

The Highland Council

Minutes of Meeting of the **Black Isle and Easter Ross Area Committee** held remotely on Monday 11 August 2025, at 10.00 am.

Present:

Sinclair Coghill
Tamala Collier
Richard Cross
Laura Dundas

John Edmondson
Lyndsey Johnston
Morven-May MacCallum
Maureen Ross

Participating Officials:

Mr P Tomalin, Senior Community Development Manager
Ms L Bauermeister, Community Development Manager
Mr I Moncrieff, Roads Operations Manager
Mr J MacKay, Amenity Services Manager
Mr E Marsh, Housing Repairs Manager (North)
Ms S Blazquez, Principal Repairs Officer (North)
Mr B Cumming, Senior Environmental Health Officer
Mr S Hunter, Road Safety Officer
Ms F MacBain, Senior Committee Officer

Also in Attendance:

Chief Inspector Calum Smith - Area Commander (North Highland Area Command)

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

Ms L Johnston in the Chair

Preliminaries

The Chair welcomed Mr Richard Cross to his first meeting since being elected and led several tributes to Mr Derek Loudon for his patience, kindness and hard work during his time on the Committee.

1. Apologies for Absence Leisgeulan

Apologies were intimated on behalf of Ms Sarah Atkin.

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

There were none.

3. Recess Powers Cumhachdan Fosaìdh

The Committee **NOTED** that the Recess Powers granted by the Council at its meeting on 26 June 2025 had not been exercised in relation to the business of the Committee.

4. Police – Area Performance Report Poilis – Geàrr-chunntas Dèanadais Sgìreil

There was circulated Report No BIER/16/25 by the Area Commander (North Highland Area Command).

During discussion, information was sought and provided on the following issues:

- the protocols used for recording and investigating missing persons, including vulnerable adults and children. Information was also provided on joint working in this regard with other organisations, such as the Council and third sector, and the resourcing challenges around repeat missing people;
- clarification on the increases in reported sexual assaults, the extent to which they were historical, and on improved support being provided to victims. In response to a question on how the Council could assist the Police with this type of crime, the protection of funding for third sector organisations which supported victims was suggested;
- increased police attention for detecting vehicles without insurance or a valid MOT, noting that a police presence in local neighborhoods would be beneficial in this regard. Members were urged to contact the police with any specific concerns;
- joint working with the Council and DVLA with regard to abandoned vehicles;
- the use of YTD (Year to Date) in the financial figures;
- the reporting of detection rates where the crime and recorded detection took place in different accounting periods;
- County Lines activity in Scotland;
- the policing of 20mph and 30mph zones; and
- the cost to the Council of repairing damaged infrastructure following road traffic accidents and the suggestion that the driver's insurance should cover this. Attention was drawn to the crime of leaving the scene of an accident.

The Committee **NOTED** progress made against the objectives set within the Highland Local Policing Plan 2023-2026 Year 1, attached as Annex A to this report, for the period covering 01 April 2024 – 31 March 2025.

5. Housing Repairs Performance Report – 1 April 2025 to 30 June 2025 Aithisg Choileanaidh Càraidhean Taigheadais – 1 Giblean 2025 gu 30 Ògmhios 2025

There was circulated Report No. BIER/17/25 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Place.

During discussion, the following issues were considered:

- some of the reported increases in performance, including for emergency repairs and void re-lets, were the result of administrative errors made previously (for example an emergency repair being undertaken out of hours,

but recorded the following day), but which could not be amended retrospectively;

- in relation to work being undertaken to expedite void re-lets, and to reduce reliance on sub-contractors, Mr Edmondson requested that information on the cost-benefits of this be provided to him outwith the meeting;
- it was disappointing that a number of homes had been returned in a state that required extensive work to bring them back to an acceptable standard. Regular inspections of rented homes to minimise this in future were suggested, and a summary was provided of joint working between the Housing officers and Housing maintenance and repairs to share information on properties; and
- the benefits of loft insulation were summarised, and assurance provided that properties were up to date, and that this was checked prior to any re-let.

Members **NOTED** the information provided on housing repairs performance in the period 1 April 2025 – 30 June 2025 and **AGREED** to provide Mr Edmondson with information on the cost versus benefits of reducing the Council's reliance on sub-contractors, and undertaking more in-house housing repairs work.

6. Environmental Health - Annual Report & Activity 2024/25 Slàinte Àrainneachdail – Aithisg Bhliadhnail & Gnìomhachd 2024/25

There was circulated Report No. BIER/18/25 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Place.

