

The Highland Council

Minutes of Meeting of the **Wester Ross, Strathpeffer and Lochalsh Committee**
held remotely on 19 January 2026 at 11am.

Present:

Dr C Birt

Ms L Kraft

Mrs I Campbell

Mr P Logue

In attendance:

Ms D Sutton, Chief Officer - Operations & Maintenance

Mr I Moncrieff, Roads Operations Manager

Mr E Marsh, Repairs Manager

Mr M Crowe, Project Officer - Community Regeneration

Mr W MacKinnon, Community Development Manager

Ms L Bauermeister, Community Development Manager

Mrs O Marsh, Committee Officer

Also in attendance:

Acting Chief Inspector Mr D McAlpine, Police Scotland (Item 3)

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

Ms L Kraft 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

The Committee **NOTED** the following declaration of interest:-

Item 8 (Application 1) – Ms L Kraft

3. Police – Area Performance Report Poilis – Geàrr-chunntas Coileanaidh Sgìreil

There had been circulated Report No WRSL/01/26 by the Chief Inspector - Area Commander.

During discussion, the following main points were raised:-

- clarification was sought on the road fatalities recorded during the period, including whether any had occurred at the same locations and whether those involved were local residents or visitors. It was confirmed that the incidents

had taken place at different sites across the North Area, each relating to a separate collision, and that further information on the individuals involved would be obtained and provided;

- Members queried whether figures for Lochalsh were included within the report, and it was confirmed that Lochalsh statistics formed part of the committee data although the area was policed by the South Area Command;
- concern was expressed about the rise in fraud, and Members asked whether improved identification and reporting contributed to the increase. Officers advised that enhanced banking protocols, greater public confidence and improved recording practices had contributed, although offending itself was also rising;
- the small population of the Ward was highlighted and Members asked whether low numbers risked identifying individuals. Data protection was always taken into account and that detailed personal information could not be disclosed;
- an update was sought on policing attendance at Community Councils. It was observed that quarterly combined meetings had replaced routine attendance due to staffing levels and call demand;
- clarification was requested on the appointment of a new officer in Lochcarron, and it was confirmed that the information would be provided after the meeting; and
- further information was requested regarding drug-related activity in the Ward. In this regard, it was reported that possession detections had increased due to proactive work, while no supply offences had been recorded for the period, and emphasised that intelligence from the community remained essential for targeting supply.

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 this report, for the period covering 01 April 2025 – 31 December 2025

4. Area Roads Capital Programme 2026/27 Prògram Calpa Rathaidean Sgìreil 2026/27

There had been circulated Report No WRSL/02/26 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Place.

During discussion, the following main points were raised:-

- concern was expressed regarding the condition of the A890 between Tower and Stromeferry following recent snow, with Members highlighting that drivers were forced to avoid deep potholes and that road safety was being compromised. It was recognised that the route was in poor condition and required attention;
- clarification was sought on the use of contractors, and it was confirmed that a mix of external contractors and Direct Labour Organisation (DLO) squads would be deployed, depending on scheme type and available resources;
- reference was made to the Gairloch Co-op area, whether the previously agreed works by the Co-op had been completed. It was confirmed that the Co-op had agreed to undertake a substantial portion of the works and that the Council's remaining section was included in the programme, subject to confirmation with the Roads Officer; and

- Members referred to the condition of the junction at Scatwell and asked whether it could be included while works were being undertaken nearby. In this regard, it was confirmed that Scatwell was on the future list for discussion at the next Ward Business Meeting and could potentially be added, subject to available budget and higher priority scheme costs.

The Committee:-

- APPROVED** the rolling programme of Capital schemes as listed in Appendix 2, which will be a multi-year programme;
- NOTED** that the Area budget will be available after the February 2026 Economy and Infrastructure (E&I) Committee; and
- NOTED** that the rolling programme may require to be updated once results from the Scottish Road Maintenance Condition Survey had been received and considered.

5. **Community Asset Transfer Request – Torridon Playpark Glusad So-mhaoin Coimhearsnachd – Raon-cluiche Thoirbheartan**

There had been circulated Report No WRSL/03/26 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Place.

