The Highland Council

Minutes of Meeting of the **Dingwall and Seaforth Area Committee** held in the Council Chamber, Council Offices, Dingwall on 24 August 2026 at 10.30 am.

Present:

Mr G MacKenzie
Mrs A MacLean
Mrs M Paterson

In attendance:

Ms L Bauermeister, Community Development Manager
Mr J McLean, Bereavement Services Project Manager
Mr G MacKenzie, Senior Maintenance Officer
Mr B Cumming, Senior Environmental Health Officer
Mr I Moncreiff, Roads Operations Manager
Ms R Ross, Committee Officer

Also in attendance:

Chief Inspector D 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 G MacKenzie in the Chair

1. Apologies for Absence
Leisgeulan

An Apology was intimated on behalf of Mr S Kennedy.

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

There were no Declarations of Interests/Transparency Statements.

3. Recess Powers
Cumhachdan Fosaidh

The Committee **NOTED** that the recess powers granted by the Council at its meeting on 25 June 2026 did not require to be exercised in relation to the business of the Dingwall and Seaforth Area Committee.

4. Police – Area Performance Summary
Poilis – Geàrr-chunntas Dèanadais Sgìreil

There had been circulated Report No DSA/13/26 by the North Area Commander.

Chief Inspector D. McAlpine provided an introduction, summarising the key areas of the report, including Road Safety and Road Crime, Anti-Social Behaviour, Acquisitive Crime, Protecting Vulnerable People, and Drug Supply Offenses.

During discussion, the following points were made:-

- it was highlighted that fraud had become more sophisticated with personal information gathered from social media being used to make scams more believable;
- it was queried why there were no longer annual consultations with Members and Community Councils on policing priorities. The Chief Inspector undertook to get back the Chair with the reasons for this;
- concern was expressed about the number of shoplifting incidents and the possibility that this could increase during the winter. This had a detrimental impact on small businesses;
- in response to a question, it was confirmed that there had been some incidents involving shoplifting gangs but these were uncommon and the majority of shoplifting incidents were perpetrated by individuals;
- thanks were extended to officers for carrying out their duties in a caring way;
- it was queried whether there were sufficient staffing levels in the area and, in response, it was clarified that there were fewer staff due to budget constraints but constant work was being done to ensure that there were enough staff available to deal with the volume of calls;
- the importance of providing Community Councils with accurate and up to date information on policing, was emphasised as this could affect public confidence in the Police.
- on the point being raised, it was confirmed that figures from Covid were still included within five-year averages which could cause these figures to show reductions in certain types of crime due to Covid lockdowns;
- it was queried whether the closure of local bank branches had resulted in an increase in fraud or had made it more difficult for police to liaise with banks;
- information was sought, and provided, on the time taken to respond to, and investigate shoplifting incidents; the improved missing persons protocols for looked-after young people; speeding and drug driving offenses; the reporting of rape and domestic abuse offenses and the support provided to victims; which organisations attended Workshops to Raise Awareness of Prevent (WRAP) and ACT Early meetings; and anti-social behaviour and the work of the Harm Prevention Officer;
- the monitoring of speeding in Conon Bridge had been well received by the public;
- it was highlighted that there had been a significant increase in certain types of crime and it was queried whether anything could be done by communities and Members to help mitigate this;
- in response to a question, it was clarified that there had been two reported incidents of Hate Aggravated Conduct in Dingwall and Seaforth in the previous year and four incidents in the current year; and
- the importance of reporting incidents to the Police was highlighted as, even when incidents were posted on social media, the Police may not be aware of them.

The Committee **NOTED** 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 – 31 March 2026.

5. Bereavement Services – Project Updates
Seirbheisean Luchd-Caoidh – Cunntasan às Ùr air Pròiseactan

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

During discussion, the following points were raised:-

- on the point being raised, it was confirmed that lairs in all three of the open cemeteries in the Ward could be pre-sold as they all had over 10 years of capacity remaining. The pre-sale of lairs was only stopped when cemeteries had less than 10 years capacity or less than 15 lairs remaining;
- it was queried whether information on the capacity of Urquhart and Urray cemeteries could be included in the next report as many Dingwall and Seaforth residents chose to be buried in those cemeteries. In response, it was confirmed that this information could be included in future reports. It was also clarified that there was currently over 26 years of capacity at Urquhart cemetery and over 10 years of capacity at Urray cemetery. It was further clarified that cemetery capacities were reported to all Area Committees as well as the Communities and Place Committee;
- in response to a query about the capital budget, it was confirmed that details of spending against this budget had been included in a report to the most recent Communities and Place Committee and the Bereavement Services Project Manager undertook to get back to Cllr MacLean with more detailed information;
- information was sought, and provided, on the waiting times at the Inverness Crematorium, the effects that the crematorium renovations were having on this and the possibility of building a new crematorium in Lochaber;
- in response to a question, it was confirmed that previously lairs had been sold in perpetuity although regulations had recently changed to mean that they were now sold for 25 years at a time meaning that unused lairs were returned to the Council; and
- in response to a request, the Bereavement Services Project Manager undertook to get back to Cllr Paterson with information regarding whether burials could still take place in St Clements Churchyard where lairs were already owned.

The Committee **NOTED** the current capacities the burial ground in the Dingwall and Seaforth area.

