

The Highland Council

Minutes of Meeting of the Isle of Skye and Raasay Committee (Comataidh an Eilein Sgitheanaich agus Ratharsair) held remotely on **Monday, 17 February, 2025 at 10.30 am.**

Present:

Mr J Finlayson
Mr D Millar

Mr C Munro
Mr R Stewart

Officials in attendance:

Mr G Smith, Service Lead, Infrastructure, Place Service
Mr M Sutherland, Roads Operations Manager, Place Service
Ms M A Gray, Project Officer, Community Regeneration Fund, Place Service
Mr E Marsh, Housing Repairs Manager, Place Service
Ms M Macdonald, Area Education and Learning Manager, People Service
Ms D Ferguson, Senior Community Development Manager
Mr A Macleod, Policy Officer, Corporate Service
Mr A MacInnes, Senior Committee Officer, Corporate Service

Also in attendance:

Station Commander Stuart Fraser, Scottish Fire and Rescue Service
Mr F Bertoldi, National Islands Plan Team Leader, Scottish Government
Ms I MacDonald, Mr A McLeod, Mr N Campbell – Portree & Braes Community Trust

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 J Finlayson in the Chair

**1. Apologies for Absence
Leisgeulan**

There were none.

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

Item 8 – Mr C Munro (Transparency statement)

**3. Scottish Fire and Rescue Service Local Committee Performance Report
Aithisg Choileanaidh Comataidh Ionadail Seirbheis Smàlaidh agus Teasairginn na h-Alba**

There had been circulated Report No SR/1/25 by the Local Senior Officer for Highland.

In discussion, the following main points were raised by Members:-

- Information was sought and provided on recruitment and availability with particular reference to stations in Staffin and Uig; plans for any future skills days events for young people, the future locations of Fire stations in Portree

and Uig, and joint mobilisation. In particular, progress would continue to be reported on new Fire stations at Portree and Uig, and joint mobilisation data would be provided in the next report to Committee.

- following a successful fire safety event at a nursing home in the area, it was suggested that it would be good to have similar events at supported living facilities such as Tigh na Drochaid and Shulishader Beag in Portree. It was advised that premises of highest risk would be targeted for fire safety events.

Thereafter, the Committee **Noted** the report.

4. National Islands Plan – Presentation **Plana Nàiseanta nan Eilean – Taisbeanadh**

A representative from the Scottish Government's National Islands Team gave a presentation on the new National Islands Plan. The Plan's overarching objective was to improve outcomes for Islands communities.

In discussion, issues raised included – how the Council was prioritising the delivery of the outcome of the consultation process on the National Islands Plan; more national recognition about the importance of the plan; how the plan linked in with Area and Local Place Plans; mandatory direction from Government for fixed payments to communities from onshore and offshore wind farm companies to tackle fuel poverty; concern that the visitor levy was in direct conflict with the Islands (Scotland) Act and plan; accommodation being converted to short term lets which was changing communities on Skye and Raasay; the difficulty of attracting young people to fishing industry.

Continuing, population attention and attraction was key to this area as was culture and empowerment to communities. Community companies and trusts would play a key role in the plan and they should be supported in this role. The annual report on progress with the plan was reported to relevant Area Committees and given the importance of the National Plan and that it covered a wide range of areas, it was requested that progress on the plan should also be reported to full Council.

The Committee **Noted** the presentation and the request for the Annual report on the National Islands Plan to be submitted to full Council.

5. Portree and Braes Community Trust (PBCT) – Presentation **Urras Coimhearsnachd Phort Rìgh agus a' Bhràighe – Taisbeanadh**

Representatives from PBCT gave a presentation in relation to projects that the trust were delivering in the community.

Members acknowledged the good work taking place by the trust and the partnership working for the projects in the programme, including with the Highland Council. There was recognition of community regeneration funding and ward discretionary funding towards projects. In relation to issues raised with the old swimming pool site, this was an operational matter and officers would liaise with the trust on this. In relation to Bayfield car park, efforts were being made to resurface and reline the car park before the summer season.

The Committee **Noted** the presentation and congratulated the trust and all their volunteers for the work being undertaken on projects.

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

There had been circulated Report No. SR/2/25 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Place which detailed the proposed 2025/26 Area Roads Capital Programme for the Isle of Skye and Raasay.

Following commentary on the report by the Roads Operations Manager, it was highlighted that the master document for proposed road works would be updated and submitted to a future meeting, so that Members could see what the cost would be to bring all roads in the area up to an acceptable standard.

In discussion, items raised by Members included:- the substantial increase in roads maintenance funding for 2024/25 and 2025/26, around £3m in each of those years, was welcomed. However, the last estimate to bring all roads in this area up to an acceptable standard was £40m. The planned programme and long term priorities should reassure communities that progress was being made. There was a need for flexibility in the programme based on further deterioration of the road work.

Information was requested and provided on the staffing establishment of the local roads team; recruitment and retention of staff; better workforce planning to undertake the work required in the programme; costs associated with traffic management when road maintenance is being carried out; how the roads programme was created and an example breakdown of costs for a project; proposed revenue works i.e. passing places; and an update on white lining of roads was provided.

Given the amount of roads maintenance work to be undertaken, information would be provided to Members on work planned and scheduled to take place so that they could pass this information on to Community Councils.

There was not sufficient money for roads maintenance in Highland from the Government and there was a need for them to provide more given it was such a high priority for communities.

Thereafter, the Committee **Approved** the proposed 2025/26 Area Roads Capital Programme for the Isle of Skye and Raasay Committee.

