#### **4. Education Scotland Reports Aithisgean Foghlam Alba**

##### **i. Bun-Sgoil Stafainn (Staffin Primary School)**

There was circulated Report No SR/9/18 by Area Care and Learning Manager which provided details on Education Scotland's report of Bun-sgoil Stafainn (Staffin Primary School) of 13 March, 2018.

In discussion, it was requested that in future year's Education Scotland reports on Bun-Sgoil Stafainn (Staffin Primary School) presented to Committee that the inspection findings on the early years centre 'Sgoil Araich' be included as well. It was welcomed that the evaluation report of the Sgoil Araich was positive particularly in the use of Gaelic and community engagement. The support of Partners in developing the Gaelic language at Sgoil Araich had been recognised.

It was confirmed that Bun-Sgoil Stafainn had been visited by the Quality Improvement team to check on progress with the recommendations of the Education Scotland report and positive progress was being made.

Having scrutinised the report, the Committee **NOTED** the Education Scotland report on Bun-sgoil Stafainn (Staffin Primary School) of 13 March 2018 and that the inspection findings on the early years centre 'Sgoil Araich' be included in future Education Scotland reports submitted to Committee.

##### **ii. Report on Portree High School of 12 June 2018 Aithisge mu Àrd-Sgoil Phort Rìgh den 12 Ògmhios 2018**

There was circulated Report No SR/10/18 by Area Care and Learning Manager which provided details on Education Scotland's report of Portree High School of 12 June, 2018.

In discussion, it was encouraging to see a strong emphasis on achievement and developing the young workforce agenda at the School and it was particularly welcomed that the support provided by Pupil Support Assistants had been recognised.

In terms of Gaelic medium education, it was noted that the number of young people taking national qualifications in Gaelic was relatively low. This was a national concern, in that a lot of resources were going into Gaelic and Gaelic medium education but we were not seeing young people taking national qualifications in Gaelic.

It was explained that this issue was replicated nationally. Portree High School was strong in the range of general education subjects it offered in Gaelic for S1 to S3 pupils and the range of opportunities both in and out of School. However, there were significant challenges in senior phase of education relating to getting staff who could deliver a range of subjects in Gaelic medium. This was a national issue and would require a national solution in order to deliver a range of subjects in Gaelic. There was also a need to look at how the Council could use blended learning through Colleges and e-Sgoil in order to give young people opportunities and pathways into the senior phase of education in Gaelic.

Having scrutinised the report the Committee **NOTED** the Education Scotland report on Portree High School of 12 June, 2018.

## **5. Police – Area Performance Summary Poileas – Geàrr-chunntas Dèanadais Sgìre**

There was circulated Report No SR/11/18 by the Area Inspector for Police which provided an update on the progress with reference to the objectives outlined in the Highland Policing Plan 2017-20.

In particular, Community Speed Watch was an initiative to tackle the speeding problem in communities and the recognition that the Police did not have the capacity to cover all problem areas all of the time. Community Speed Watch would involve a community group e.g. a Community Council, who would operate in 20mph/30mph/40mph speed limits and would use speed detection devices and signage at appropriate locations. People who wanted to be involved in the operation would require to be vetted by the Police and funding would be required for the speed detection devices. When someone was caught speeding a letter would be sent to the person. No one would be prosecuted unless the standard of driving was thought to be dangerous. This was a community led initiative and would encourage drivers to slow down in the targeted areas. The results of the initiative had been positive in other areas of the UK as no driver wanted to be caught speeding. The Temporary Inspector undertook to liaise with the Ward Manager with a view to providing information on Community Speed Watch to Community Councils in local areas where there were well known speeding problems.

There was discussion on the significant work Police undertook dealing with Mental Health issues. It was explained that 20% of Police Officers time was dealt dealing with crime and the remaining 80% of a Police Officers time was dealt with vulnerability incidents of which mental health issues formed part of. Significant time could be spent in hospitals waiting for assessments to be carried out. People with mental health problems did not need to be with the Police and indeed being with the Police or in a Police Station could make the situation worse. The Police would usually divert someone with mental health issues to the hospital and stay with them. However, if they had committed a crime they would be dealt with accordingly. Police Officers time would be better spent dealing with crime prevention rather than mental health work.

In relation to the redesign of health services on the Isle of Skye innovations such as a centre for excellence and a centre for learning about medical issues had been introduced into the redesign. The difficulties of local Police Officers in rural areas having to deal with mental health issues had an impact on the community and perhaps this issue should be raised nationally. There may also be a case for more interaction with the NHS in dealing with mental health incidents, i.e. the NHS providing a locally based specialist in mental health. With the redesign in local health services there could be an opportunity for this to happen.

