

The Highland Council

Minutes of Meeting of the **Sutherland County Committee** held in the Chamber, Council Offices, Drumbuie, Golspie on Monday 1 December 2025 at 10.00am.

Present:

Mr M Baird
Mr R Gale
Ms M Hutchison

Mr J McGillivray
Mr H Morrison
Ms LA Niven

In attendance:

Ms F Richardson, Community Development Manager
Ms M Maguire, Principal Planner, Development Planning
Mr R Bartlett, Principal Traffic Officer
Mr M Dent, Access Officer
Ms C Murray, Project Officer (Community Regeneration)
Ms E Taggart, Principal Housing Officer
Ms F MacBain, Senior Committee Officer

Also in attendance:

Mr J Thrower, Group Commander, Scottish Fire and Rescue Service

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

1. Apologies for Absence Leisgeulan

There were no apologies for absence.

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

Mr J McGillivray – Item 10

3. Scottish Fire and Rescue Local Performance Report Aithisg Dèanadais Ionadail Seirbheis Smàlaidh is Teasairginn na h-Alba

There had been circulated Report No SCC/26/25 by the Local Senior Officer for Highland.

During discussion, the following main points were raised:

- the relatively low incidences of fire were welcomed and SFRS officers thanked for their work;
- with reference to online forms, information was sought and provided on how people without internet access could request home safety visits, which included partner agency referral pathways, telephone and face to face engagement;
- further detail was sought and provided on recruitment issues;

- the staffing situation at Bonar Bridge was queried and explained;
- engagement with school pupils on fire skills was welcomed and plans to increase this, especially in schools in areas where recruitment was challenging, were queried; and
- the benefits of partnership working were summarised and SFRS officers should be invited to ward business meetings by the Community Development Officer.

The Committee **NOTED** the attached Sutherland Performance Report and **AGREED** to invite an SFRS officer to ward business meetings.

The Committee **AGREED** to consider Item 6 after Item 4 due to officer availability.

6. **Short Term Lets Report** **Aithisg Mhàil Gheàrr-ùine**

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

Following a presentation, confirmation was sought that the matter could be dealt with as an Area, rather than individual wards, and support for the recommendations was voiced, noting the importance of consulting with communities;

The Committee:

- NOTED** the evidence presented demonstrating the degree of prevalence of Short Term Lets within Sutherland;
- NOTED** that this evidence, demonstrates that the housing market within parts of Sutherland, is subject to significant pressure, exacerbated by high rates of potential dwellings being converted to Short Term Lets;
- NOTED** that the designation of any new Short Term Let Control Area will have no retrospective impact on existing Short Term Lets where no material change of use had occurred at the time of establishment and will therefore only require planning permission from new Short Term Lets established after a Short Term Let Control Area comes into force.
- NOTED** that should the Economy and Infrastructure (E&I) Committee formally commence the process of introducing a Short Term Let Control Area, this will initiate a process of further evidence gathering and public consultation with communities;
- NOTED** that the Sutherland Area Committee therefore seeks to progress with the process of considering the introduction of a Short Term Let Control Area covering all or part of the Sutherland Area; and
- AGREED** that progressing with consideration of a Short Term Let Control Area enables communities within the area to participate in that consultation at the appropriate stage.

4. **Invitation to Pay – Allocation of Income 2024-25** **Cuireadh gus Pàigheadh – Riarachadh Teachd-a-steach 2024–25**

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

During discussion, the following main points were raised:

- the importance of ensuring all Council car parks were fully compliant with the necessary health, safety and fire requirements was emphasised, while recognising that the matter was not strictly relevant to the report; and
- an explanation was sought and provided for the relatively low income at Achmelvich Beach car park, this being due to a refurbishment closure of the car park for a period.

The Committee:

- NOTED** the earmarked funds for 2024/25 for this Committee from the Invitation to Pay Parking of £10,453.00;
- NOTED** expenditure to date of income generated in 2022/23 and 2023/24 and the balance available following the addition of income earned in 2024/25;
- APPROVED** the process for the distribution of Invitation to Pay income in Sutherland;
- NOTED** the distribution process will be reviewed in a year's time; and
- APPROVED** delegated power for the authorisation of spend up to £10,000 to the Community Development Manager in consultation with local Members; while spend over £10,000 would be subject to Sutherland County Committee approval.

5. **Dornoch Common Good Fund – Invitation to Pay Parking Scheme** **Maoin Math Coitcheann Chataibh – Sgeama Parcaidh Cuireadh gus Pàigheadh**

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

It was clarified that the report title had wrongly stated Sutherland when it should have said the Dornoch Common Good Fund.

The Committee **AGREED** that £1124.80 costs incurred by the Council's Parking Enforcement Team to operate the invitation to pay parking scheme at the Dornoch Beach car park is charged against the Sutherland Common Good Fund.

7. **Public Recreational Access on Hill of Edderton Report** **Aithisg mu Chothrom Inntigidh dhan Phoball airson Cur-seachad air Cnoc Eadardain**

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

During discussion, Members recognised the issues facing both parties and emphasised that while responsible access must be provided, it was important that no damage was done. Formal recognition of the situation was welcomed and it was hoped the outlined process would resolve the situation.