6. Housing Repairs and Capital Report – 1 April 2026 to 30 June 2026
Aithisg Chàraidhean is Calpa Taigheadais – 1 Gearran 2026 gu 30 Ògmhios 2026

There had been circulated Report No DSA/15/26 by the Assistant Chief Executive - Place

During discussion, the following points were raised:-

- the improving performance in non-emergency repairs was welcomed and positive feedback had been received from tenants on the quickness of repairs and helpfulness of staff. Information was sought, and provided, on the reasons for this improvement;
- in response to a question, it was clarified that more information on Environmental Capital Projects would be available in the following weeks. The Senior Maintenance Officer undertook to keep Members updated on the termination dates of these projects as soon as they were available;
- it was queried whether the improvement in re-letting times was due to Officers being able to access properties earlier. In response, it was confirmed that while it was not always possible to gain access to properties before they were void, the Housing Repairs team worked hard to gain access to properties and make repairs as soon as possible after they were vacated;
- in response to a question, it was confirmed that there were no significant waiting times for Aids and Adaptations assessments or works and, where larger jobs such as the installation of wet rooms had delays, this was usually due to pricing or contactor availability;
- it was requested that there be no reprofiling of the Environmental Capital Projects budgets as there were a large number of projects that local communities were keen to see taken forward such as fixing paths and replacing or repainting handrails; and
- information was sought, and provided, on garages, including the possibility of demolishing garages to create parking spaces, garage repairs and how unused garages were dealt with.

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

7. Environmental Health – Annual Report & Activity 2025/2026
Slainte Àrainneachdail – Aithisg Bhliadhnail & Gnìomhachd 2025/26

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

During discussion, the following points were raised:-

- there had been a full discussion on the subject of abandoned vehicles at the previous Communities and Place Committee and Members had requested for a further report on the matter come to the Committee meeting in November;
- it was queried what the process was for vehicles that were reported as abandoned but were not, later claimed or removed. In response, the importance of improving the website to help members of the public to understand what constituted an abandoned vehicle and how this should be reported, was emphasised;
- information was sought, and provided, on the process of making members of the public who reported an abandoned vehicle aware of what happened to that vehicle; the challenges associated with dealing with abandoned or

nuisance caravans; issues concerning dog control; and the potential effects of the Environmental Health Operational Plan being renewed every three years rather than annually;

- disappointment was expressed that it had taken three years to remove an abandoned vehicle from the Cromartie car park in Dingwall;
- attention was drawn to a car park in Dingwall where several abandoned caravans were taking up parking spaces. In response to a request, the Senior Environmental Health Officer undertook to organise a site visit for Members to better understand the difficulties in dealing with this issue;
- on the point being raised, it was confirmed that the report due to come to Communities and Place Committee in November would explore the possibility for provision of a storage area for nominally abandoned vehicles;
- in response to a request, the Senior Environmental Health Officer undertook to provide Members with an update on antisocial behaviour and abandoned vehicles in Bridge View and Sellar Place in Conon Bridge, prior to the next meeting of the Community Council. An offer of a Members' site visit covering these areas was extended;
- it was suggested that there should be and opportunity for people to purchase a permit to allowing for caravans, trailers and other vehicles to be parked in Council car parks;
- on the point being raised, it was confirmed that time spent by Environmental Health Officers on planning and licensing applications was tracked;
- in response to a question concerning the decrease in numbers of Fish and Shellfish Export Health Certificates, it was confirmed that there was a large amount of paperwork involved and that this could be done externally by approved vets; and
- on the point being raised, it was confirmed that National Assistance Funerals were a function performed by the Environmental Health team although this was not publicised.

The Committee is invited to **NOTED**:-

i. the scope and volume of work currently being delivered in the local area;
ii. local issues and current operational priorities;
iii. Highland wide issues impacting Environmental Health services; and
iv. the format and content of the report.

8. Winter Service Plan for 2026/27
Plana Seirbheis a' Gheamhraidh airson 2026/27

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

During discussion, information was sought and provided on the new arrangements for the provision of dedicated gritters

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

9. Dingwall Common Good Fund – Final Outturn 2025/26 and Q1 2026/27 Monitoring Report to 31 May 2026
Maoin Math Coitcheann Inbhir Pheofharain – Fìor Shuidheachadh Deireannach 2025/26 agus Aithisg Sgrùdaidh R1 2026/27 gu 31 Cèitean 2026

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

Having scrutinised the reports, the Committee **NOTED** the position of Dingwall Common Good Fund as shown in the 2025/26 Quarter 4 and 2026/27 Quarter 1 (from 1 April to 31 May 2026 only) monitoring statements.

10. Dingwall and Seaforth Ward Discretionary budget applications approved since last meeting
Iarrtasan buidseat fo Ùghdarras Uàrd Inbhir Pheofharain agus Shìophort air an aontachadh bho choinneamh mu dheireadh

The Committee **NOTED** that the following Dingwall and Seaforth Ward Discretionary Budget applications hade been approved since its last meeting.

i. James Support Group - Supporting the costs of advertising the monthly support group meetings in Dingwall - £500.00
ii. Dingwall Youth Forum - Improving the space for Young People in Dingwall Town Hall - £999.00
iii. Dingwall Community Council - Dingwall in Bloom - Floral Plantings around Dingwall - £1,000.00
iv. Maryburgh Community Council - Maryburgh in Bloom - £450.00

11. Minutes
Geàrr-chunntas

The Committee **NOTED** the Minutes of Meeting of the Dingwall and Seaforth Area Committee held on 25 May 2026 which were approved by the Council on 25 June 2026.

The meeting ended at 1pm.