

The Highland Council

Minutes of Meeting of the **Sutherland County Committee** held in the Chamber, Council Offices, Drumbuie, Golspie on Monday 17 February 2025 at 10.00am.

Present:

Mr M Baird
Mr R Gale
Ms M Hutchison

Mr J McGillivray
Mr H Morrison
Ms L Niven

In attendance:

Mr P Tomalin, Community Development Manager
Ms J Sutherland, Roads Operations Manager
Mr R MacLeod, Service Lead Housing Investment/Building Maintenance
Ms A Jansson, Chief Officer Education (Primary)
Ms M Murray, Principal Committee Administrator

Also in attendance:

Chief Inspector C Smith, Police Scotland

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

Mr R Gale 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 Summary Poileas – Geàrr-chunntas air Coileanadh Sgìreil

There had been circulated Report No SCC/01/25 by the North Area Commander.

During discussion the following main points were raised:-

- an explanation was sought and provided on the number of drink/drug driving detections for the North Area Command being higher than the Inverness area;
- it was encouraging that the public had more confidence in reporting sexual offences to the Police;
- highlighting that domestic and hate crime was a significant concern nationally and it would be helpful to have a local update on these issues at the earliest opportunity;
- the Committee's good wishes be conveyed to the outgoing police officers at Lochinver and Tongue and it was reassuring these posts would be filled, given the importance of rural stations to the area;

- the opportunity for Police Scotland to work with the Council to address issues of speeding in 20mph zones going forward. The Chief Inspector confirmed that he would liaise with the Council's road safety officers on the potential for a unified policy to be developed in response to this issue; and
- in regard to the above, it would also be helpful for Members to have discussions with Police Scotland on particular speeding hotspots in villages.

The Committee **NOTED** the progress made against the objectives set within the Highland Local Policing Plan.

4. Area Roads Capital Programme Update - 2024-25 Cunntas mu Phrògram Calpa nan Rathaidean Sgìreil – 2024-25

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

Arising from the report, Members welcomed the number of projects completed during the year.

The Committee **APPROVED** the:

- final budget allocation for Sutherland area for 2024/25;
- works completed on the approved prioritised list to date;
- additional works identified and prioritised throughout the year; and
- works still proposed for the 2024/25 financial year.

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

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

During discussion, disappointment was expressed that the Cape Wrath road had slipped down the priority list, concern being expressed at the impact on the local community and viability of businesses. Further concerns were raised on the condition and priority status for the Ardmere Loop, Edderton and A836 Bogrow to Redburn, while recognising the challenges in prioritising schemes. Members were advised that while individual schemes had to be considered in the context of the whole road network in Sutherland, they could review priorities within the Programme at their area business meetings.

A point was then raised on the potential for works to be undertaken to upgrade the Lairg Road to Dornoch Road footpath in Bonar Bridge. After discussion, Members requested that a separate priority list for works to footpaths be brought to a future area business meeting.

Thereafter, Members were advised that operationally the ambition was for white lining at junctions to follow on from surface dressing and this would be actively considered. Centre lining was coordinated strategically across Highland and a list of Sutherland works had been fed into the process. Following on from this, the Chair requested that the issues around white lining be considered at an area business meeting.

The Committee **APPROVED** the proposed prioritised Area Roads Capital Programme for Sutherland Area.

6. Housing Revenue Account: Garage Rents 2025/2026
Cunntas Teachd-a-steach Taigheadais: Màil Gharaidsean 2025/26

There had been circulated Report No SCC/04/25 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Place.

During discussion, the Chair requested that details of spend on garages in Sutherland over the past 12 months be provided to an area business meeting, observing this appeared to have been minimal. It was noted that Council houses tended to have more priority over garages and the repairs budget had been subject to pressures over the period.

Following on from the above, it was suggested that given the recent 8% uplift in Council house rents and level of spend on garages over the past year, no increase in garage rents be applied for Council tenants. An 8% increase be applied for non-tenants on the basis rents would continue to be well below commercial rents for garages.

The Committee **AGREED** not to increase garage and garage sites rents for Council tenants and to apply an 8% increase for non-tenants in 2025/26.

