

AGENDA ITEM 3

The Highland Council

Minutes of Meeting of the Isle of Skye and Raasay Committee (Comataidh an Eilein Sgitheanaich agus Ratharsair) held remotely on **Monday, 31 October, 2022 at 10.30 am.**

Present:

Mr J Finlayson
Mr D Millar

Mr C Munro
Mr R Stewart

Officials in attendance:

Mr A Gunn, Executive Chief Officer, Communities and Place
Mr W MacKinnon, Ward Manager, Communities and Place
Mr N Young, Transportation Officer, Economy & Infrastructure
Ms M MacDonald, Area Education Manager, Education & Learning
Mr I Meredith, Solicitor, Regulatory Services, Performance & Governance
Mr G Somers, Solicitor, Performance & Governance
Mr R MacLeod, Housing Manager (North), Housing & Property
Ms J Bruce, Principal Housing Officer, Housing & Property
Mr M Bailey, Team Manager, Transformation, Depute Chief Executive
Ms A Smith, Transformation, Depute Chief Executive
Mr M Crowe, Skye, Lochalsh & West Lochaber Access Officer, Economy & Infrastructure
Mr A MacInnes, Administrative Assistant, Performance & Governance

Also in Attendance:

Inspector R McCartney, Police Scotland
Mr A Danter, Skyeconnect

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**

There were no apologies for absence.

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

The Committee **NOTED** the following Transparency Statement:-

Item 7 – Mr C Munro

**3. Minutes
Geàrr-chunntas**

There had been circulated for information, Minutes of Meeting of the Isle of Skye and Raasay Committee (Comataidh an Eilein Sgitheanaich agus Ratharsair) held

on 15 August, 2022, which were approved at the Highland Council meeting held on 22 September, 2022, the terms of which were **NOTED**.

4. Police Scotland Local Committee Performance Report Aithisg Choileanaidh Comataidh Ionadail Poileas Alba

There was circulated Report No. SR/11/22 by the Area Commander for Police Scotland.

In particular, it was highlighted that Police detection rates were positive and Officers were thanked for all their hard work and commitment on this. An increase in drug/drink driving could be related to proactive policing detection rates when stopping vehicles, rather than the drug/drink driving causing more road traffic collisions. The Police would continue to be proactive in educating the public on the dangers of drug/drink driving. There were also Police liaison officers for each school area and Officers would give educational talks to young people in schools on matters such as drugs.

Continuing, a Preventions and Interventions Officer had been appointed to cover South Highland and the Officer would travel to local areas to support the work of local Officers in engaging with the public and communities to reduce and prevent crimes and liaison with young people in schools.

There had been no reduction in the local staff establishment and recently 3 vacant posts had been advertised and 2 appointments made so far. The Police continued to be proactive in encouraging people to join the Police Service.

Police Officers did show visibility by walking amongst the public as much as possible for example in Town Centres and in licensed premises. However, there was a balance to be had with such a large area to cover and Officers required to be mobile in their vehicles as well. Officers were encouraged to park their vehicles and walk and engage with the public and attend community events. In addition, Officers had received training on a Police bicycle course to further engage with the public.

In relation to the problem of drivers not having vehicle insurance, Officers would regularly stop and do vehicle checks to try and address this concern. Any information that the public had on this offence or concerns about a vehicle should be shared with the Police.

The Committee **NOTED** progress made against the objectives set within the Highland Local Policing Plan 2020-2023 Year 2, attached as Annex A to the report, for the period covering 1 April, 2021 to 31 March, 2022.

5. Portree Active Travel Master Plan and Skye & Raasay Integrated Transport Plan Prìomh Phlana Siubhal Gnìomhach Phort Rìgh agus Plana Còmhdhail Amalaichte an Eilein Sgitheanaich is Siorrachd

The Transportation Officer gave a presentation on the Portree Active Travel Master Plan which would act as a framework for supporting people to make healthier, low carbon travel choices.

It was recommended to Members:-

i the use of the Portree Active Travel Masterplan as material consideration when dealing with development proposals and as supporting documents for funding bids; and

ii to delegate to the Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure, Environment & Economy to liaise with other bodies, including Transport Scotland, with a view to identify funding opportunities and a delivery programme to target early improvements across the Portree active travel network.

