

The Highland Council

Minutes of Meeting of the **City of Inverness Area Committee** held in the Council Chamber, Town House, Inverness on Thursday, 3 December 2015 at 10.30am.

Present:

Mrs H Carmichael
Mr I Brown
Mr R Balfour
Mr A Christie
Mr J Crawford
Mrs M Davidson
Dr J Davis
Mr N Donald
Mr K Gowans
Mr A Graham
Mr J Gray

Mr D Kerr
Mrs B McAllister
Mr K MacLeod
Mr F Parr
Mr T Prag
Mr G Ross
Mrs G Sinclair
Ms J Slater
Ms K Stephen
Mr H Wood

Officials in Attendance:-

Mr D Haas, Inverness City Area Manager
Mr S Dalgarno, Development Plans Manager, Development & Infrastructure
Ms A Tanner, Inverness Heritage Trust Project Officer, Development & Infrastructure
Ms T Urry, Area Community Services Manager, Community Services
Mr A McKinnie, Waste Operations Manager, Community Services
Mr P Finlayson, Education Quality Improvement Manager, Care & Learning Service
Mr K Masson, Policy Co-ordinator (Climate Change), Chief Executive's Office
Miss J MacLennan, Democratic Services Manager

Also in attendance:

Mr M Smith, Inverness BID

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

Mrs H Carmichael in the Chair

Preliminaries

Prior to the commencement of the formal business, the Provost and City Leader confirmed that a letter of thanks had been received from the Mayor of La Baule in which specific reference had been made to the lighting of the Ness Bridge in the colours of France which had shown solidarity with the country and its citizens following the recent attacks on 13 November in Paris.

The Provost and City Leader also conveyed the congratulations of the Committee to the staff of Inverness College who had recently won first prize in the 'Changing Colleges' section of the 'College Development Annual Awards' for transformational change in the Highlands.

Business

1. Apologies for Absence Leisgeulan

Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of Mrs C Caddick, Miss J Campbell, Mr A Duffy, Mr J Ford and Mr R Laird.

2. Declarations of Interest Foillseachaidhean Com-pàirt

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

Item 4 – Mr F Parr and Mr K Gowans

Item 7- Ms J Slater, Mr G Ross and Mr H Wood

Item 9 – Mr H Wood

Item 11 – Mr A Christie, Mr K MacLeod and Mr R Balfour

Item 15 – Mr J Gray, Mr A Graham and Mr K MacLeod

Mr D Kerr also declared a financial interest in relation to any items which might arise during discussion in regard to Council housing on the grounds of being a Council House tenant.

3. Inverness Business Improvement District Annual Performance Report Aithisg Deanadais Bhliadhnail Sgìre Leasachadh Gnothachais Inbhir Nis

There had been circulated Report No. CIA/57/15 dated 14 November 2015 by the Inverness City Area Manager which provided a summary of the activities of the Inverness Business Improvement District Ltd, operating as Inverness City Centre Business Improvement District (BID), for the period November 2014 to December 2015.

During discussion, Members raised the following issues:-

- the work which had been undertaken in regard to gull management was welcomed on the basis that it had made a significant difference to the City Centre;
- it would be helpful if further information could be provided in due course in relation to the economic benefit for local businesses following the recent Street Festival;
- the roles of the Coach Ambassador and Taxi Marshall had been very successful and thanks were conveyed to the individuals concerned;
- there was a need to highlight the poor condition of some buildings under private ownership within the City Centre on the basis that improvement was required wherever possible;
- BID had undertaken a number of initiatives over recent years and it would be helpful if the success of such initiatives could be quantified in a future report;
- mutual respect was imperative in the relationship between BID and the Council and in this regard there was a need to avoid instances of poor publicity by discussing any potential problems as and when they arose;

- displacement of gulls into residential areas was becoming an increasing problem and this needed to be considered in future, perhaps with the involvement of other agencies if necessary;
- there was a need to focus on the potential for second and third floor premises to be used for housing within the City Centre wherever possible;
- a report from the Director of Development and Infrastructure on the progress being made with regeneration activity within the City Centre would be helpful for a future meeting;
- a number of projects were currently being undertaken in the area and a report to update all Members on this activity would be helpful; and
- an update on the current position with regard to the Inverness Partnership should be submitted to a future meeting.

Thereafter, the Committee **ENDORSED** the work detailed in the report and **NOTED** the presentation which had been provided by Inverness BID representatives and the on-going development of partnership working.