7. Housing Repairs Performance Report
Aithisg Coileanaidh Càraidhean Taigheadais

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

During discussion concern was expressed at the underspend on kitchen/bathroom replacements and rewiring and confirmation that a higher level of spend was anticipated by the end of Quarter 4 and a further update would be brought to an area business meeting at the appropriate time. In addition, this was a multi-year programme and as such spend was profiled across a five year cycle and work was ongoing to reflect this in future reports.

Thereafter, concern was expressed that there had been no spend on the Environmental Improvements Ward 1 and 4 budgets at this stage of the financial year. An assurance was provided that there had been spend on the budgets to date and further details would be brought to an area business meeting.

The Committee **NOTED** the information provided on housing performance for the period 1 April 2024 – 31 December 2024.

8. Attainment Overviews – Kinlochbervie, Farr, Dornoch and Golspie
Associated School Groups
Foir-sheallaidhean Buileachaidh – Buidhnean Sgoiltean Co-cheangailte
Cheann Loch Biorbhaidh, Farr, Dhòrnaich agus Ghoillspidh

There had been circulated Report Nos SCC/06/25 to SCC/09/25 by the Assistant Chief Executive - People.

In relation to the Kinlochbervie High School ASG and Farr High School ASG, Members were advised that due to the small pupil cohort, some data could not be shared as children would be identifiable. It was confirmed that full data for both ASGs would be provided to an Area Business Meeting with the Head Teachers invited to attend to allow for more detailed discussion.

Thereafter, the following main points were raised:

- confirmation was sought and provided that the Early Learning Centre Commissioner would be asked to share with Members details of the numbers to be enrolled in ELC settings in August 2025, with a particular focus on Durness Primary School Nursery;
- the reports reflected that all schools within the ASGs offered a high quality educational environment, however it was important to highlight the fragile pupil numbers in many areas, reflecting issues of depopulation and threat it posed to communities;
- the increase in pupil numbers at Durness Primary School was encouraging; and
- confirmation was sought and provided that the Tain and Ullapool ASG reports and number of pupils attending from Sutherland would be shared with Members.

The Committee **NOTED** the content of the reports.

9. Realignment of the boundary between Creich and Ardgay and District Community Councils

There had been circulated Report No SCC/10/25 by the Chief Officer Community and Housing.

The Committee **APPROVED** the realignment of the boundary between Creich and Ardgay & District Community Councils.

10. Dornoch Common Good - Annual Report 2023/24, Proposed Budget 2025/26 and Quarterly Monitoring Statement 2024/25 Math Coitcheann Dhòrnaich – Aithisg Bhliadhnail 2022/23, Buidseat ga Mholadh airson 2024/25 agus Aithris Sgrùdaidh Ràitheil 2023/24

There had been circulated Report No SCC/11/25 by the Chief Officer Community and Housing and Chief Officer Corporate Finance.

In discussion, reference was made to the fact the Fund was in a healthy position and the opportunity to have discussions through the Investment Sub Committee on investments was a positive step forward. The Fund continued to support local projects whilst retaining a core balance for any major projects that may come forward and the Annual Budget for 2025/26 was encouraging.

The Committee **AGREED:-**

- i. the Dornoch Common Good Fund Statement of Accounts (Appendix 1) and Quarter 4 monitoring report for 2023/24 (Appendix 2);
- ii. the position of the Dornoch Common Good Fund, as shown in the Q3 monitoring statement (Appendix 3) against budget for 2024/25;
- iii. the Dornoch Common Good Fund Annual Budget for 2025/26 (Appendix 4); and

- iv. to delegate authority to the Community Development Manager to approve Dornoch Common Good grants up to £10,000, within the annually set budget and following consultation with Ward 4 Members.