In relation to the concern of people falling victim to a range of fraud offences, with fewer banks in the area, people would be withdrawing more cash from automated teller machines and may feel more vulnerable to fraud. It was explained that staff at local branches knew their customers and their banking habits and if those staff disappeared then that final check of security would disappear also and would increase people's vulnerability to fraud.

Further, online crime had increased and Police Scotland were creating Hubs of expertise to tackle this. Keeping up with the technology behind online crime was very challenging and IT experts were employed to help the Police with this.

Also of concern was the use of drugs in the local area and it was queried if the Police had received an increase in the numbers of calls from the public reporting drug use or supply. It was advised that the number of reports from members of the public reporting drug use or supply had not increased. The public's help was always welcome in detecting this crime and the anonymity of those providing the information was key particularly in small communities. The public could call the Police on 101 or Crimestoppers anonymously with information.

Having scrutinised the report, the Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** progress made against the objectives set within the Highland and Islands Local Policing Plan 2017-20; and
- ii. **AGREED** that the Temporary Inspector, Police Scotland would liaise with the Ward Manager with a view to providing information on Community Speed Watch to Community Councils in areas where there were known speeding problems.

*In accordance with Standing Order 18, with the consent of the meeting, item 8 on the agenda was taken at this point.*

## **8. Housing Revenue Account Capital Programme 2019-2021 Prògram Calpa Cunntas Teachd-a-steach Taigheadais 2019-2021**

There was circulated Report No. SR/13/18 by the Director of Community Services which contained details of the level of HRA capital resources for Skye and Raasay for the 2019-2021 mainstream capital programme based on the 5 year capital plan and the proposed programme of works in 2019/20 and 2020/21.

In discussion, it was noted that the local Housing Association were working on a housing model called 'Healthy Homes' where you could improve the care of someone e.g. if they were returning from hospital. In terms of works being carried out on Council homes following referrals from Occupational Therapists, it was queried how the work of the Council on its housing linked in with the work of the local Housing Association. It was explained that work on equipment and adaptations allowed people to stay in their homes. The Council works with all its Partner agencies on development opportunities across Highland, such as developing Fit Homes. This allowed for a far more diverse housing stock to suit people's needs, particularly in rural areas where the housing stock with limited.

The equipment and adaptations budget was demand led and there had been a consistent overspend on this budget across Highland over the last few years. In terms of the next review of the strategic budget allowances it would be checked if the resources in the equipment and adaptations budget was sufficient for the various Council areas.

Thereafter, the Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the allocation of resources to Skye and Raasay Area as set out in Appendix 1;
- ii. **NOTED** the investment priorities as set out in section 4.2 of the report;

- iii. **AGREED** the proposed two year HRA Capital Programme for Skye and Raasay 2019-21 as set out in Appendix 2; and
- iv. **NOTED** that updates on the Housing Revenue Account Capital Programme will continue to be provided through ward briefings and at Local Committees as requested by local Members, in addition to reporting to the Environment, Development and Infrastructure Committee.

## 6. **Tourism Presentation** **Taisbeanadh Turasachd**

The Principal Officer – Europe, Tourism & Film was in attendance and gave a presentation on the 2018 tourism season to date along with details of initial and proposed future bids to the Scottish Government's Rural Tourism Infrastructure Fund.

In discussion, the perception that 36% of local responses to a new business barometer felt that visitor numbers were down was surprising and perhaps this was more to do with a significant increase in accommodation providers in the area, and therefore more people competing for a similar market as the year before. Also, businesses in different parts of the tourism industry may be seeing different trends.

The Isle of Skye had seen a number of film productions in the area which had a tourism benefit. The recent filming of 'Robert the Bruce' on various locations on Skye could only have a positive impact on the number of visitors wanting to visit the area.

It was queried if there had been a detrimental impact on the countryside as a result of the loss of Countryside Rangers on Skye. It was felt that they had a valuable role in teaching visitors how to respect the countryside. It was explained that while this may have some limited impact e.g. lack of minor footpath or fence repair, overall there was no evidence of a detrimental impact and part of the work that Countryside Rangers did was now covered by Access Officers.

It was queried if the loss of small rural visitor centres could have impacted on diverting visitors away from 'honeypot' tourist destinations such as the Fairy Pools and Neist Point to other areas less visited. While local information was helpful in advising visitors of other areas of interest on the Island, more often social media was the driving force behind where visitors went and in some ways was taking over the service that local visitor centres once provided. Therefore, there was a need to think about how the tourism industry engaged with Social media on these issues.