The Committee **AGREED**:

- that the Council will exercise its powers under Section 19 of the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003 to issue notice to the landowner(s) requiring the removal

- of all restrictive signs and the unlocking of pedestrian gates on core path RC15.10, where the path is a constructed and surfaced track. If the signs and locks are not removed within the specified notice period, the Council will take action to remove them;
- ii. that the Council will seek the support of all parties (or their representatives) to engage an independent mediation service aimed at achieving a mutually acceptable outcome. The remit of the mediation will include core paths and any other tracks or paths considered appropriate on the Hill of Edderton; and
 - iii. that officers will report back to the committee once independent mediation has been concluded or earlier if not all parties have agreed to participate or if the process is discontinued.

8. Community Regeneration Fund Report **Aithisg Maoin Ath-nuadhachadh Coimhearsnachd**

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

During discussion, it was queried why the contribution from the wind farm fund was relatively low, and a summary was provided of the match funding sources for this project. It was possible that other projects being undertaken were in receipt of wind farm funding, and this could be followed up out with the meeting.

The Committee:

- i. **NOTED** the CRF application presented and agree whether to approve, defer or reject each application. An approval of funding should detail the amount approved and outline any conditions of funding that Members wish to attach to the approval over and above the required technical conditions. A deferral would allow an applicant to resubmit the current application at a future date with updated information or for the project to be approved subject to further funding becoming available. A rejection would mean that the application will not proceed and any future application to the fund should be brought forward initially as a new expression of interest or application; and
- ii. **AGREED** the approved CRF grant award of £104,718 for the application as detailed in the report.

9. Housing Performance Report 1 April – 30 September 2025 **Aithisg Coileanaidh Taigheadais 1 Giblean – 30 Sultain 2025**

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

During discussion, the following main points were raised:

- the good management of rent arrears was welcomed;
- an explanation was sought and provided for anomalies due to the universal credit payment system, and for the support offered to tenants in this regard;
- in relation to housing allocation, a plea was made to ensure the homes were up to an appropriate standard prior to relet; and
- figures for transfer out of Sutherland were sought and could be provided outwith the meeting.

The Committee **NOTED** the information provided on housing performance in the period 1 April 2025 – 30 September 2025 and **AGREED** to provide Members with figures for Housing transfers out of Sutherland outwith the meeting.

10. Dornoch Common Good: DADCA Application
Math Coitcheann Dhòrnaich: Iartras DADCA

Mr J McGillivray declared an interest in item 10 as a former Director of Dornoch and District Community Association Application and left the meeting for this item.

There had been circulated Report No SCC/33/25 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Place.

During discussion, the Chair made reference to the significant sum required but outlined the benefits the project would bring.

- * The Committee **AGREED TO RECOMMEND** the Full Council approves the £280,000 application from Dornoch and District Community Association (DADCA) for the new community centre project, subject to match funding and required permissions being in place.

11. Dornoch Common Good Q2 2025-26 Monitoring Report 2025
Aithisg Sgrùdaidh 2025 R2 2025–26 Maoin Math Coitcheann Dhòrnaich

There had been circulated Report No SCC/34/25 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Place.

During discussion, Members welcomed the report and thanked officers.

The Committee:

- i. **NOTED** the Quarter 2 25/26 monitoring statement for the Dornoch Common Good Fund; and
- ii. **NOTED** the proposal to vary expenditure.

12. Ward 1 & 4 Ward Discretionary Fund Approvals 25-26
Aontaidhean Maoin fo Ùghdarras Uàird 1 & 4 25–26

The Committee **NOTED** the awards:

North, West & Central Sutherland Ward Discretionary Budget applications approved 1st April 2025 – 20th October 2025

Durness Community Council – Multimedia & TV Equipment	£1,400.00
Kyle of Sutherland Hub – Community Cycling Project	£1,000.00
Kyle of Sutherland Development Trust – Kyle Feeds	£1,000.00
Sutherland Sports Council – Supporting Sport in Sutherland	£1,000.00
Scourie Community Development Company – Repopulating Scourie	£5,384.71
Community Food Initiatives North East – Fareshare in Highland	£3,585.00

Lochinver Weed Whackers – Lamp Post Planters	£750.00
Culag Community Woodlands Trust – Troll Bridge Restoration	£2,000.00
Culrain & District Hall Committee – New Door	£2,000.00
Bonar Bridge Community Hall – Running Costs	£1,250.00
The Flow Country Partnership – Flowing Forward	£412.29
Poppy Wreaths	£99.00

East Sutherland & Edderton Ward Discretionary Budget applications approved 1st April 2025 – 20th October 2025

Golspie Youth Action project – Youth Club Core Costs	£1,500.00
Go Golspie Development Trust – Go Golspie Community Car Service	£2,000.00
Sutherland Sports Council – Supporting Sport in Sutherland	£1,000.00
Fèis Chataibh - Fèis an t-Samhraidh	£2,000.00
Embo Football Club – Football Pitch Development/Upgrade	£975.00
Community Food initiatives North East – Fareshare in Highland	£975.00
Golspie Sutherland FC – Season's Transport	£1,000.00
Golspie High School – Higher Geography Field Trip	£1,598.00
The Flow Country Partnership – Flowing Forward	£412.29
Golspie high School – Small Schools Football Competition	£1,220.00
Poppy Wreaths	£99.00

13. Minutes
Geàrr-chunntas

The Committee **NOTED** the Minutes of the Sutherland County Committee held on 1 September 2025, which were approved by the Council on the 18 September 2025.

The meeting concluded at 11.20am.