11. Ward Discretionary Awards **Duaisean fo Ùghdarras Uàird**

North, West and Central Sutherland Ward Discretionary Budget applications approved 1 April 2024 – 3 February 2025

The Committee **NOTED** the following North, West and Central Sutherland Ward Discretionary Budget applications have been approved 1 April 2024 to 3 February 2025:

Assynt Development Trust – Menopause Chats	£1,425.00
Community Food Initiatives North East – FareShare in Highland	£5,050.00
Bradbury Centre – Medical Bath Replacement	£500.00
North Sutherland Community Forestry Trust – First Aid Training	£500.00
Kyle of Sutherland Development Trust – Kyle Feeds	£500.00
Lairg & District Community Initiatives – Lairg War Memorial Upkeep	£400.00
North West Training Centre – Learning programme 24-25	£500.00

East Sutherland and Edderton Ward Discretionary Budget applications approved 1st April 2024 – 3 February 2025

The Committee **NOTED** the following East Sutherland and Edderton Ward Discretionary Budget applications have been approved 1 April 2024 to 3 February 2025:

Community Food Initiatives North East – FareShare in Highland	£2,179.00
Embo Trust – Old School Transition – Final Step	£780.00
The Dornoch Area CIC – Dornoch Transport Project	£999.00
Bradbury Centre – Medical bath Replacement	£500.00
Dornoch Cricket Club – Practice Nets Extension	£1,000.00
Dornoch Youth Service Summer Programme	£1,000.00
Youth Highland – Golspie RESPECT Project	£900.00
Embo Football Club – Essential Works to Changing Rooms	£1,000.00
Engaging with Activity CIC – Hub Outings	£1,000.00
Timespan – Gutting Girls	£1,000.00
Rogart Community Council – Rogart Hub	£1,866.00
Timespan Title Check	£140.00
Brora Development Trust – Christmas outing for Brora Youth Room	£1,202.00
Helmsdale Primary School – A9 Crossing Hut	£238.00
Brora Development Trust – Food Provision for Youth Room*	£96.00

*Please note that this is a part contribution to a total award of £1,440.00. The remainder was made up from contributions from the Cost of Living budget and Invitation to Pay budget.

12. Notices of Motion **Brathan Gluasaid**

There was circulated the following Notice of Motion received by the Chief Officer - Legal and Corporate Governance:-

“Given the impact of overnight parking of camper vans in Council car parks leading to inappropriate waste disposal and other anti-social behaviour, the Sutherland County Committee agrees to impose a ban on all overnight camper van and motorhome parking in Council car parks in the County of Sutherland with signage being put in place to direct them to alternative parking options in the local area.

This motion to be a starred item for referral to full Council if necessary.”

Signed: Mr R Gale Mr J McGillivray

During discussion the following main points were raised:

- the Motion had been motivated by the problems caused and number of complaints received in relation to camper van and motorhome parking in Council car parks across Sutherland;
- as a specific example, a considerable number of camper vans/motorhomes had been observed parking at Shore Street Car Park, Golspie, some in disabled bays, with incidents of aggression shown to members of the public when challenged. This was despite there being a campervan and motorhome parking site at the gateway to the village;
- the above situation was mirrored at Dornoch Beach car park where there was a no overnight parking sign in place and a designated site in close proximity;
- there were similar problems with an invitation to pay car park in Durness, adjacent to the campsite, particularly between April to October when the car park was full each night with no waste, toilet facilities or running water;
- concern that the Council was effectively using public monies to enter into unfair competition with private camping and caravan parks who had invested in providing attractive facilities for visitors;
- a precedent for the Motion existed at an invitation to pay car park in Carrbridge where it was clearly indicated that no camper vans and motorhomes were allowed to park between the hours of 2200hrs and 0800hrs the following morning;
- querying the assessed impact in terms of enforcement, the legal position in this regard and that if the Motion was approved then it was considered effective local enforcement would ensue;
- the impact assessment highlighted the potential for displaced campervans/motorhomes to park in laybys and therefore the opportunity for no parking signs to be installed at these locations; and
- the impacts associated with camper vans and motorhomes parking inappropriately in areas outwith Council car parks and designated sites.

Thereafter, it was confirmed that, if agreed, the Motion would be a starred item for referral to full Council due to its financial implications and the fact the decision was not within the delegated authority of the Committee.

* The Committee **AGREED** the Motion.

13. Minutes Geàrr-chunntas

The Committee **NOTED** the Minutes of the Sutherland County Committee held on 12 November 2024, which were approved by the Council on 12 December 2024.

The meeting concluded at 11.45am.