4. Event Tourism – The Way Forward Tachartasan agus Feisean a’ Bhaile – Ag Obair ann an Com-pairteachas

Declarations of Interest – Mr F Parr and Mr K Gowans declared non-financial interests in relation to this item as Directors of High Life Highland but, having applied the test outlined in Paragraphs 5.2 and 5.3 of the Councillors’ Code of Conduct, concluded that their interests did not preclude their involvement in the discussion.

Mr K Gowans also declared a financial interest on the grounds that a family member was an employee of High Life Highland but, having applied the test outlined in Paragraphs 5.2 and 5.3 of the Councillors’ Code of Conduct, concluded that his interest did not preclude his involvement in the discussion.

There had been circulated Joint Report No. CIA/58/15 dated 23 November 2015 by the Director of Development and Infrastructure and Inverness City Area Manager which provided background on activity connected with making the City and Area a vibrant place for both local communities and visitors.

The report also reflected on the support provided by the Inverness Common Good Fund (ICGF) and Partners, as well as the outputs from the recent Events Tourism Charrette which had been led by Professor Joe Goldblatt of Queen Margaret University, Edinburgh.

During discussion, Members raised the following issues:-

- event tourism events had always had a very positive impact for the area and this needed to be highlighted;
- involvement of TBID in future would make this a more joint exercise and provide maximum benefit;
- there was a need to also recognise the smaller tourism events which often had a significant impact;

- a comprehensive and overarching report to highlight the considerable number of events being undertaken across the area should be submitted to a future meeting;
- development of a local Street Artist Programme, perhaps in conjunction with Eden Court, should be pursued;
- there should be a focus on identifying opportunities for contributions to help subsidise conferences and events wherever possible;
- alternative forms of advertising forthcoming events should also be considered;
- there were currently very few activities for tourists in the evenings and this should be addressed where possible;
- the co-ordination of conference and event planning was essential to ensure future success;
- in terms of future partnership working, there was a need to revisit and revise where necessary the previously agreed Events Action Plan;
- corporate sponsorship of the Hogmanay Event should be investigated and in this regard more information was sought on the economic return from this particular event;
- the area would have some of the best sporting facilities in the country in future and this had to be more widely advertised; and
- promotion of historic trails should be included in any future proposals.

Thereafter, the Committee **NOTED** the roles of the Council, Highlands & Islands Enterprise and other Partners, the progress made to date and the benefits which events could bring to the City of Inverness Area and its businesses.

The Committee also **APPROVED** the recommended approach to developing a strategy for the future development of events in Inverness and area and noted that progress would be reported early in 2016.

**5. Victorian Market Inverness – Action Plan – Market Management
Margadh Bhictorianach, Inbhir Nis – Plana-ghnìomh – Stiùireadh Margaide**

It was **AGREED TO DEFER** this item pending consideration of further additional information which had been received on the basis that it would be re-submitted to a meeting early in 2016.

**6. Town House Works Programme Phase 2, High Street, Inverness
Ceum 2 de Phrogram Obraichean Thaigh a' Bhaile, Ard-Shraid, Inbhir Nis**

There had been circulated Joint Report No. CIA/60/15 dated 12 November 2015 by the Director of Development and Infrastructure and the Inverness City Area Manager which sought approval to proceed to contract award to carry out comprehensive fabric works for Phase 2 to the Town House.

In this regard, it was confirmed that the works would include full stone repairs and replacement, mortar re-pointing, roof repairs, rainwater goods renewal, window repairs and replacements.

During discussion, thanks were conveyed to the Officers who had been working on the project.

It was also suggested that alternative car parking arrangements should be identified if the proposals were to impact on the current Town House Car Park in order to minimise disruption for all concerned.

Thereafter, the Committee **AGREED** in principle, and subject to full Council agreement, that work be done to proceed to contract award for the repairs outlined in Phase 2 at a cost of £1,752,908.16, to proceed with Phase 2 including the Castle Street elevation, to proceed to tender for Phase 3 in 2016 at a total estimated project cost of £4,200,000 for all three phases and to proceed with third party funding applications with Historic Scotland.

7. Inverness Town Twinning Committee – Action and Financial Plan for 2016 Comataidh Baile-ceile Inbhir Nis – Plana Gníomh agus Ionmhais airson 2016

Declarations of Interest – Ms J Slater, Mr G Ross and Mr H Wood declared non-financial interests in relation to this item as members of the Town Twinning Committee but, having applied the test outlined in Paragraphs 5.2 and 5.3 of the Councillors’ Code of Conduct, concluded that their interests did not preclude their involvement in the discussion.

