

The Highland Council

Minutes of Meeting of the **Wester Ross, Strathpeffer and Lochalsh Committee**
held remotely on 20 January 2025 at 11am.

Present:

Dr C Birt Ms L Kraft
Mrs I Campbell Mr P Logue

In attendance:

Mr R MacLeod, Service Lead Housing
Mr I Moncrieff, Roads Operations Manager
Ms M Macdonald, Area Education & Learning Manager
Ms D Ferguson, Senior Community Development Manager
Ms L Bauermeister, Community Development Manager
Mrs O Marsh, Committee Officer

Also in attendance:

Chief Inspector Mr C Smith, Police Scotland (Item 3)
General Manager Ms N Hutchison, Wester Ross UNESCO Biosphere (Item 4)

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

Mrs I Campbell in the Chair

Business

1. Apologies for Absence Leisgeulan

There were no apologies for absence.

2. Declarations of Interest/Transparency Statement Foillseachaidhean Com-pàirt/Aithris Fhollaiseachd

There were no declarations of interest or transparency statements.

3. Police – Area Performance Report Poilis – Geàrr-chunntas Coileanaidh Sgìreil

There had been circulated Report No WRSL/01/25 by the Chief Inspector - Area Commander.

During discussion, the following main points were raised:-

- information was sought, and provided, regarding the significantly higher statistics for Drink/Drug Driving Offences in North Highland compared to South Highland;
- Members welcomed the creation of the Highland-wide Harm Prevention Officer (HPO) post. In this regard it was confirmed that the post was fully

funded by NHS Highland via the Highland Alcohol and Drug Partnership (HADP);

- it was queried if Police Scotland had statistical evidence to demonstrate the effectiveness of the HPO post, as this would also serve to secure additional funding to maintain the post;
- Members highlighted an issue raised by Mr McGinty, Trading Standards Officer that fraudsters had been attempting to scam residents regarding home and energy improvement Government initiatives. In this regard Police Scotland would seek to link in with the officer to liaise with community councils to raise further awareness of this issue;
- it was felt that there were likely many telephone and internet scam incidents which were not being reported to Police Scotland;
- it was queried if there had been organised fraud crime based within the local wards; and
- it was confirmed that in relation to organised drug crime, on the whole there was no issue within the Wester Ross, Strathpeffer and Lochalsh areas.

The Committee **NOTED** the progress made against the objectives set within the Highland Local Policing Plan 2023-2026 Year 1, attached as Annex A to the report, for the period covering 01 April 2024 – 31 December 2024.

4. Wester Ross, Strathpeffer and Lochalsh Area Place Plan Plana Àite Sgìre Rois an Iar, Shrath Pheofhair agus Loch Aillse

There had been circulated Report No WRSL/02/25 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Place.

In amplification of the report Ms N Hutchison, General Manager of the Wester Ross UNESCO Biosphere, delivered a presentation updating the progress of the Area Place Plan (APP). She provided an overview of the engagement process and emphasised key aspects of the plan, including the unique regional challenges and strategies to address them. The APP was structured around three core themes: People, Prosperity, and Place, which form the foundation of its framework. The overall goal of the Plan was to support community empowerment and regenerative development. The next phase would prioritise building partnerships within and across sectors to mobilise resources and transform plans into action. Practical steps included supporting community-led initiatives, achieving quick wins, focusing on medium and long term goals, and maintaining ongoing reviews to adapt to emerging needs.

During discussion, the following main points were raised:-

- it was queried if all communities in the area had engaged with the Area Place Plan process. In this regard it was felt that Lochcarron community had not engaged fully, and this might have been down to losing some key personnel in the community;
- thanks were expressed for the place plan presentation which had demonstrated some changes and improvements. Members recognised the challenges faced by communities;
- information was sought, and provided, regarding the reasons for the anticipated population growth;

- Members welcomed the emphasis placed on the need for new housing developments within the area and expected that in time this could be developed to be more location specific;
- concern was raised regarding the lack of available funding to support local groups who want to progress their place plans;
- it was queried if community groups were satisfied with the skills available for young persons within the areas. In this regard, Members supported young people remaining in local areas and being able to develop their skills;
- innovative thinking was required to balance available schooling and housing options to encourage people to stay, or move into the area;
- it was felt that some work tasks risked duplication by groups working in silos and this required to be addressed; and
- it was crucial to establish sustainability of funding to ensure the continuation of area place plans and the people who are employed to work on the projects.

The Committee:-

- AGREED** to adopt the Wester Ross, Strathpeffer and Lochalsh Area Place Plan;
- AGREED** to support and promote the Area Place Plan where possible in terms of its consideration within other plans and strategies across or impacting the Wester Ross, Strathpeffer and Lochalsh area; and
- NOTED** that to progress the work and aspirations set out in the Plan future steps would include creation of detailed action plans.