A brief presentation was provided covering environmental health duties, operational areas, activities 2024-25, reactive work, pro-active / programmed work, local matters, and Highland wide matters.

During discussion, the following issues were raised:

- the reported pressures on the environmental health profession and challenges in workforce planning were noted;
- concern was expressed in relation to possible noise and salt spray issues caused by Port of Cromarty jack-up rigs, and this would be followed up outwith the meeting;
- information was sought and provided on the process for tackling out of control dogs, noting that if a person was bitten, it became a police matter;
- in relation to abandoned boats, establishing ownership could be a challenge, and waste disposal legislation could be applicable depending on the extent of dilapidation. Specific cases could be raised directly with Environmental Health outwith the meeting;
- concern was expressed about reports of black fungus in some Council-owned properties and it was clarified that this would be dealt with in the first instance by Housing Services. The Senior Environmental Health Officer offered to follow this up with Ms T Collier outwith the meeting;
- in relation to Members' concerns about the prevalence rats in certain areas, Environmental Health did not have a pest control function but could offer advice to affected and at risk property owners; and
- issues around domestic and commercial private water supplied were highlighted, and it was explained that commercial properties were inspected but not private properties. Recent changes to short term let licensing were

highlighting new commercial private water supplies, and the geographic size of the area was highlighted.

The Committee **NOTED** the:

- i. **NOTED** the range and volume of work being undertaken locally by the environmental health team;
- ii. **NOTED** the Highland wide issues;
- iii. **NOTED** the report format and content;
- iv. **AGREED** to contact Mr R Cross about reported noise and salt spray from Port of Cromarty jack-up rigs; and
- v. **AGREED** to contact Ms T Collier about reported black mould in some Council-owned properties.

7. Scottish Government Play Park Funding Maoineachadh Phàircean-cluiche Riaghaltas na h-Alba

There was circulated Report No. BIER/19/25 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Place.

During discussion, it was clarified that play park development was undertaken on a case by case basis, given the many variables to be considered. Further issues relating to the Ward 6 budget would be considered in the first instance at the Ward Business Meeting.

The Committee **AGREED** £182,294 be allocated to the agreed projects as outlined in sections 6.5 and 6.6.

8. Winter Service Plan 2025/26 Plana Seirbheis a' Gheamhraidh 2025/26

There is circulated Report No. BIER/20/25 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Place.

During discussion, it was requested that detail about the Struie Road (B9176) being the responsibility of Sutherland Area Committee be included in future reports, noting that the road crossed Area boundaries, and that the route map, once it was completed, be circulated to Members. In relation to resources to aid with community resilience, a single point of contact for a community would be helpful and should be communicated to the Roads Operations Manager.

The Committee:

- i. **APPROVED** the Winter Service Plan for 2025/26;
- ii. **AGREED** the winter maintenance route map be circulated to Members upon its finalisation; and
- iii. **AGREED** the winter service plan 2026/27 contain reference to responsibility for the B9176 / Struie Road.

9. B817 Saltburn 30mph Speed Limit Order Report Aithisg air Òrdugh Teorainn Luas 30msu B817 Saltburn

There was circulated Report No. BIER/21/25 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Place.

During discussion, the 30mph speed limit was welcomed and information was sought and provided on the next steps to be implemented, which included 30mph roundels and speed count surveys. It was pointed out that the cars parked on the road should not be there but did serve to slow traffic. Members requested detail on further speed restrictions, as detailed below.

The Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the background to the proposed 30mph speed limit order for Saltburn, in particular the collision history, speed data and the representations received;
- ii. **APPROVED** the making of the Traffic Regulation Order (TRO) within Appendix 2,
- iii. **NOTED** the intention to carry out after speed counts to determine the effectiveness of the reduced speed limit;
- iv. **AGREED** to provide Members with information on progress to seek a 40mph speed restriction through Barbaraville; and
- v. **AGREED** to provide Members with a timeline for implementation of 30mph signage and road markings on the road to Arabella

10. Tain Common Good Asset Register Review Ath-sgrùdadh Clàr So-mhaoin Math Coitcheann Bhaile Dhubhthaich

There was circulated Report No. BIER/22/25 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Corporate and the Assistant Chief Executive - Place.

