

AGENDA ITEM 9

The Highland Council Sutherland County Committee

Minutes of Meeting of the Sutherland County Committee held in the Chamber, Council Offices, Drummie on Thursday, 14 November 2019 at 10.30am.

Present:

Ms K Currie
Mr R Gale

Mrs D Mackay
Mr J McGillivray

Officials in attendance:

Mr P Tomalin, Ward Manager, Chief Executive's Office
Ms A Donald, Education Quality Improvement Manager, Care and Learning Service
Mr B Couston, Acting Education Quality Improvement Manager, Care and Learning Service
Mr G Smart, Head Teacher, North West Sutherland Schools, Care and Learning Service
Ms A Bain, ELC Commissioner North, Care and Learning Service
Mr J Gunn, Technician, Community Services
Ms S Murdoch, Common Good Fund Officer, Corporate Resources Service
Ms A Macrae, Committee Administrator, Chief Executive's Office

Also in Attendance:

Station Manager J Gardiner, Scottish Fire and Rescue Service

Mr R Gale in the Chair

**1. Apologies for Absence
Leisgeulan**

Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of Mrs L Munro and Mr H Morrison.

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

There were no declarations of interest.

**3. Scottish Fire and Rescue Local Performance Report
Aithisg Dèanadais Ionadail Seirbheis Smàlaidh is Teasairginn na h-Alba**

There had been circulated Report No SCC/17/19 dated 30 October 2019 by the Local Senior Officer for Highland.

In discussion, Members raised the following main points:-

- the Service be commended on the number of home fire assessments carried out in the area and the fact there had been no fire related fatalities over the period;

- the Service be commended on its proactive approach to recruitment in the area, while acknowledging there continued to be challenges in some areas;
- an explanation was sought and provided on how the Service shared information from home fire assessments on vulnerable people in communities with other partners and agencies;
- clarification was sought and provided on the process for recruiting young people to the Fire Skills scheme and the potential to extend the scheme into Ward 1: North, West and Central Sutherland;
- confirmation was sought and provided that virtual headset technology was being used in the Driving Ambitions scheme;
- an assurance was sought and provided that appropriate counselling was available to firefighters attending road traffic collisions;
- the work to support the Scottish Ambulance Service in regard to uninjured falls. It was confirmed the pilot scheme in Caithness and Sutherland continued to be active and monitored.

The Committee following scrutiny, **NOTED** the attached Area Performance Report.

4. Kinlochbervie Associated School Group Overview Sealladh Coitcheann air Buidheann Sgoiltean Co-cheangailte Cheann Loch Biorbhaidh

There had been circulated Report No SCC/18/19 dated 1 November 2019 by the Interim Head of Education.

Mr G Smart, Head Teacher, North West Sutherland Schools provided an update in relation to the successful transition which had taken place to the new 3 to 18 campus which had been well supported by parents and the wider community. He provided further information on HMIE inspections, ASN provision, funding, buildings, exclusions and the school roll projections. In terms of staffing the current roll-based model did not allow him to cover the curriculum he would wish to cover. He was proud of the 100% positive destinations of pupils which reflected the hard work undertaken within the campus, including the work undertaken with local employers to find apprenticeships and employment.

In discussion, Members raised the following main points:-

- an update was sought on the position with Kinlochbervie Childcare Centre, in response to which it was confirmed this setting would be bought under the Council's control from January 2020;
- an assurance was sought and provided that probationers were accessing their training and professional development and there were no barriers in terms of travel and IT support;
- the training of active schools coordinators in mental health support for children and young people was welcomed and an assurance provided there would be no issues with access to the relevant training;

- concern the issues around teacher contracts continued to be a challenge going forward;
- the importance of maintaining good communications in respect of school closures due to winter road conditions;
- confirmation was sought and provided that all the probationers which had been engaged this year had expressed a wish to work in the Highlands;
- it was disappointing that HMIE had not accepted the reality of the new North West Sutherland Schools structure and other 3 to 18 campuses in Sutherland and the potential to raise this at a national level;
- the opportunity to follow up on the Head Teacher's request for a single budget with the Executive Chief Officer – Education, once in post;
- the potential for staff within the North West Sutherland Schools campus to consider dual registration given the flexibility this provided and the need for the Council to support any such requests;
- concern at the school roll numbers for some of the schools within the campus and the need for the issues of depopulation and economic development in the area to be addressed as a priority;
- the need to consider how to support the delivery of modern languages to pupils within schools; and
- further information was sought and provided around the provision of maths and physics within the campus.

Thereafter, Ms A Bain, ELC Commissioner North, provided an update on the implementation of the Scottish Government's commitment to deliver 1140 hours of free early learning and childcare provision from August 2020. She outlined the challenges in delivering the extended hours by the due date in terms of ensuring the workforce was in place and around capital investment so that settings had the capacity to accommodate the extended hours. The Scottish Government had provided clear criteria in relation to the national standard all settings were required to meet. It was disappointing that a situation had arisen in Brora in relation to the proposal that Sutherland Stepping Stones be the provider and the fact there had not been prior discussions with parents in a more planned and informed way. Information sharing sessions had been scheduled for Thursday 21 November 2019.