7. Community Regeneration Fund Assessment of Applications Measadh Iarrtasan Maoin Ath-nuadhachadh Coimhearsnachd

There was circulated Report No. SR/3/25 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Place which detailed a funding request to the Isle of Skye and Raasay Community Regeneration Fund (CRF) allocation for discussion and decision by Members.

In terms of the application, the majority of members were in support of the application and therefore, the Committee **Agreed** the grant request for funding of £15,900.00 towards the John Muir Trust, Bla Bheinn Visitor Facilities project.

8. Portree High Associated School Group Overview **Foir-shealladh air Buidheann Sgoiltean Co-cheangailte Àrd-Sgoil Phort Rìgh**

Transparency Statement – Mr C Munro declared a transparency statement in relation to this item as he had a close family member who works part-time in Portree High School Associated School Group and he also had children who attend schools in the Portree Associated School Group. However, having applied the objective test he did not consider that he had an interest to declare.

There had been circulated Report No. SR/4/25 by the Assistant Chief Executive – People which provided an update of key information in relation to the schools within the Portree High Associated School Group and provided updated links to further information in relation to these schools.

Commentary on the report was provided by the Area Education and Learning Manager and in particular all the information would be included in future reports on Primary attainment for schools. Current and projected school roll capacities predicted a downward trend in school rolls in some areas.

Information was sought and provided on the following issues:- in terms of the standards and quality reports, how were schools self-evaluations, evaluated; what engagement took place to check the self evaluation reflected what was happening in schools; a comparison be made of how self evaluations compared to Education Scotland inspection results; Knockbreak primary which was mothballed but still appeared in the tables in the report; school roll data on Bun-Sgoil Ghaidhlig Phort Rìgh; the context of destination of school leavers in this area; the attainment gap and what can be done to improve this. It was highlighted that closing the attainment gap was a priority and to ensure the curriculum is broad enough for all pupils.

The Committee **Noted** the report.

9. Housing Performance Report **Aithisg Choileanaidh Taigheadais**

There had been circulated Report No. SR/5/25 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Place, providing information on how the housing section performed in relation to Scottish Social Housing Charter and other performance indicators up to 31 December, 2024.

In discussion, it was noted that the average response time to complete emergency repairs to properties was within the performance target of 12 hours. However, 2 work orders had skewed the data, thus showing a big increase in the average response time in quarter 3 compared to previous quarters. Also, the average re-let target was 35 days (and not 55.6 days stated in report) and there was continued strong performance against this target. Also, an update was provided to say that £20,000 had been spent to date on Environmental improvements.

The continued strong performance in re-let times was welcomed and houses were relet in a good condition in accordance with the Council's Empty Homes Standard specification. Works on houses in Portree, such as new windows being installed,

was also welcomed and tenants were pleased with the completed works. In terms of the houses known as the 'Swedish houses' it was queried if cladding energy efficiency works were to be undertaken on them. It was advised that there were a number of this type of house in the Council's housing estate and funding bids were being made to carry out this retrospective energy efficiency works. Information would be provided to Councillor Millar on any works planned to the 'Swedish houses' in Portree.

The Committee **Noted** the information provided on housing performance in the period 1 April 2024 to 31 December 2024.

10. Portree Harbour Update **Fios às Ùr mu Chaladh Phort Rìgh**

There had been circulated Report No. SR/6/25 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Place which provided an update of progress for the planning of repairs to Portree Harbour.

The Service Lead, Infrastructure provided commentary on the report. An update to the report was provided to say that the contractor working on the Harbour project had been awarded other major projects and were no longer in a position to work on the harbour project. Therefore, a different contractor would be found through a tender process.

Information was sought and provided in relation to a programme for operational repairs to the harbour and the staff establishment at the harbour. There would be a traffic management plan while the works were being undertaken and there would be restrictions on access to the harbour during this period.

The Committee **Noted**:-

- i. the funding position in respect of the Portree Harbour; and
- ii. the draft delivery programme.

11. Portree Link Road – Design/Tender Programme Update **Cunntas às Ùr mu Rathad-ceangail Phort Rìgh**

There had been circulated Report No. SR/7/25 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Place which provided an update on progress for the design and construction programme for Portree Link Road project.

The Service Lead, Infrastructure provided a summary of the report. The tender for the contract would be issued at the end of February, 2025 and contract award in May and construction thereafter. It was anticipated that the project would be completed by the end of 2025.

The Committee **Noted** the updated position in respect of the Portree Link Road.

12. Skye and Raasay Future (SARF) - Presentation **Àm ri Teachd an Eilein Sgitheanaich is Ratharsair**

This item was deferred until the next meeting.

13. Community Payback Service – Presentation **Seirbheis Ath-Phàigheadh Coimhearsnachd – Taisbeanadh**

This item was deferred until the next meeting.

14. Ward Discretionary Budget **Buidseat fo Ùghdarras Uàird**

The Committee **Noted** the following Ward 10 Discretionary Fund Grant awarded since the last meeting of the Committee:-

Braes Village Hall - External wall repairs £1,500

15. 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 25 November, 2024 which were approved at the Highland Council meeting held on 12 December, 2024. The terms of the minute were **Noted**.

Councillor Calum Munro –The Chair on behalf of the Committee and constituents in the Ward, extended their best wishes to Calum who would be leaving the Council at the end of March. Calum was thanked for his contributions to Ward business and his engagement with community members was particularly highlighted. In response, Calum very much valued his time with the Council over the last 5 years, working with the other members in Ward and that it had been an honour to be a Councillor for the Isle of Skye and Raasay area.

The meeting ended at 1.20 p.m.