During discussion, clarification was sought on whether work being undertaken on properties due to be transferred to the Common Good Fund would remain in the Council budget. This was being discussed between Services prior to transfer and Members would be updated at their Ward Business Meetings.

The Committee:

- i. **NOTED** the investigations undertaken to review the Tain Common Good Asset Register;
- ii. **AGREED to CONFIRM** the reclassification of the assets noted in 7.2 – 7.5;
- iii. **NOTED** the consequent impact on the financial position for the General Fund and Tain Common Good Fund; and
- iv. **AGREED** to update Members at a future Ward Business Meeting on discussion taking place between Services on work the Council was undertaking to properties due to be transferred.

11. Common Good Funds Maoin Maith Choitchinn

- a. **Cromarty Common Good Fund
Maoin Math Coitcheann Chromba**

There was circulated Report No BIER/23/25 by the Assistant Chief Executive - Place.

The Committee **NOTED** the position of Cromarty Common Good Fund as shown in the end of year statement for 2024/25 Quarter 4 and 2025/26 Quarter 1 Monitoring Statements.

b. Fortrose and Rosemarkie Common Good Fund
Maoin Math Coitcheann na Cananaich agus Ros Maircnidh

There was circulated Report No BIER/24/25 by the Chief Officer Housing & Communities and the Chief Officer Corporate Finance.

The Committee **NOTED** the position of Fortrose and Rosemarkie Common Good Fund as shown in the 2024/25 Quarter 4 and 2025/26 Quarter 1 Monitoring Statements.

c. Invergordon Common Good Fund
Maoin Math Coitcheann Inbhir Ghòrdain

There is circulated Report No BIER/25/25 by the Chief Officer Community and Housing, and the Chief Officer Corporate Finance.

In relation to the efforts being made to ensure the Bouchardon Bust remained in the UK after its sale, a ministerial decision on this was imminent. The process that would ensue should the Bust be found to be of national significance was explained.

Members **NOTED** the Quarter 4 2024/25 and Quarter 1 2025/26 monitoring statements for the Invergordon Common Good Fund.

d. Tain Common Good Fund
Maoin Math Coitcheann Bhaile Dhubhthaich

There was circulated Report No BIER/26/25 by the Chief Officer Community and Housing, and the Chief Officer Corporate Finance.

It was queried whether the area planned for solar arrays at Blarliath would remain with the Common Good Fund, and this would be investigated outwith the meeting.

Members **NOTED** the Quarter 4 2024/25 and Quarter 1 2025/26 monitoring statements for the Tain Common Good Fund and **AGREED** to confirm whether the area identified for possible solar arrays at Blarliath would remain in the Common Good fund following the assert review..

12. Ward Discretionary Awards
Duaisean fo Ùghdarras Uàird

There was circulated and **NOTED**, details of the Discretionary Budget applications that had been approved.

Cromarty Firth Ward Discretionary Budget applications approved 1st April 2025 – 31st July 2025

Alness Gala & Events – The Alness Gala	£2,000.00
Saltburn & Westwood Community Council – Annual Community Flowers	£700.00
Invergordon Lunch Club – Invergordon Lunch Club	£400.00
Highland Action for Little Ones – Bright Futures	£1,000.00

Tain and Easter Ross Ward Discretionary Budget applications approved 1st April 2025 – 31st July 2025

Tain YMCA – Assistance for Running Costs	£1,500.00
Tain Task Force – Tain Environmental Improvements Worker	£3,000.00
Seaboard Memorial Hall – Village Care Assistance Scheme	£3,500.00
Tain Gala Association – Talk Car Rally & Gala	£2,000.00

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Black Isle Ward Discretionary Budget applications approved 1st April 2025 – 31st July 2025

Cromarty & District Community Council - Reed Loop Path Maintenance	£700.00
Go Flourish - Community Open Days	£773.00
Fortrose Academy - Young Enterprise Team Scottish Finals	£823.00
Black Isle Cares - Fortrose Community Larder	£400.00
Black Isle Cares - Meals at Home service	£300.00
Cromarty & District Community Council - Tidy up Townland	£580.00
Knockbain Community Council - North Kessock Community Youth Art Project	£950.00

**13. Minutes
Geàrr-chunntas**

There was circulated and **NOTED** minutes of the meeting of the Black Isle and Easter Ross Area Committee held on 12 May 2025, which had been approved by the Council on 26 June 2025.

In response to a question, the process for providing information and actions requested by Members during meetings was explained.

The meeting ended at 12.40pm.