

The Highland Council

Minutes of Meeting of the **Sutherland County Committee** held in the Chamber, Council Offices, Drumbuie, Golspie on Monday, 1 June 2026 at 10.00 pm.

Present:

Mr M Baird

Mr R Gale

Ms M Hutchison

Mr H Morrison

Ms LA Niven

In attendance:

Ms F Richardson, Community Development Manager

Mr J MacLean, Bereavement Services Manager

Mr J Mitchell, Housing Manager

Mr T Lush, Environmental Health Manager

Ms K Van Voornveld, AQIM (Farr KLB Thurso Wick Golspie)

Mr M Dent, Access Officer

Ms C Murray Project Officer, Community Regeneration

Mr J MacKay, Amenity Services Manager

Ms I Jamieson, Service Support Officer 2, Operations and Maintenance

Also in attendance:

Mr J Thrower, Scottish Fire and Rescue Service

Mr K Ettles, 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 none.

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

There were none.

3. Scottish Fire and Rescue Area Performance Report Seirbheis Smàlaidh is Teasairginn na h-Alba Aithisg Coileanaidh Sgìreil

There had been circulated Report No SCC/09/26 by the Local Senior Officer for Highland.

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

- the reporting of fire and non-fire casualties;
- fire station staff availability and recruitment in various locations including Durness, Scourie, Thurso, Bettyhill, Lochinver and Tongue;

- the benefits of holding joint meetings with Members, SFRS representatives and local businesses to encourage staff to consider on-call fire fighting. Talks on this would take place outwith the meeting;
- the young leader of the Lochinver team was commended for their work, as were all the SFRS officers;
- engagement with schools was appreciated and details of which schools had experienced direct engagement could be provided outwith the meeting;
- information was sought and provided on recruitment challenges and progress at Bonar Bridge; and
- plans to share fire officers across different areas, and to engage with communities and schools, were summarised.

The Committee **NOTED** the Sutherland Performance report.

4. Bereavement Services – Project Updates **Cunntas às ùr mu sheirbheisean bàis**

There had been circulated Report No SCC/10/26 by the Assistant Chief Executive - Place.

During discussion, the following main points were raised:-

- Members requested that the number of lairs reported to be available at Golspie burial ground be reviewed and confirmed in due course;
- the work to secure additional land for Melness burial ground was welcomed; and
- assurance was sought and provided that consideration would be given to undertaking early discussions in relation to the possible extension of Balnakeil burial ground.

The Committee:

- NOTED** the current capacities and progress of burial ground extensions in the Sutherland area;
- NOTED** the challenges with identifying and developing suitable land for burial ground development; and
- AGREED** the reported number of available lairs in Golspie Cemetery and Balnakeil Burial Ground be checked.

5. Housing Management Performance Report up to 31 March 2026 **Aithisg Choileanaidh Taigheadais - 31 Màrt 2026**

There had been circulated Report No SCC/11/26 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Place.

During discussion, the following main points were raised:-

- appreciation was expressed for the work of the Housing Service in Sutherland, with particular reference to the low levels of rent arrears;
- information on the number of people housed in temporary accommodation across Highland was sought and would be provided after the meeting; and

- an explanation was sought and provided on how the figures within the Sutherland area compared with other parts of Highland, which was generally positive given the relatively lower demand.

The Committee **NOTED** the information provided on housing performance in the period 1 April 2025 – 31 March 2026 and **AGREED** information on the number of people housed in temporary accommodation across Highland was sought and would be provided after the meeting.

6. Environmental Health – Annual Report & Activity 2025/26

There had been circulated Report No SCC/12/26 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Place.

A presentation was provided on local Environmental Health activities, including environment health duties, operational areas, and a summary of reactive, pro-active and enforcement activities, locally and Highland-wide.

During discussion, the following main points were raised:

- information was sought and provided on the dog fouling activity taking place in the Sutherland area, and the number of fines that had been issued, which was zero at present, with visibility of officers being a preventative measure. Members were invited to email officers with any areas of particular concern. The benefits of providing communities with posters and leaflets was highlighted;
- attention was drawn to the need for some private housing emergency repair assistance and to the lack of budget for this, which would be further discussed with the lead officer for grants after the meeting; and
- concern was expressed at the poor state of repair of a derelict building in Lairg and efforts to contact the deceased owners estate could be discussed out with the meeting.

The Committee:

- i. **AGREED** the Lead Officer for Housing repair grants would contact Ms Hutchison after the meeting about a case she had information on; and
- ii. **NOTED**:-
 - a. the scope and volume of work currently being delivered in the local area;
 - b. local issues and current operational priorities;
 - c. Highland wide issues impacting Environmental Health services; and
 - d. the format and content of the report.

7. Associated School Group Attainment Overview Foir-shealladh air Buileachadh Buidheann Sgoiltean Co-cheangailte

Members pointed out that information on Ullapool High School had been requested for the Sutherland County Committee on several occasions, noting that a number of Sutherland-resident children attended secondary school in Ullapool. They also expressed disappointment that there was no Service representative in attendance to speak to the reports for Dornoch Academy and Golspie High School.

7i. Dornoch Academy

There had been circulated Report No. SCC/13/26 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Place.

