

The Highland Council

Minutes of Meeting of the **Caithness Committee** held **remotely** on Monday 3 November 2025 at 10.00 am

Present:

Mr R Gunn
Mr A Jarvie
Mr S Mackie
Ms J McEwan

Mr M Reiss
Mr K Rosie
Mr W Mackay

In attendance:

Ms P Tomalin, Senior Community Development Manager
Ms C Maciver, Community Development Manager
Ms A Banks, Principal Housing Officer
Ms M Maguire, Principal Planner
Mr J MacLean, Bereavement Services Project Manager
Ms R Robertson, Project Co-ordinator
Mr R Bartlett, Principal Traffic Officer
Ms F MacBain, Senior Committee Officer

Also in attendance:

Inspector D Livitt, 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 A Jarvie in the Chair

Business

**1. Apologies for Absence
Leisgeulan**

There was an apology for absence from Mr R Bremner.

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

There were no Declarations of Interest/Transparency Statements.

**3. Police – Area Performance Summary
Poileas – Geàrr-chunntas air Coileanadh Sgìreil**

There had been circulated Report No CC/18/24 by the North Area Commander.

In discussion, Members raised the following main points:-

- in response to complaints received in relation to the noise made by boy/girl racers it was explained that there would be a mix of legal and illegal exhaust systems on these vehicles and concerns on this issue would be passed onto the relevant officers;

- the reduction in figures for drink/driving offences were excellent and demonstrated Police Scotland was responding to public concerns on this and other road traffic matters;
- confirmation was sought and provided that drug driving cases lost in court due to delays in laboratory analysis was not an issue of concern in the North Division;
- the reduction in the number in missing persons be welcomed and it was hoped this would continue going forward;
- the implications for Police Scotland associated with the proposed SSEN worker camps, noting that no particular issues had been observed with a similar camp in Alness and that contractor responsibility was also key;
- local concerns in relation to the volume of speeding traffic on the back road from Thurso to Dounreay via Shebster which might have partly been caused by the installation of average speed cameras on the A836. An assurance was provided that for an increased focus on this road would be passed onto the relevant officers;
- in response to a query, further clarity was provided that while there had been an increase in the figures for the theft of motor vehicles in Caithness the number of incidents involved was low; and
- an update was sought and provided on the latest incident of vandalism at the public toilets in Wick and action that could be taken in relation to local information as the possible perpetrators.

Thereafter, 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 2025 – 30 September 2025.

4. Housing Management Performance Report – 1 April 2025 to 30 September 2025 Aithisg Dèanadais Stiùireadh Taigheadais – 1 Giblean 2025 gu 30 an t-Sultainn 2025

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

During discussion, further clarity was sought and provided on;

- the process for families who had to move out of employer accommodation, applying to the Highland Housing Register and the subsequent assessment undertaken;
- that persons in private accommodation whose homes had been repossessed could present as homeless and thereafter a decision would be made as to whether they were homeless and whether the Council had a duty to house them; and
- concern in relation to the number unkempt gardens in housing estates and an assurance was provided that officers were undertaking an increased number of visits in this regard and offering support to tenants including signposting.

The Committee **NOTED** the information provided on housing performance in the period 1 April 2025 – 30 September 2025.

5. Short Term Let Control Area Sgìre Smachd Màil Gheàrr-Ùine

There had been circulated Report No CC/26/25 by the Assistant Chief Executive - Place.

In discussion, it was suggested given the healthy condition of the housing market in Caithness in the context of short term lets, it was not considered necessary to reconsider the evidence base regarding short term lets prevalence in area with a further report brought to the Area Committee in 12 months' time. As an alternative, Members indicated their support for recommendation iv. to be amended to read as follows:

'agree to keep a watching brief on Short Term Let prevalence, with the option to bring this item back to a future meeting if members feel the need'.

The Committee:

- i. **NOTED** the evidence presented demonstrating the degree of prevalence of short term lets within Caithness;
- ii. **NOTED** that this evidence, at this time, did not demonstrate that the housing market within Caithness specifically, was subject to any significant pressure caused by Short Term Lets at this time, that would warrant regulation through a Short Term Let Control Area;
- iii. **AGREED** that the Caithness Area Committee did not at this time wish to progress with the process of considering the introduction of a Short Term Let Control Area covering all or part of the Caithness Area; and
- iv. **AGREED** to keep a watching brief on Short Term Let prevalence in Caithness, with the option to bring this item back to a future meeting if Members felt the need.

6. Bereavement Services – Project Updates Seirbheisean Bàis – Cunntas às Ùr mu Phròiseactan

There had been circulated Report No CC/27/25 by the Assistant Chief Executive - Place.

During discussion, Members welcomed the project updates which outlined the challenges to Members and the public with a number of burial grounds in the area and expressing support for the work being undertaken. It would be helpful for further updates on any progress with Wick and Thurso Mount Vernon Burial Grounds to be provided going forward.