It was noted that the Inverness Town Twinning Committee existed to give substance to the Council’s long-established policy commitment to maintain town twinning partnerships and activity programmes with Augsburg, St Valery and La Baule. These three civic partners had very different community profiles and the twinning relationships had differing and fluctuating emphasis. Forward planning of activity was not straightforward, calling for budgetary planning which combined a blend of commitment and discretionary flexibility and proposals currently under discussion indicated that 2016 could be a busy year.

In this regard, there had been circulated Report No. CIA/61/15 dated 7 November 2015 by the Inverness City Area Manager which reviewed activity prospects and presented proposals and budget requirements for consideration and approval.

The Committee **APPROVED** a budget allocation to the Inverness Town Twinning Committee of £5,000 from the 2015/16 Inverness Common Good Fund Twinning Budget, an allocation of £1,000 from the 2015/16 Twinning budget and that the Provost, the City Area Manager or a Ward Manager and the Civic and Facilities Team Leader should accept an invitation to visit Augsburg as detailed in the report.

It was also **AGREED** that the Provost should extend an invitation to the Mayor of Augsburg as detailed in the report, including agreement to the estimated costs.

It was further **NOTED** that a further £4,000 would require to be allocated from the 2016/17 Twinning Budget to the Inverness Town Twinning Committee and that an application would be made for a Civic Dinner in respect of the Visit by the Mayor of Augsburg which had been set for 2016.

8. Inverness City Centre Parking Report and Draft Action Plan Solar Parcaidh ann am Meadhan Baile Inbhir Nis

Members were reminded that, at the City of Inverness Area Committee meeting on 2 September 2014, it had been agreed that a comprehensive and strategic study of parking provision on the west side of the River Ness should be undertaken. The scope of the study had also been widened to include the City Centre as a whole.

In this regard, there had been circulated Report No. CIA/62/15 dated 16 November 2015 by the Director of Development and Infrastructure which provided a review of the outcomes of the study and a draft Action Plan for agreement.

During discussion, Members raised the following issues:-

- thanks should be conveyed to the Officers concerned for the comprehensive and detailed report which had been produced;
- there was a need to take action in relation to Huntly Street which had been designed as a shared space;
- clear and appropriate signage was essential, especially for visitors to the City;
- more information in relation to permit parking was needed;
- there had been a loss of parking on both sides of the river with resultant displacement which had to be assessed/quantified;
- it was a concern that some offices had relocated out of the City Centre due to a lack of parking facilities;
- cognisance should be taken of forthcoming housing development which might add to the parking problems;
- consideration should be given to the installation of Pay and Display meters wherever possible;
- more information on the methodology used for the surveys would have been helpful;
- it was essential that the Community Council for the area was kept informed of the proposals;
- the positive impact which the development had had on the use of the river was welcomed;
- there was a need for a focus on recreational vehicles and their impact on parking in the area;
- second tier parking in the Council Car Park should perhaps be considered as an option for the future;
- better signage and more parking bays for disabled drivers were essential;
- the possibility of using Ardress Street for additional parking at all times of the year should be considered; and
- it should be recognised that the current problems were being incurred because of changes which had been requested to the original proposals.

Thereafter, the Committee **AGREED** the findings of the Inverness Parking Study and Draft Action Plan and, as part of the new Decriminalised Parking Enforcement Project, to the publication of Traffic Regulation Orders and any

associated Permit Parking Orders in respect of Huntly Street Pay and Display spaces, recognising the outcomes of the Safety Audit and the need for public consultation on the proposals and any mitigation.

**9. Cycling, Walking and Safer Streets Update
Program Rothaireachd, Coiseachd agus Sraidean nas Sabhailte**

Declaration of Interest – Mr H Wood declared a non-financial interest in relation to this item as a member of the Highland Cycling Club but, having applied the test outlined in Paragraphs 5.2 and 5.3 of the Councillors' Code of Conduct, concluded that his interest did not preclude his involvement in the discussion.

There had been circulated Report No. CIA/63/15 dated 16 November 2015 by the Director of Development and Infrastructure which invited approval of the projects delivered through the Scottish Government funding for Cycling, Walking and Safer Streets for the City of Inverness area as set out in Appendix 1 to the report.

The Committee **APPROVED** the Cycling Walking and Safer Streets/Safer Routes to School Project as detailed in Appendix 1 to the report.

It was also **NOTED** that the Road Safety Unit would continue to work with Schools to develop further Safer Routes To School Projects for future years.