The Committee **NOTED** the content of the report and **AGREED** that a representative from the Service be asked to attend the meeting in August 2026 to speak to this report, and to provide information on the Sutherland pupils who attended Ullapool High School.

7ii. Golspie High School

There had been circulated Report No. SCC/14/26 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Place.

The Committee **NOTED** the content of the report and **AGREED** that a representative from the Service be asked to attend the meeting in August 2026 to speak to this report,

7iii. Farr High School

There had been circulated Report No. SCC/15/26 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Place.

Farr Highland School was considered alongside discussion of Kinlochbervie High School, below.

The Committee **NOTED** the content of the report.

7iv. Kinlochbervie High School

There had been circulated Report No. SCC/16/26 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Place.

During discussion, the following main points were raised:-

- in response to concern being expressed that the figures for Kinlochbervie and Farr were from two years earlier, an update on more recent figures would be provided outwith the meeting;
- consideration was given to the staffing challenges being faced and a summary was provided of work being undertaken to address this, including recruitment initiatives and digital solutions; and
- Members offered their help and support to assist with any improvement measures, which included sharing recruitment adverts whenever possible;

The Committee **NOTED** the content of the report and **AGREED** that more up to date figures for Kinlochbervie and Farr be provided outwith the meeting.

8. Core Path Amendment - SU06.02 Loch Brora – West Track Atharrachadh Prìomh Cheuma – SU06.02 Loch Bhrùra – Slighe an Iar

There had been circulated Report No SCC/17/26 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Place.

The Committee **AGREED** the Council promote the diversion of the Loch Brora – West Track core path (SU06.02) by notifying the relevant landowners, occupiers and those with an interest in the area and undertake a formal 12-week public consultation.

9. Community Regeneration Fund Assessment of Applications
Measadh Iartasan na Maoin Ath-nuadhachadh Coimhearsnachd

There had been circulated Report No SCC/18/26 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Place.

The Committee:

- i. **NOTED** the Community Regeneration Funds currently available in Sutherland;
- ii. **NOTED** the CRF application presented and whether to approve, defer or reject each application; and
- iii. **AGREED** the approved CRF grant award, subject to any conditions, up to the value of £95,000.

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

There had been circulated Report No SCC/19/26 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Place.

The Committee **AGREED** £150,500 be allocated to the agreed projects as outlined in sections 6.4.1 of the report, and that the Amenity Services Manager would provide the Committee with information on the timescales for completion of Kinlochbervie – Innes Place Play Park after the meeting.

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

The Committee **NOTED** the following awards:

North West & Central Sutherland Discretionary Budget Applications
Approved 1 April 2026 – 31 March 2027

Budget £19381	Approved £961.98	Balance £18419.02
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– Lochview Rural Training Lairg £961.98

Total	£961.98
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East Sutherland & Edderton Ward Discretionary Budget applications approved
1 April 2026 – 31 March 2027

Budget £19381.00	Balance £19381.00
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No applications approved to date

Total **£0.00**

**North West & Central Sutherland Discretionary Budget Applications
Approved 1 April 2025 – 31 March 2026**

Budget £14381.00 **Approved £14381.00** **Balance £0.00**

- Durness Community Council - Multimedia & TV Equipment £1400.00
- Kyle of Sutherland Hub - Community Cycling Project £500.00
- Kyle of Sutherland Development Trust - Kyle Feeds £1000.00
- Scourie Community Development Company - Repopulating Scourie £5,384.71
- CFINE - Fareshare in Highland £3,585.00
- Lochinver Weed Whackers - Lamp Post Planters £750.00
- Lady Haig Poppies - 3 x Poppy Wreaths £90.00
- Bonar Bridge Community Hall - Running Costs £1250.00
- The Flow Country partnership - Flowing Forward £412.99

Total **£14381.00**

**East Sutherland & Edderton Ward Discretionary Budget applications
approved 1 April 2025 – 31 March 2026**

Budget £14381.00 **Approved £14381.00** **Balance £0.00**

- Golspie Youth Action Project - Youth Club Core Costs £1000.00
- Go Golspie Development Trust - Go Golspie Community Car Service £1000.00
- Embo Football Club - Football Pitch Development/Update £975.00
- CFINE - Fareshare in Highland £2105.00
- Golspie Sutherland FC - Season's Transport £1000.00
- Golspie High School - Higher Geography Field Trip £1598.00
- Lady Haig - 3 x Poppy Wreaths £99.00
- The Flow Country Partnership - Flowing Forward £412.29
- Golspie High School - Small Schools Football Competition £1220.00
- Go Golspie Development Trust - Securing Go Golspie Active Travel £200.00
- Engaging with Activity CIC - Christmas Hamper Project 2025 £1000.00
- Sutherland Sports Council - Funding Top-Up £999.00
- Brora Development Trust - Food Relief Project £1000.00
- Dornoch Academy School Transport £1772.71

Total **£14381.00**

12. Minutes
Geàrr-chunntas

The Committee **NOTED** the Minutes of the Sutherland County Committee held on 16 February 2026, which had been approved by the Council on 26 March 2026.

The meeting ended at 12.05pm