The Committee **AGREED** to the sale of the land of the former Torridon Playpark, Torridon, to Torridon District Community Association for £1, based upon the terms of transfer as set out in the report at 6.1.

6. **Housing Revenue Account - Garage Rents 2026-2027 Cunntas Teachd-a-steach Taigheadais – Mìl Gharaidsean 2026–2027**

There had been circulated Report No WRSL/04/26 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Place.

Consideration was given to the proposed rent increase options for garages and garage sites. Concern was raised that some garages, particularly in Strathpeffer, were too small to accommodate modern vehicles, with reference to earlier discussion about possible demolition and replacement although no progress had been made. It was also observed that many tenants used the spaces for storage rather than parking. There was broad support for an 8 percent increase as the most appropriate option in the current cost-of-living context, acknowledged that the difference in income between the available options was minimal.

The Committee **AGREED** an 8 percent rent increase to apply to Wester Ross, Strathpeffer and Lochalsh Garages and Garage Sites.

7. **Housing Repairs Performance Report Aithisg Choileanaidh Càraidhean Taigheadais**

There had been circulated Report No WRSL/05/26 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Place.

During discussion, the following main points were raised:-

- clarification was sought on the void period target of 35 days, specifically whether delays caused by prospective tenants taking longer to accept a property could extend the total period and whether there was a point at which an offer lapsed. In this regard, it was explained that housing management continued engagement throughout the process and managed refusals as required;
- concern was raised regarding the energy efficient band D to C Programme, with reference to cases where external contractors had been unable to deliver works despite initial indications that properties would be eligible. It was observed that strict grant criteria and property conditions could limit the level of upgrades, and specific constituent cases would be followed up directly; and
- Members acknowledged the positive contribution of energy efficiency works but recognised that inconsistent delivery could lead to tenant frustration, and they welcomed the offer to investigate individual cases further.

The Committee **NOTED** the information provided on housing performance in the period 1 April 2025 to 31 December 2025.

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

Ms L Kraft made a Declaration of Interest in respect of this item, relating to the first application, as a Member of the Board of Wester Ross Biosphere Ltd. In accordance with paragraph 5.6 of the revised Code of Conduct, she withdrew from consideration of that application and left the meeting for its duration, returning for the remainder of the item.

The Vice Chair assumed the Chair for consideration of Application 1. Following conclusion of that application, Ms L Kraft returned to the meeting and resumed the Chair for Application 2 onwards.

There had been circulated Report No WRSL/06/26 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Place.

During discussion, Members expressed strong support for all four projects. They highlighted the importance of securing continued designation for the Wester Ross Biosphere, acknowledged the significant community benefit of the Lochalsh and Skye Swimming Pool, and welcomed progress on the community hub project in Dornoch and District. The value of the Imaginarium initiative in addressing isolation in remote rural areas was also recognised.

The Committee **AGREED** that funding be awarded from the Community Regeneration Fund as follows:

- Wester Ross Biosphere Ltd – £38,093.00
- Lochalsh & Skye Swimming Pool Association – £ 16,380.00
- Dorie & District Community Trust – £ 11,130.00
- Create Inspire Projects CIC (CIP) – £ 14,122.20

9. Wester Ross, Strathpeffer and Lochalsh Ward Discretionary Budget

Buidseat fo Ùghdarras Uàird Rois an Iar, Shrath Pheofhair agus Loch Aillse

The Committee **NOTED** that the following Wester Ross, Strathpeffer and Lochalsh Ward Discretionary Fund applications had been approved from 1 October – 31 December 2025:-

- Contin Community Trust - Senior/Kids Christmas Party - £500
- Aultbea Community Hub - Purchase a new dishwasher for the Community Café - £1,500

10. Minutes Geàrr-chunntas

The Committee **NOTED** the Minutes of Meeting of the Wester Ross, Strathpeffer and Lochalsh Committee held on 3 November 2025 which were approved by the Council on 11 December 2025.

The meeting ended at 12:35pm