**10. Culloden Muir Conservation Area Designation, Character Appraisal and Management Plan
Ainmeachadh Sgìre Ghleidhteachais, Measadh Caractair agus Plana Stiuridh Blar Chuil Lodair**

There had been circulated Report No. CIA/64/15 dated 2 November 2015 by the Director of Development and Infrastructure which presented the final post consultation proposals for the new Culloden Muir conservation area designation and the final draft of the Conservation Area Character Appraisal and Management Plan.

During discussion, Members raised the following issues:-

- there was a need to thank the Officers concerned for the work and significant amount of research which had been undertaken;
- it had to be recognised that this work was of international significance and would afford the area the protection which it deserved;
- protection of Culloden Battlefield and the surrounding area was imperative for both past and future generations; and
- the contributions of local residents and pressure groups in highlighting important issues had to be highlighted.

Thereafter, the Committee **APPROVED** the new Conservation Area Designation and the formal advertising and notification to Scottish Ministers and the Culloden Muir Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan (Appendix 1 to the report) as planning guidance to be a material consideration in the determination of any future planning applications within the Culloden Muir Conservation Area Boundary.

11. Housing Performance Report – 1 April to 30 September 2015
Aithisg Dèanadais a thaobh Taigheadais – 1 Giblean gu 30 Sultain 2015

Declarations of Interest – Mr A Christie declared a non-financial interest in this item as General Manager of the Citizens Advice Bureau and Mr R Balfour and Mr K MacLeod declared non-financial interests as members of the Citizens Advice Bureau but, having applied the test outlined in Paragraphs 5.2 and 5.3 of the Councillors' Code of Conduct, concluded that their interests did not preclude their involvement in the discussion.

There had been circulated Report No. CIA/65/15 dated 16 November 2015 by the Director of Community Services which provided information on how the Housing Section had performed in relation to the Scottish Social Housing Charter and other performance indicators during the first half of 2015/16.

During discussion, and with reference to average re-let times, it was suggested that further information should be provided in future reports in regard to the current situation within Inverness West.

Thereafter, the Committee otherwise **NOTED** the information which had been provided on housing performance for the period from 1 April to 30 September 2015.

12. Housing Revenue Account Capital Programme for Inverness Area 2016/17
Program Calpa Cunntas Teachd-a-steach Taigheadais airson Sgìre Inbhir Nis 2016/17

There had been circulated Report No. CIA/66/15 dated 16 November 2015 by the Director of Community Services which outlined the resources available to undertake capital investment to the Council's housing stock in the Inverness Area and recommended capital investment projects for approval in 2016/17 following Member consultation.

During discussion, Members raised the following issues:-

- in future, there was a need to undertake capital investment on the basis of need as opposed to the current system;
- it would be helpful if Officers could attend Ward Meetings in order to take cognisance of local knowledge from Members;
- further information on works to the external fabric of buildings, including gutter replacements/cleaning, should be submitted to a future meeting and consideration should be given to other funding options wherever possible; and
- the prevalence and eradication of Japanese Knotweed was becoming a real issue in some Wards and needed to be addressed.

Thereafter, the Committee **NOTED** the resources available to undertake capital investment to the Council's housing stock in the Inverness Area and **APPROVED** the capital investment projects for 2016/17.

**13. Street Naming – New Development in Inverness Ness-side
Ainmeachadh Sraide – Leasachadh Ur Taigheadais ann an Taobh Nis
Loch Nis**

Members were invited to homologate the new street names which had been agreed at the Inverness Ness-side Ward Business Meeting.

In this regard, it was confirmed that the streets were part of the Ness Castle development and the names followed the theme of Highland Castles.

Ness Castle Drive was also the new name for the existing road providing access to the Castle.

The Committee **HOMOLOGATED** the naming of the streets as follows:-

1. Mey Avenue (Craobhraid Mey)
2. Dunrobin Grove (Doire Dhùn Robain)
3. Lochindorb Drive (Dràibh Loch an Doirb)
4. Skibo Place (Ceàrn Sgiobaill)
5. Eilean Donan Road (Rathad Eilean Donnain)
6. Urquhart Street (Sràid Urachardain)
7. Kilravock Gardens (Gàrradh Chill Rathaig)
8. Inverlochry Crescent (Corran Inbhir Lòchaidh)
9. Dornoch Road (Rathad Dhòrnaich)
10. Carbisdale Gardens (Gàrradh Chàrbasdail)
11. Ness Castle Drive (Dràibh Chaisteal Nis)

**14. Inverness Ness-side Ward Discretionary Funding
Maoineachadh fo Ughdarras Uard Taobh Nis Inbhir Nis**

The Committee **APPROVED** expenditure over £10k for Ward Projects as follows -

Play Equipment for Holm Park play area - £15,000

In this regard, it was confirmed that Ward Members had been consulted and were in agreement with the proposal.