It was noted that the income generated locally from tourism was substantial i.e. estimated economic impact for Skye in 2017 was £145m. However, there would also be an economic benefit to other parts of Scotland as there was a trend now for minibuses from other areas bringing tourists to Skye. Therefore, there would be an economic benefit to Scotland as a whole, but the more central areas of Scotland would benefit more given that this was where the mini bus operators and staff were located. However, rural tourism would still have some economic benefit from mini bus tours.

Continuing, there would have been a significant increase in tax revenues coming from Skye in the last few years given the significant increase in tourism. There needed to be a massive increase in infrastructure investment in the area to cope with the number of visitors. Local Members were in support of having a special region or island deal for Skye. Therefore, there needed to be a recognition of the importance of tourism to Skye and tax revenues raised needed to be reinvested in the local area.

It was explained that rural Highlands tourism was very different to urban tourism. While visitors may spend money in local accommodation, restaurants and shops, many of the attractions that they visited in rural areas were not charged for, unlike in urban areas. Therefore there was no direct charging at visitor attractions for reinvestment. There was recognition in the Council that some of the economic benefit had to be reinvested in infrastructure and facilities. A tourist tax was one of a few options and there was a recognition at UK and Scottish Government level that investment was needed and a solution was required.

Thereafter, the Committee **NOTED** the presentation.

*In accordance with Standing Order 18, with the consent of the meeting, item 9 on the agenda was taken at this point.*

## **9. Winter Maintenance Plan Plana Obair-gleidhidh Geamhraidh**

There was circulated Report No. SR/14/18 by the Director of Community Services which provided information on winter maintenance preparations and arrangements for the 2018/19 winter period and invited the Committee to approve the Winter Maintenance Plans for the Isle of Skye and Raasay.

In particular it was noted that the Environment, Development and Infrastructure Committee agreed to adjust the level of weekend service at its meeting on 16 August, 2018. The Committee agreed that a new strategic service be applied where up to 65% of the network may be treated on both a Saturday and Sunday. Therefore the Isle of Skye and Raasay Committee Members had the opportunity to influence the extent of the service provided on these days. Treating all Primary and Secondary routes on Saturday and Sunday equates treating 43% of the local road network within Skye and Raasay.

It was suggested that all Primary and Secondary routes be treated on a Saturday and Sunday (currently only Primary routes were treated on a Sunday) with the addition of some difficult hilly or awkward other routes which had yet to be selected. It was noted that Sunday operations would also commence at 0600hrs.

Members were in support of the Winter Maintenance plan, that there would be winter maintenance operations on Primary and Secondary routes on both Saturday and Sunday, with the addition of some other routes that created difficulty for communities, such as for example Heaste, Glen Mhor and Glendale.

It was queried what the implications would be for the local road network if there was a severe winter this year, similar to last year. It was advised that if this happened, then the deterioration on the road network would continue. There was exceptional pressure on the road network particularly as a result of the success of the tourism industry and this highlighted the need to invest in the infrastructure on Skye and Raasay, otherwise the tourism industry would not be sustainable in future.

It was noted that Grit/Salt bins were filled before the onset of winter conditions and were replenished regularly. Consideration was also being given to locating a Salt barn at Sconser, and efforts were continuing to identify a suitable location for storing of Salt in Portree.

In terms of weather forecasts, it was confirmed that the Council employed a professional forecast provider and forecasts were reasonably accurate.

The Committee:-

- i. **APPROVED** the Winter Maintenance Plans for the Isle of Skye and Raasay for 2018/19, which included the priority road lists and maps presented in Appendix B & C of the report;
- ii. **AGREED** that all Primary and Secondary routes be treated on a Saturday and Sunday; and
- iii. **AGREED** that it be delegated to the Director of Community Services, in consultation with all local Members, to select the additional other routes to be treated.

## 7. Annual Area Capital Report Aithisg Bhliadhnaid Calpa Sgireil

There was circulated Report No. SR/12/18 by the Depute Chief Executive/Director of Corporate Resources which showed for the Isle of Skye and Raasay Council Area, the net expenditure by project in 2017/18 and the budget by capital project for 2018/19. In future years the cumulative spend on each project would also be included.

Members expressed the need for more background information on capital projects in future Annual Area Capital Reports. Members also requested that they receive an early draft of the report in order that they could invite Lead Officers to attend meetings to speak more about specific projects or request reports on an area of service delivery.

The Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the expenditure on each project in the Isle of Skye and Raasay Council area in 2017/18;
- ii. **NOTED** the budget for each project in this Council area in 2018/19; and
- iii. **AGREED** that there should be more background information on projects in future reports and that Members receive an early draft of the report in future years

The meeting concluded at 12.05 pm.