

The Highland Council

Minutes of Meeting of the **Sutherland County Committee** held in the Chamber, Council Offices, Drumbuie, Golspie on Monday 31 August 2026 at 10.00am.

Present:

Mr M Baird
Mr R Gale
Ms M Hutchison

Mr H Morrison
Mr J Murray
Ms L A Niven

In attendance:

Ms F Richardson, Community Development Manager
Mr M Sutherland, Strategic Lead (Operations)
Mr C Sutherland, Principal Repairs Officer
Ms M Maguire, Principal Planner
Mr G Somers, Solicitor (Licensing)
Ms L Bradley, AQIM (Portree Plockton Gairloch Ullapool)
Ms C Murray Project Officer (Community Regeneration)
Ms F MacBain, Senior Committee Officer

Also in attendance:

Acting Chief Inspector David McAlpine, 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 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

The Committee **NOTED** the following Transparency Statement:

Item 11: Mr R Gale

3. Recess Powers Cumhachdan Fosaidh

The Committee **NOTED** that the Recess Powers granted by the Council at its meeting on 25 June 2026 had not been exercised in relation to the business of this Committee.

At this point, the Chair welcomed Mr J Murray, newly elected Member for Ward 4: East Sutherland and Edderton to his first meeting.

Thereafter, Members congratulated Golspie Stafford Football Club on being the first team from Sutherland to win the Highland Amateur Cup.

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

There had been circulated Report No SCC/20/26 by the Area Commander (North Highland Area Command).

During discussion, the following main points were raised:-

- further clarity was sought and provided on the detection rates in relation to assaults and drug (supply) offences;
- an explanation was sought and provided on the reasons for and work being undertaken in response to the increase in the number of sexual offences and crimes of dishonesty over the five-year period;
- in response to a query, it was confirmed that an applicant was to be interviewed for the vacant position at Tongue Police Station and it was hoped an officer would be in post as soon as practicable;
- an explanation was sought and provided in relation to the increase in offences relating to the cruel and unnatural treatment of children; and
- concern at reports of visitors to the area being harassed due to their nationality; the Chief Inspector explained that such incidents would only be recorded and investigated as hate crimes if they were reported to the Police.

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 2025 – 31 March 2026.

5. Area Roads Capital Programme **Prògram Calpa Rathaidean na Sgìre**

There had been circulated Report No SCC/21/26 by the Assistant Chief Executive - Place.

During discussion, the following main points were raised:-

- further clarity was sought and provided on the regular inspection regime of roads conducted by the Service and reasons why the priority of routes could change rapidly, reference being made to the fact the C1140 road had moved from 240th to 2nd on the priority list;
- it would be helpful for Members to be provided with a priority list of schemes for each Ward in Sutherland and information on the number of schemes that the Service would realistically expect to complete on an annual basis; it was confirmed the Roads Operations Manager would be asked to provide this information and attend an area business meeting to provide Members with an update on progress;
- an assurance was sought and provided that a practical approach was taken to the mobilisation and deployment of equipment, so that a number of schemes were carried out in a particular, thereby reducing timescales and costs;
- confirmation was sought and provided that the Roads Operations Manager would be asked to provide an update to Members at their next area business meeting on progress with works to a section of pavement on Dornoch Road, Bonar Bridge, in view of concerns around pedestrian safety;

- the challenges that existed in relation to the logistics and higher cost of tarring roads in North and West Sutherland and the need for a balance to be achieved across Sutherland in terms of works carried out; and
- specific concerns in relation to the condition of the road surface at the Kyle of Tongue Bridge.

The Committee **NOTED** the:-

- i. works completed on the approved prioritised list to date;
- ii. additional works identified and prioritised throughout the year; and
- iii. works still proposed for the 2026/27 financial year.

6. Winter Service Plan 2026/27 Plana Seirbheis a' Gheamhraidh 2026-27

There had been circulated Report No SCC/23/26 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Place.