It was noted that a briefing on the Skye & Raasay Integrated Transport Plan would be provided to Members at a future Ward Business Meeting

Members were overall in support of the masterplan, albeit a view was expressed that further consideration be given to the plan for Wentworth Street as there may be opposition to full pedestrianisation of this street given that businesses relied on the public having access to their vehicles. Also, a proposed shared cycle track along the A87 trunk road between Aros and Sluggans was welcomed and Bun Sgoil Ghaidhlig Phort Rìgh were looking at options for a safe route along Struan Road to the A87 Trunk Road. Somerled Square was a great space but very vehicle focused at present and should be redesigned and the Portree Link Road was a key priority for the town. The plans should all be consulted with the community. Tourism was very important and an environment should be created where tourists can feel safe walking around Portree.

The Scottish Government had given a commitment to spend at least £320m or 10% of the total transport budget for Active Travel by 2024/25. In terms of timescales for implementing safety interventions on roads and accessing funding to implement the masterplan, designs for projects across the Highland Council area required to be finalised following consultation and interventions prioritised on the basis of best value for money. Some of the safety interventions could take place this financial year.

The Committee **AGREED**:-

i the use of the Portree Active Travel Masterplan as material consideration when dealing with development proposals and as supporting documents for funding bids; and

ii to delegate to the Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure, Environment & Economy to liaise with other bodies, including Transport Scotland, with a view to identify funding opportunities and a delivery programme to target early improvements across the Portree active travel network.

ii **NOTED** that the ECO Infrastructure, Environment & Economy and Transportation Officer would be invited to a future Ward Business Meeting to discuss with Members priorities for the Portree active travel network.

iii **NOTED** that a briefing on the Skye & Raasay Integrated Transport Plan would be provided to Members at a future Ward Business Meeting.

6. Area Education Manager's Introduction – Associated School Group Priorities
Ro-ràdh Manaidsear Foghlaim na Sgìre – Prìomhachasan Buidhne Sgoile Co-cheangailte

The Area Education Manager gave a presentation on priorities for the associated school group which was in line with raising attainment.

Schools would work closely with Collaborative Lead Officers looking at literacy and numeracy in particular. There were now 2 Collaborative Lead Officers for the West Highland area which would provide more stability for schools in Skye and Raasay and help schools focus on strategic aims as well as operational matters.

Attainment reports would be submitted to future Local Committee meetings. In terms of supporting small rural schools, there was good liaison by schools to work with each other and Education Scotland had been involved in rolling out the moderation training across Highland.

Recruitment in schools was challenging as was finding suitable affordable housing for staff. The Executive Chief Officer Education and Learning had met with the Portree Associated School Group to listen to their concerns on staffing and recruitment which was a national problem. There was a desire to retain Probationer Teachers who wanted to stay on Skye/Raasay, but this was dependant on jobs being available for them after the probation term ended.

The Committee **NOTED** the presentation on Associated School Group priorities.

7. Introduction of Short Term Lets
Ro-ràdh Leitichean Geàrr-ùine

Transparency Statement: Mr C Munro made a Transparency Statement in respect of this item as both himself and his wife have a self-catering business and the Short Term Let Licensing legislation will directly affect them. However, as this item is providing a general overview of the legislation and is for noting, Mr Munro wished to record a connection but having applied the objective test he did not consider that he had an interest to declare.

The Solicitor, Regulatory Services provided an overview of the short term lets legislation and how it was being implemented by The Highland Council. This was a new mandatory licensing regime brought in by the Scottish Government which local authorities are required to establish by 1 October 2022

The licensing scheme was brought in by the Scottish Government with the aim to ensure short term lets are safe, address issues faced by neighbours, to facilitate local authorities in knowing and understanding what is happening in their area and handling complaints effectively. It also enables local authorities to ensure the people providing short term lets are suitable. The legislation aims to make sure that the economic and tourism benefits from short term lets are balanced with the needs and concerns of local communities. The short term let licensing scheme would cover a wide range of residential accommodation including, but not exclusively, self catered properties, B&B's, glamping pods and yurts.

In discussion, it was advised that Officers had worked with Corporate Communications and tourism organisations in communicating information on short term lets legislation with the trade. It was advised that there were still some operators who were unaware of this legislation and there was still work to do to communicate information and it was suggested an advertisement in the West Highland Free Press would help.