**15. Inverness Common Good Fund
Maoin Math Coitcheann Inbhir Nis**

Declarations of Interest – Mr J Gray declared a non-financial interest in relation to this item on the basis that a family member worked for the Blythswood Trust and Mr A Graham and Mr K MacLeod declared non-financial interests as members of the Blythswood Trust but, having applied the test outlined in Paragraphs 5.2 and 5.3 of the Councillors' Code of Conduct, concluded that their interests did not preclude their involvement in the discussion.

Annual Report 2014/15

Fior Shuidheachadh Buidseit 2014/15

There had been circulated Joint Report No. CIA/67/15 dated 20 November 2015 by the Director of Finance and the Inverness City Area Manager which presented the audited accounts for the Financial Year 2014/15.

In this regard, it was confirmed that expenditure was within budget and income from both investments and commercial rents was higher than expected. Also, fewer reserves than anticipated had had to be realised to fund major projects which included important ongoing work on major Inverness assets, such as the Town House and 1-5 Church Street.

The Committee thanked Officers for the information which had been presented and otherwise **NOTED** the Final Monitoring Report and Balance Sheet for the Inverness Common Good Fund as at 31 March 2015.

Financial Monitoring

Sgrùdadh Ionmhasail

There had been circulated Report No. CIA/68/15 dated 13 November 2015 by the Inverness City Area Manager which presented the expenditure monitoring position for the Inverness Common Good Fund as of 31 October 2015 and the projected year end position.

The Committee **NOTED** the financial monitoring report as presented.

It was also **NOTED** that maintenance of the Ness Islands footpath was to be undertaken and this was welcomed.

Grants and Capital Projects

Pròiseactan Tabhartais agus Calpa

There had been circulated Report No. CIA/69/15 dated 18 November 2015 by the Inverness City Area Manager which set out the current applications for funding to be determined and the current status of capital projects.

In this connection, there had been circulated separately a copy of supporting documentation as Booklet A.

The Committee **NOTED** the current status of capital projects and **AGREED** as follows:-

Blythswood Care – £20,000 towards the Inverness Foodbanks;

Calman Trust – £21,308 subject to the position being monitored to ensure overall improvement.

16. Carbon CLEVER Community Grant Fund 2015/16
Sgeama Thabhartasan Coimhearsnachd Càrboin Ciallaich 2015/16

There had been circulated Report No. CIA/70/15 dated 17 November 2015 by the Head of Policy and Reform which set out the applications received for the Carbon CLEVER Community Grant Fund in Inverness for 2015/16 and detailed the background to the Fund, together with a summary of applications, the assessments and funding recommendations.

The Committee **AGREED** the funding recommendations from the Carbon CLEVER Community Grant Fund as below:-

| Ref. | Applicant Organisation | Recommended Award |
|--------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------|
| 11793 | Aulnaskiach Dell | 3,550 |
| 11803 | Inverness Tennis & Squash Club | 20,350 |
| | Total | £23,900 |

It was also **AGREED** to promote a final round of funding for the current financial year (2015/16).

17. Minutes
Geàrr-chunntas

The following Minutes had been circulated for noting or approval as appropriate:-

- i. City of Inverness Area Committee held on 10 September and Special Meeting of the Committee held on 22 October 2015 – **NOTED**
- ii. Inverness Events and Festivals Working Group held on 8 October 2015 – **APPROVED**; and
- iii. Inverness Common Good Fund Grants Sub-Committee held on 9 November 2015 – **APPROVED**.

18. Exclusion of the Public
As-dunadh a' Phobail

The Committee **RESOLVED** that, under Section 50A(4) of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973, the public should be excluded from the meeting for the following item on the grounds that it involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraphs 6 and 9 of Part 1 of Schedule 7A of the Act.

19. Inverness Common Good Account Sites and Premises Transaction
Report
Laraich Chunntasan agus Aithisg Gnothachais Maoin Math Choitcheann Inbhir Nis

There had been circulated to Members only Report No. CIA/71/15 dated 12 November 2015 by the Head of Property Partnerships which summarised the property transactions recently approved by the Head of Property Partnerships, under the Highland Council's Scheme of Delegation, after consultation with Local Members as appropriate and in accordance with policy, together with a

statement on the current position in respect on Inverness Common Good fund rents and tenant arrears, if any.

The Committee **NOTED** the terms of the report as circulated.

It was also **AGREED** that a Briefing should be undertaken for Members of the Committee on the background to and administration of Inverness Common Good Fund rents.

The meeting ended at 3.05pm.