5. **Area Roads Capital Programme 2025/26** **Prògram Calpa Rathaidean Sgìreil 2025/26**

There had been circulated Report No WRSL/03/25 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Place.

During discussion, the following main points were raised:-

- Members welcomed the capital roads programme as it addressed the worst road areas;
- it was suggested that the Roads Unit update Members in spring as the winter period had not yet finished and might impact on the capital programme;
- the allocated budget of £714,558 for Wester Ross, Strathpeffer and Lochalsh Area was confirmed to be proportionate of the total budget which included the additional resources, but minus of overheads and overspend;
- regarding the road between Sheildaig and Applecross, it was queried if these repairs works would be included within the programme of works. In this regard any adjustment to the capital programme could be discussed at an Ward Business Meeting (WBM) later in the year; and
- it was clarified that the roads budget allocation was based on road mileage within each Ward.

The Committee **APPROVED** the proposed 2025/26 Area Roads Capital Programme for Wester Ross, Strathpeffer and Lochalsh Area.

6. Housing Revenue Account: Garage Rents 2025/2026
Cunntas Teachd-a-steach Taigheadais: Màil Gharaidsean 2025/2026

There had been circulated Report No WRSL/04/25 by the Executive Chief Officer Housing and Property.

The Committee **AGREED** an 8% rent increase be applied to Wester Ross Strathpeffer and Lochalsh Garages and Garage Sites.

7. Housing Performance Report – 1 April 2024 to 30 September 2024
Aithisg Coileanaidh Taigheadais – 1 Giblean 2024 gu 30 Sultain 2024

There had been circulated Report No WRSL/05/25 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Place.

During discussion, the following main points were raised:-

- despite performance being a mean average of response time, Members confirmed they had received some complaints from tenants regarding the length of time taken to complete repairs;
- information was sought, and provided, regarding the Ord Terrace re-roofing project as it was expected to be over budget;
- regarding Voids performance, it was queried why the turnaround times had been so challenging in the Ward; and
- it was queried if the installation of ASHP (air source heat pumps) formed part of the housing capital budget expenditure. In this regard, it was confirmed that Members would receive an update at a future WBM regarding energy efficiency measures, including the installation of ASHP at rated properties.

The Committee **NOTED** the information provided on housing performance in the period 1 April 2024 – 30 September 2024.

8. Associated School Group Attainment Overview
Foir-shealladh air Buileachadh Buidheann Sgoiltean Co-cheangailte

There had been circulated Report No WRSL/06/25, WRSL/07/25, and WRSL/08/25 by the Executive Chief Officer, Education & Learning.

During discussion, the following main points were raised:-

- clarification was provided regarding the report's author as it should have been from the Assistant Chief Executive - People;
- suggestion was made that the Gairloch Headteacher could attend an WBM to discuss and answer Member questions regarding ASG related issues;
- Members welcomed the Gairloch ASG report and were encouraged by the figures for feeder schools;

- regarding the Education Scotland report for Plockton, Members invited the Headteacher and Deputy Head to attend a future WBM to discuss the report;
- Members welcomed the report data for their oversight, and were encouraged by the number of children attending the schools; and
- Members welcomed the listening and talking figures as it was felt that this underpinned the building blocks of everything we did in Highland.

The Committee **NOTED** the content of the reports related to Gairloch, Plockton and Ullapool.

9. Wester Ross, Strathpeffer and Lochalsh Ward Discretionary Budget Buidseat fo Ughdarras Uàird Rois an Iar, Shrath Pheofhair agus Loch Aillse

The Committee **NOTED** that the following Wester Ross, Strathpeffer and Lochalsh Ward Discretionary Fund applications had been approved since 11 November 2024:-

- Dornie and District Community Trust - Community Growing at Dornie Community Hub: £528.00
- Strathpeffer Community Council -Various Improvements in the Square: £800.00
- Dornie and District Community Trust - Community shop and café: £796.79
- Achmore Community Hall Association - Hall energy efficiency measure: £750.00
- Contin Community Council - Local Place Plan – printing & engagement: £224.26
- Aultbea Community Council - Public Access External Defibrillators Project: £800.00
- Contin Community Trust - Seniors festive lunch and kids Christmas parties: £700.00
- Strathpeffer Community Council - Repairs to gazebo fascia boards in the square: £190.80

10. Minutes Geàrr-chunntas

The Committee **NOTED** the Minutes of Meeting of the Wester Ross, Strathpeffer and Lochalsh Committee held on 11 November 2024 which were approved by the Council on 12 December 2024.

The meeting concluded at 12:35pm