If a house had planning permission and had been operating as a B&B for a while it was unlikely to need planning permission for a short term let in the Skye/Raasay area.

Information on the number of applications received for short term lets licenses in the Skye & Raasay area would be provided to Members.

Any premises which had an alcohol license would not require a short term let license as this would be seen as double licensing.

It was highlighted that operating a short term let without a license was a criminal offence and therefore it was likely that the vast majority operating short term lets will seek to do so lawfully.

The Committee **NOTED:-**

i the presentation on Short Term Let Licensing; and
ii that information on the number of applications received for short term let licenses in the Skye & Raasay area would be provided to Members.

8. Housing Reports

8a Housing Performance Report Aithisg Choileanaidh Taigheadais

There was circulated Report No. SR/12/22 by the Executive Chief Officer Property and Housing.

In discussion, it was highlighted that there could be considerable investment required to bring some properties up to a standard so that they could be re-let which was a result of the age of the properties and tenancy issues where costs were recovered if possible. The lack of available contractors and material had an impact on the time it took to re-let properties. The right type of support required to be provided to vulnerable tenants and the Housing Service worked with partners in adult social care to help them. The money for repairs to properties came from all tenants rents and like rent arrears early intervention was key.

Information would be provided to Members on the number of social housing in Skye & Raasay that did not meet the minimum energy efficiency standards.

The Committee **NOTED:-**

i the information provided on housing performance in the period 1 April 2022 to 30 September 2022; and

ii information would be provided to Members on the number of social housing in Skye & Raasay that did not meet the minimum energy efficiency standards.

8b – Homelessness in Skye & Raasay at 30 September 2022

There was circulated Report No. SR/12a/22 by the Executive Chief Officer Property and Housing.

In discussion, Officers were working hard to provide accommodation to those people presenting themselves as homeless and the Council was building new affordable housing on Skye. The Council did look to purchase private homes and had advertised that the Council was looking to purchase homes. There was a desire to reduce the amount of homelessness presentations in the area and affordable social housing and a vibrant private rented market had a key role.

The Committee **NOTED** the information provided on homelessness in Skye & Raasay at the end of September 2022.

9. The Storr – Progress Update An Stòr - Adhartas ùrachadh

There was circulated Report No. SR/13/22 by the Executive Chief Officer Communities and Place.

In discussion, Officers were commended for the work on the Storr project. This had been a team effort involving Members, with the Project securing external funding from a number of sources to achieve the ambitious aims for developments at the Storr. Looking to the future, there was commitment to identify further developments and initiatives to continue to enhance the: iconic site; visitor experience; and increased income delivering benefits to the local community and economy. Further, the project provides a model approach to site development that could be applied across other suitable sites across Highland, in particular with regard to site management and income generation.

The Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the achievements and progress made as detailed in this report such as:-
 - a. established governance via a Project Board
 - b. continual local Member involvement
 - c. creation and appointment of 2 full time equivalent (FTE) posts at the Storr for improved visitor experience and improved site management
 - d. installation of welfare facilities for the on-site staff
 - e. ongoing development of digital solution including logo, website, and social media, with prominent Gaelic
 - f. successful funding application of £440k to the Islands Infrastructure Fund for the installation of a retail unit and electric vehicle (EV) chargers on site.

- ii. **APPROVED** £60k investment from disaggregated Ward funds, as agreed in principle, pending the funding grant from the Islands Programme, towards the delivery of on-site management and income generation at the Storr, through this report to the Isle of Skye and Raasay Area Committee; and

iii. **APPROVED** the updated parking charges for the Storr.

10. Skye & Lochalsh Local Access Forum
Fòram Ruigsinneachd Ionadail an Eilein Sgitheanaich & Loch Aillse

The Access Officer gave a presentation on Local Access Forums and outdoor access on Skye and Raasay.

In discussion, Members thanked the Access Officer for the presentation which highlighted the significant work being undertaken in Skye and Raasay on outdoor access and working in partnership with Community Groups. The presentation highlighted how quickly erosion of paths could happen and the need for investment to maintain them.

The Committee **NOTED** the presentation on Local Access Forums & Outdoor Access in Skye & Raasay

The meeting ended at 1.40 p.m.