During discussion, the following main points were raised:-

- confirmation was sought and provided that Members would be provided with details of the number of gritters and footpath tractors available in Sutherland for the forthcoming winter season and information on where they would be based in the area; information would also be provided on where footpath tractors had been based and utilised during the previous winter season;
- concern at the reliability of the gritting fleet, there having been a number of breakdowns last winter, and the need to consider how to deal more proactively with this issue; an assurance was provided that there was a rigorous inspection and maintenance regime in place in advance of the winter season and all vehicles met the required standards;
- a point as to whether there was a sufficient number of mechanics to deal with vehicle breakdowns during the winter given that some depots were not fully staffed; it was explained that assurances had been given to officers that a improved fleet service would be in place, however there were ongoing recruitment challenges including competition from the private sector;
- that Members would raise the above issues with fleet management and the position in relation to the reported closure of the Brora depot in respect of which they were not aware a decision had been taken;
- the difficulties associated with the closure of the B9176 Struie Road and access to Aulnamain during the previous winter, this having been raised at full Council with the responsibility being placed on the Area Committee; an assurance was therefore sought that external contractors were ready to be called upon at their earliest possible convenience for this route. It was confirmed Members concerns on this matter would be forwarded to the relevant officers with an instruction to ensure arrangements were in place for the forthcoming winter season;
- an explanation was sought and provided that winter routes classed as other and marked in green on the maps at appendix 2 of the report referred to low priority routes that would only be treated if and when resources permitted, and in respect of which there was no specific commitment to open these routes within any timescale;

- recording the disappointment of the community councils on the North Coast of Sutherland who had made an early request to meet with roads officers to discuss the Winter Service Plan prior to it being considered by the Committee, and requesting that arrangements be made for this meeting to be held going forward;
- an update was sought and provided on the measures that had been put in place for the forthcoming winter season to mitigate against the extreme winter conditions experienced last winter where it appeared the Council had been slow to react; this included redeployment between areas of vehicles and plant and investment in new and more reliable machinery, however a balance had to be achieved in terms of the affordability of investing in additional vehicles and equipment to deal with extreme weather events that may or may not happen;
- it would be helpful for Members to be provided with details of the outcome of the review of route priorities that had been carried out following the previous winter season; and
- in response to a query, an assurance was provided that it was unlikely the Service would deploy inexperienced drivers on gritters and that a response would be provided directly to Mr M Baird in relation to the specific case he had raised.

The Committee **APPROVED** the Winter Service Plan for 2026/27.

**7. Community Asset Transfer – Former Altnaharra Primary School and Grounds
Glusad So-mhaoin Coimhearsnachd – Seann Sgoil agus Raon-cluiche Allt na h-Eirbhe**

There had been circulated Report No SCC/22/26 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Place.

in discussion, Members expressed their support for the proposal, highlighting the level of funding secured and strong track record of the Altnaharra Community Trust SCIO.

The Committee **AGREED** the Community Asset Transfer request for the property and grounds comprising of the former Altnaharra Primary School and Grounds be sold to Altnaharra Community Trust SCIO at a nominal cost of £1, in line with the conditions set out in 8.2 of the report.

**8. Housing Repairs and Capital Report 01 April 2026 to 30 June 2026 Aithisg
Chàraidhean Taigheadais agus Calpa – 1 Giblean 2026 gu 30 Ògmhios 2026**

There had been circulated Report No SCC/24/26 by the Assistant Chief Executive - Place.

During discussion, it was confirmed that a review of the condition of garages in the area was ongoing and that a previous report to the Committee had provided information on both the number of garages and garage sites and those in Council tenant and private ownership, details of which could be provided if required.

Thereafter, and in response to a query, an update was sought and provided on staffing within the Sutherland Repairs Delivery Team and on the process for advertising and recruiting apprentices.

The Committee **NOTED** the information provided on housing performance in the period 1 April 2026 – 30 June 2026.