In discussion, concern was expressed that parents had learned that a review had taken place and the decision taken to close the nursery in Brora and provision transferred to Sutherland Stepping Stones in advance of any consultation or dialogue taking place with parents. Furthermore, Members had not been informed of the proposed change or the opportunity through the normal consultation processes to consider the proposals. A meeting had been held the previous evening at which parents had detailed their questions and concerns. The newly appointed Interim Head of Education had attended the meeting and a further meeting and site visits would be held the following week. It had been requested the process be halted until parents had been provided with the relevant information and had the opportunity to consider the proposal.

Thereafter, the Committee following scrutiny, **NOTED** the content of the report.

**5. Education Scotland Activity in Edderton Primary School
Obair Foghlam Alba ann am Bun-Sgoil Eadardain**

There had been circulated Report No SCC/19/19 dated 6 November 2019 by the Interim Head of Education.

In discussion, Members raised the following main points:-

- this was a positive report and the fact there would be no further HMle visits to the School in relation to the inspection was welcomed;
- in terms of concerns at population numbers in the area and projected school roll numbers every effort should be made to ensure the School was not subsumed into the Tain 3 to 18 campus given its importance to the local community and vice versa;
- the more 1140 child care that could be delivered in smaller schools such as Edderton Primary School, the better the future was for their schools rolls and staffing numbers; and
- the importance of addressing the challenges identified in the HMle report, particularly around assessments, and of driving forward positive change and improvements in teaching and learning at the School going forward and to maximise the potential of pupils.

The Committee following scrutiny, **NOTED** the content of the report.

**6. Winter Maintenance Plan 2019/20
Plana Obair-gleidhidh Geamhraidh 2019/20**

There had been circulated Report No SCC/20/19 dated 22 October 2019 by the Executive Chief Officer Customer and Communities.

In discussion, Members raised the following main points:-

- confirmation was sought and provided that the recruitment process for two operative vacancies had commenced with a view to the posts being filled by the end of the year;
- the importance of good communication on winter road conditions being maintained between Ullapool High School and the gritter drivers serving the area from Assynt southwards;
- concern that the Edderton/Struie road be given more priority on the basis this route was busier than might be expected;
- confirmation was sought and provided that arrangements had been put in place with the relevant bus operator to ensure the gritter was deployed in front of the school bus serving Rogart Primary School; and
- an assurance was sought and provided that measures had been put in place to ensure the even spread and use of better quality of salt, reference being made to issues which had been experienced in the Rogart area

during the previous winter. This included the use of fresh salt which would also be covered.

The Committee **APPROVED** the Winter Maintenance Plan for the Sutherland Area, which includes the priority road lists and maps presented in Appendices B & C.

**7. Street Naming – Dornoch
Ainmeachadh Sràide**

There had been circulated Report No SCC/21/19 dated 31 October 2019 by the Acting Head of Policy.

Arising from this item, it was suggested that consideration be given to how the Council could feed new street names into mapping services such as Google maps.

The Committee **APPROVED** the naming of a flatted development in Dornoch as Old Stable Yard, St. Gilbert St.

**8. Dornoch Common Good
Math Coitcheann Dhòrnaich**

**(a) Annual Report 2018/19, Proposed Budget 2020/21 and Quarter 2
Monitoring Statement 2019/20
Aithisg Bhliadhnail Math Coitcheann Dhòrnaich 2018/19, Buidseat ga
Mholadh airson 2019/20 agus Aithris Sgrùdaidh Cairteil 2 2019/20**

There had been circulated Report No SCC/22/19 dated 28 October 2019 by the Executive Chief Officer Resources and Acting Head of Policy.

The Committee:-

- i. **APPROVED** the Dornoch Common Good Fund Annual Report and Accounts for 2018/19;
- ii. **AGREED** the Dornoch Common Good Fund Annual Budget for 2020/21; and
- iii. **NOTED** the position of the Dornoch Common Good Fund, as shown in the Q2 monitoring statement against budget.

**(b) Lease of Ground to East Sutherland Rescue Association
Aonta Fearainn do Chomann Teasairginn Chataibh an Ear**

There had been circulated Report No SCC/23/19 dated 31 October 2019 by the Acting Head of Policy.

In discussion, it was confirmed the lease related to the disposal of land only and the erection of any buildings on the site would be subject to a separate planning process. The public would have the opportunity to comment on any proposed development as part of that process.

The Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the outcome of the consultation process undertaken; and
- ii. **AGREED** the proposal to dispose of an increased area of Common Good to the East Sutherland Rescue Association subject to the consent of the Sheriff Court being obtained.

9. Minutes Geàrr-chunntas

There were circulated and **NOTED** Minutes of the Sutherland County Committee held on 22 August 2019, which were approved by the Council on 5 September 2019.

ADDITIONAL ITEM

The Committee **AGREED** that the following item be considered as an additional item to allow Members to consider a request in relation to the Golspie Flood Protection Scheme.

10. Golspie Flood Protection Scheme

The Chair reported that the Environment, Development and Infrastructure Committee had agreed at its meeting on 7 November 2019 that the Golspie Flood Protection Scheme be submitted to SEPA. He expressed concern that there had been no consultation with the Sutherland Members on the Scheme to go forward, and suggested the proposed scheme was limited in its effect and there was a need for a more holistic approach for Golspie and the coastal area. He therefore requested that the relevant officers consult with Members on the scheme and provide an explanation of the rationale for the proposal.

The Committee **AGREED** to request that Sutherland Members be consulted on the proposal for the Golspie Flood Protection scheme which the Environment, Development and Infrastructure Committee had agreed be submitted to SEPA.

The meeting closed at 12.15pm.