The Committee **NOTED** the:

- i. current capacities and progress of burial ground extensions in the Caithness area; and
- ii. challenges with identifying and developing suitable land for burial ground development.

7. Invitation to Pay Income
Teachd-a-steach bho Chuireadh gus Pàigheadh

There had been circulated Report No CC/28/25 by the Assistant Chief Executive - Place.

In discussion, a point was raised in relation to the potential to improve the signage at Reiss Beach Car Park to encourage more people to pay in this location.

The Committee **NOTED** the earmarked funds for this Committee from the Invitation to Pay Parking of £10,876.19.

8. Allocation of Invitation to Pay Income in Caithness
Riarachadh Teachd-a-steach bho Chuireadh gus Pàigheadh ann an Gallaibh

There had been circulated Report No CC/29/25 by the Assistant Chief Executive - Place.

In discussion, reference was made to the opportunity in future to use funds from the strategic pot to improve signage in Invitation to Pay car parks in Caithness, including an indication of how the income generated was used in the area.

The Committee:

- i. **NOTED** the Invitation to Pay income from 2024/25 and the current balance of funds to date; and
- ii. **AGREED** to **DEFER** allocating Invitation to Pay funding to allow the establishment of a strategic pot to be used for future projects.

9. Wick Common Good Fund
Maoin Math Coitcheann Inbhir Ùige

a. Invitation to Pay Parking Scheme
Cuireadh Cosgaisean a Phàigheadh

There had been circulated Report No CC/30/25 by the Assistant Chief Executive - Place.

The Committee **AGREED** that:

- i. £2,933.91 costs incurred by the Council's Parking Enforcement Team to operate the invitation to pay parking scheme at the Wick Common Good sites was charged against the Wick Common Good Fund; and
- ii. the costs of signage maintenance be recovered from the Wick Common Good Fund in the financial year 2026/27.

b. Quarter 2 Monitoring
Sgrùdadh Ràith 2

There had been circulated Report No CC/31/25 by the Assistant Chief Executive - Place.

In discussion, it was confirmed that further clarity would be provided on what comprised miscellaneous costs listed under expenditure.

The Committee **NOTED** the Quarter 2 2025/26 monitoring statement for the Wick Common Good Fund.

10. Thurso Common Good Fund - Quarter 2 Monitoring Maoin Math Coitcheann Inbhir Theòrsa - Sgrùdadh Ràith 2

There had been circulated Report No CC/32/25 by the Assistant Chief Executive - Place.

The Committee **NOTED** the Quarter 2, 2025/26 monitoring statement for the Thurso Common Good Fund.

11. Ward Discretionary Awards Duaisean fo Ùghdarras Uàird

Thurso and Northwest Caithness Ward Discretionary Budget applications approved 1 April 2025 – 15 October 2025

The Committee **NOTED** that the following Thurso and Northwest Caithness Ward Discretionary Budget applications had been approved for the period 1 April 2025 – 15 October 2025.

Caithness Youth Pipe Band – Edinburgh Tartan Parade	£1000.00
Caithness Chamber of Commerce – Caithness Transport Forum	£500.00
Home Start Caithness – Summer Day Trip for Families in Need	£960.00
Highlife Highland – Active Schools Coaching & Equipment	£1,500.00
Thurso Football Academy – Professional Football Coaching Sessions	£750.00
Community Food initiatives North East – Fareshare in Highland	£2,314.00
Association of Caithness Community Councils – Village Officer Fund	£2,000.00
The Flow Country Partnership – Flowing Forward	£531.77

Wick and East Caithness Ward Discretionary Budget applications approved 1 April 2025 – 15 October 2025

The Committee **NOTED** that the following Wick and East Caithness Ward Discretionary Budget applications had been approved for the period 1 April 2025 – 15 October 2025

Caithness Youth Pipe Band – Edinburgh Tartan Parade	£1,000.00
Caithness Chamber of Commerce – Caithness Transport Forum	£500.00
Newton Park Parent Council – Newton Park Breakfast Club	£242.98
Highland Council – Step Forward Wick Youth Summer London Visit	£1,500.00
Thrumster Parent Council – ELC Container	£1,400.00
Royal Burgh of Wick Community Council – Town Works	£761.72
Community Food initiatives North East – Fareshare in Highland	£3,128.00
Association of Caithness Community Councils – Village Officer Fund	£3,500.00
The Flow Country Partnership – Flowing Forward	£531.77

12. Minutes

Geàrr-chunntas

There were circulated and **NOTED** the Minutes of the Caithness Committee held on 4 August 2025 which were approved by the Council on 18 September 2025.

Arising from item 5 of the Minutes, the Chair advised that he would follow up with the relevant officer on Members request for a brief update on the readiness of the winter fleet for the winter season and ensuring the winter gritting fleet were equipped with the right tyres.

The meeting concluded at 11.25am.