9. Short Term Let Control Area – Post Consultation Update **Sgìre Smachd Màil Gheàrr-ùine – Cunntas às Ùr às Dèidh Co-chomhairleachadh**

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

During discussion, the following main points were raised:-

- confirmation was sought and provided that existing short-term lets operating would not have their planning requirements altered by the designation of the Short Term Let Control Area;
- concern that only one community council had responded to the consultation and it was suggested that this was due to the fact other community councils had not met over the period of the six-week consultation period;
- concern that the number of responses to the consultation was not sufficient on which to base a decision and a proposal that the recommendations in the report should not be accepted;
- some community councils had taken the decision not to respond as a body on the basis the consultation had been widely publicised and to allow people within communities to comment on an individual basis; and
- it was considered that a full and detailed consultation had been carried out and widely advertised with the public having the opportunity to respond if they chose to do so and therefore the Committee should make a decision based on the information presented.

Mr J Murray moved not to agree the recommendations detailed in the report but on failing to find a seconder the motion fell.

The Committee:

- i. **NOTED** the consultation feedback and the potential implications that a STL Control Area will have on communities within Sutherland as set out in Appendix 2 and summarised in Sections 8, 9 and 10; and
- ii. **AGREED** to recommend to Economy and Infrastructure Committee that Sutherland be included within the proposed Highland Rural Short Term Let Control Area, should any decision to submit a proposal for designation to Scottish Ministers be taken.

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

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

In discussion, officers were thanked for bringing the Ullapool High ASG report to the Committee, and staff and pupils commended on the attainment set out in the report, particular highlights being primary attainment in listening and talking and positive pupil destinations for 16+.

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

11. Community Regeneration Funding Applications
Measadh Iarrtasan Aithisg Maoin Ath-bheothachadh Coimhearsnachd

Mr R Gale made a Transparency Statement in respect of this item on the grounds he had been liaising with the Friends of Clyne War Memorial Association. However, having applied the objective test, reviewed his position in relation to the item and any personal connection, he did not consider that he had an interest to declare.

There had been circulated Report No SCC/27/26 by the Assistant Chief Executive - Place.

In discussion, Members commented that it was important organisations made all efforts to secure match funding prior to applying to the Fund for the full grant amount, particularly in relation to some of the larger applications. It was recognised many communities had multiple projects ongoing and it was not always possible to secure match funding and some smaller organisations may not have the resources to do so.

Thereafter, Members requested that going forward and as part of the application process organisations be asked to provide more clarity on the action being taken to secure match funding.

Following further discussion on the individual projects, the Committee **AGREED** the applications presented for a funding award from the Community Regeneration Fund as follows:

Organisation	Project Title	Grant Approved
Lairg & District Learning Centre	The School House Hub	£ 24,964.70
Kinlochbervie Community Company	Loch Clash - Regeneration of Net Sheds	£ 24,000.00
Melness Church Community Organisation	Improving safety, security, community access and energy efficiency.	£ 26,000.00
Highland Council	Clyne War Memorial Refurbishment	£ 116,400.00

12. Dornoch Common Good Fund – 2025/26 Outturn and Q1 Monitoring Statement to 31 May 2026

Maoin Math Coitcheann Dhòrnaich – Fìor Shuidheachadh Deireannach 2025/26 agus Aithris Sgrùdaidh R1 gu 31 Cèitean 2026

There had been circulated Report No SCC/28/26 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Place.

The Committee **NOTED** the Quarter 4 Outturn 2025/26 and Quarter 1 (April to May) 2026/27 monitoring statement for the Dornoch Common Good Fund.

**13. Membership of Committees
Ballrachd Chomataidhean**

The Committee **AGREED** the following appointments:

- i. Dornoch BID – Mr J Murray;
- ii. Sutherland Local Access Forum – Ms M Hutchison and Ms L Niven;
- iii. Sutherland Sports Council – Mr R Gale; and
- iv. Trustee of Recreational Ground (The Meadows) in Royal Burgh of Dornoch – Mr J Murray.

