

## The Highland Council

Minutes of Meeting of the **Easter Ross Area Committee** held remotely on Monday, 5 September 2022, at 10.30 am.

### Present:

Ms T Collier  
Mr D Louden  
Ms P Munro

Ms M Nolan  
Mr A Rhind  
Ms M Smith

### Officials in Attendance:

Phil Tomalin, Ward Manager  
Iain Moncrieff, Roads Operations Manager  
Fiona MacBain, Committee Administrator

### Also in Attendance:

Mr R Dibble, Group Commander for Highland North

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

#### 1. **Apologies for Absence** **Leisgeulan**

Apologies were submitted on behalf of Ms S Rawlings.

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

There were none.

#### 3. **Appointment of Chair** **Cur Cathraiche an Dreuchd**

Mr A Rhind, seconded by Ms T Collier, proposed Mr D Louden as Chair. Ms M Smith, seconded by Ms P Munro, proposed Ms M Nolan as Chair. Votes were cast as follows:

**For Mr Louden:** Ms T Collier, Mr D Louden, Ms P Munro, Mr A Rhind.

**For Ms Nolan:** Ms M Nolan, Ms M Smith

There being four votes for Mr Louden and two for Ms Nolan, the Committee **AGREED** to appoint **Mr D Louden** as Chair of the Easter Ross Area Committee.

Mr D Louden took the Chair.

#### 4. **Appointment of Vice Chair Cur an Dreuchd Iar-Chathraiche**

Ms M Smith, seconded by Ms P Munro, proposed Ms M Nolan as Vice Chair. Ms T Collier, seconded by Mr D Louden, proposed Mr A Rhind as Vice Chair. Votes were cast as follows:

**For Ms M Nolan:** Ms P Munro, Ms M Nolan, Ms M Smith

**For Mr A Rhind:** Ms T Collier, Mr D Louden, Mr A Rhind

As there were three votes each, Mr Rhind withdrew and the Committee **AGREED** to appoint **Ms M Nolan** as Vice Chair of the Easter Ross Area Committee.

#### 5. **Fire – Area Performance Summary Report Smàladh – Geàrr Aithisg Coileanadh Sgireil**

There had been circulated Report No ERA/11/22 by the Local Senior Officer for Highland.

During discussion, the following issues were raised:

- Members expressed concern at the recent spike in incidents at Invergordon Tank Farm and welcomed the news that the perpetrator had been caught and was being dealt with by the Police. Preventative work was being undertaken with the owners and with the local school;
- staff at Invergordon Fire Station were thanked for their help at a recent open day;
- it was requested that recent fires in wood in Alness be investigated;
- concern was expressed at the low availability (48%) of the second appliance at Invergordon and a summary was provided of efforts being undertaken to address this. Significant recruitment challenges were being faced and Members were asked to encourage people to show an interest in careers with the SFRS. Information to help with this was requested; and
- assurance was sought and provided that efforts were underway to tackle increases in climate change issues such as wild fires and flooding.

The Committee **NOTED** the Area Performance Report.

#### 6. **Roads - Winter Service Plan 2022/23 Rathaidean – Plana Seirbheis Geamhraidh 2022/23**

There had been circulated Report No ERA/12/22 by Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure, Environment & Economy.

During discussion, the following issues were raised:

- information was sought and provided on how adverse weather was dealt with, with particular reference to the need to be mindful of drivers' working hours when starting at 5am;
- it was intended that a similar level of service to the previous year would be provided. Although there had been no cutbacks, there were increased pressures including rising costs; and

- information was sought and provided on the depth of snow required for snow-ploughs to be able to safely lower their blade, this being around 20mm of snow.

The Committee **APPROVED** the Winter Service Plan for 2022/23 and **NOTED** that Covid-19 and driver's hours regulations would potentially have an impact on the winter service provided.

## 7. **Invergordon Common Good Fund** **Maoin Math Coitcheann Inbhir Ghòrdain**

There had been circulated Report No ERA/13/22 by the Executive Chief Officer, Resources and Finance and Executive Chief Officer, Community and Place.

During discussion, the following issues were raised:

- information was sought on the reported £81,305 of unaudited usable reserves, and, in the absence of anyone with knowledge to explain, this would be provided to Members outwith the meeting; and
- information was sought on the current location of the Bouchardon Bust. Recent media reports had generated interest and concern among the local community and it was explained that information was being sought on the value of the Bust in order to put together an options appraisal which would be brought to Committee for consideration. Should any proposal to sell come forward in the future, this would be subject to a full public consultation under the Community Empowerment Act. Assurance was provided that Invergordon Community Council would be kept fully up to date. Corporate Communications officers were thanked for their recent communications with the media on this.

The Committee:

- NOTED** the Quarter 1 monitoring statement for the Invergordon Common Good Fund;
- NOTED** the update on current Invergordon Common Good issues;
- AGREED** information would be provided to Member on the unaudited usable reserves; and
- AGREED** the current location of the Bouchardon Bust be given to Members of the Committee.

## 8. **Tain Common Good Fund** **Maoin Math Coitcheann Bhaile Dhubhthaich**

There had been circulated Report No ERA14/22 by the Executive Chief Officer, Resources and Finance and Executive Chief Officer, Community and Place.

During discussion, Members welcomed the £4,837.93 that had been transferred to the Tain Common Good Fund as a half share of the sale of Unit 2b, Blarliath. Further information was requested on the reasons why 100% of rental income was being paid into the Council's General Fund, and only sales were being shared 50:50 with the Common Good Fund.

The Committee **NOTED** the Quarter 1 monitoring statement for the Tain Common Good Fund and **AGREED** that information be provided to them on why no rental income from Blarliath land ownership was being paid to the Tain Common Good Fund.

## **9. Minutes** **Geàrr-chunntas**

There had been circulated and were **NOTED** Minutes of Meeting of the Easter Ross Area Committee held on 17 February 2022.

Ms Collier referred to Item 5, Placed Based Investment Programme, and asked for information on the reasons behind the agreed investments of £2,887.64 to the TCF Shore Road project, Invergordon, and £35,000 in CCTV infrastructure in Invergordon town centre. Ms P Munro gave a summary of the discussions that had taken place in this regard.

Prior to the meeting ending at 11.20am, Mr D Loudon paid tribute to his predecessor as Chair, Ms Fiona Robertson, for her hard and effective work as a Councillor for Tain and Easter Ross, and for the wider Easter Ross area. He wished her well for the future.

The Committee **AGREED** the Vice Chair be invited to future Area Committee pre-meetings.