**14. Ward 1 & 4 Discretionary Fund Approvals 25-26
Aontaidhean Maoin fo Ùghdarras Uàrdan 1 & 4 airson 2025–26**

The Committee **NOTED** the following awards:

North, West & Central Sutherland Ward Discretionary Budget applications approved 1st April 2026 – 19th August 2026

Lochinver Rural Training – Green Grow Pallet Project	£961.98
Assynt Food Larder – Continuation of Spring/Summer Provision	£1,501.00
Community Care Assynt – Activity Programme	£1,500
Assynt Development Trust – Culag Park improvements	£900
Lochinver Weed Whackers – Lochinver in Bloom	£1,230
Melness Community Church – Improving Facilities	£1,000
Lairg Community Association – Replacement Door	£948.17

East Sutherland & Edderton Ward Discretionary Budget applications approved 1st April 2026 – 19th August 2026

East Sutherland Angling Club – Brora Harbour	£655.29
Tykes – Young persons driving lessons	£750.00
Golspie Sutherland Football Club – All Weather Training	£972.00

15. Notices of Motion

Brathan Gluasaid

1. Having given due consideration to the Highland Camper Van and Motorhome Scheme since its introduction the Sutherland Area Committee has concluded that the scheme simply does not provide a practical solution to the volume of vehicles who seek to use the designated car parks in Sutherland. The two designated car parks in the County located at Durness and Golspie are both located close to registered camp sites that offer full facilities and comply with all of the safety regulations that are incumbent to commercial sites unlike the Council designated sites.

That being the case the Sutherland Area Committee seeks to restrict camper vans and mobile homes to daytime parking only with no overnight parking between the hours of 10pm and 8am. In addition, additional signage will be erected to advise camper van and motorhome owners of the locations of regulated sites close by. By imposing this restriction, it also brings Sutherland invitation to pay car parks in line with similar sites in the Highlands such as in Carrbridge.

Signed: Mr R Gale Mr M Baird
 Ms M Hutchison Mr J Murray

At this point, an amendment to the Motion was proposed by Ms L Niven and accepted by the Chair, as follows:

The two designated car parks in the County located at Durness and Golspie are both located close to registered camp sites that offer full facilities and comply with all of the safety regulations that are incumbent to commercial sites unlike the Council designated sites. That being the case the Sutherland Area Committee seeks to restrict camper vans and mobile homes to daytime parking only with no overnight parking between the hours of 10pm and 8am. In addition, additional signage will be erected to advise camper van and motorhome owners of the locations of regulated sites close by. By imposing this restriction, it also brings Sutherland invitation to pay car parks in line with similar sites in the Highlands such as in Carrbridge. The Council also notes that it agreed in December 2025 to undertake a review to produce a revised Parking Strategy across Highland and agrees that this should consider the issues around overnight parking in all Council car parks.

During discussion, the following main points were raised:-

- the amended motion was proposed on the basis that the issues around overnight parking had preceded the Highland Camper Van and Motorhome Scheme;
- the end result being sought by all Members was to prevent camper vans and mobile homes from parking overnight at the two designated car parks in Durness and Golspie on the basis they were unsuitable for such use;
- it was important that a wider review around overnight parking was undertaken at all Council car parks and this had been incorporated into the motion, as amended; and
- it was not within the Committee's remit to enforce the motion, as amended, and therefore it would require to be referred to Council as a starred item.

Decision

*The Committee **AGREED** the Motion, as amended.

16. Minutes

Geàrr-chunntas

The Committee **NOTED** the Minutes of the Sutherland County Committee held on 1 June 2026, which were approved by the Council on 25 June 2026.

The meeting concluded at 12.35pm.

ADDENDUM: ITEM 15: NOTICES OF MOTION

The decision is not competent as the Financial and Integrated Impact Assessments had not been completed for the amendment in accordance with Standing Order 13.12.