

## **The Highland Council**

Minutes of Meeting of the **Planning, Development and Infrastructure Committee** held in the Council Chamber, Council Headquarters, Glenurquhart Road, Inverness on Wednesday, 11 May 2016 at 10.30 a.m.

### **Present**

Mrs H Carmichael	Mrs I McCallum
Mr B Clark	Mrs M Paterson (Substitute)
Dr I Cockburn	Mr T Prag
Mr G Farlow	Mr M Rattray
Mr C Fraser (Substitute)	Mr I Renwick
Mr M Finlayson	Mr M Reiss
Mr M Green	Mr G Rimell
Mr R Greene	Mr R Saxon
Mr B Lobban	Dr A Sinclair
Mr T MacLennan	Mr H Wood

### **Non-Members also present:**

Mrs J Barclay	Mr B Fernie
Mr A Baxter	Mrs D Mackay
Mrs I Campbell	Mr D Mackay
Mrs M Davidson	

### **Officials in attendance:**

Mr S Black, Director of Development and Infrastructure  
Mr M MacLeod, Head of Planning and Building Standards  
Mr C Howell, Head of Infrastructure  
Mr F MacDonald, Head of Property Services  
Mr A McCann, Economy and Regeneration Manager  
Mr A Maguire, Head of Development and Regeneration  
Mr S Dalgarno, Development Plans Manager  
Mr R Gerring, Transport Planning Manager  
Mr D Jones, Area Planning Manager North  
Ms N Wallace, Environment Manager  
Mr M Mitchell, Service Finance Manager  
Mr E Boyd, Principal Engineer Energy & Engineering  
Mr M Smith, Principal Engineer and Team Leader - Flood Team  
Mr D Sharp, Graduate Engineer, Flood Risk Management Team  
Mr G Youngson, Acting Property Manager  
Mr K MacInnes, Economic Adviser  
Mr C Simpson, Tourism Co-ordinator  
Dr S Turnbull, Coastal Planning Officer  
Ms K Lyons, Principal Solicitor (Planning)  
Miss J MacLennan, Principal Administrator  
Mr A MacInnes, Administrative Assistant  
Mr S Taylor, Administrative Assistant

### **Also in attendance:**

Mr B Dick, Director, BT Scotland (Item 3)

Mr S Robertson, Director, Highlands and Islands Enterprise (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.

## **Dr A Sinclair in the Chair**

### **Business**

#### **1. Apologies for Absence**

##### **Liesgeulan**

Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of Mr J Crawford, Mr J Gordon, Mr J Gray and Mr G Phillips.

#### **2. Declarations of Interest**

##### **Foillseachaidhean Com-pàirt**

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

- Item 5 – Dr A Sinclair (non-financial) and Mr G Farlow (financial)
- Item 10 – Mr T Prag and Dr A Sinclair (both non-financial)
- Item 17 – Mr G Farlow and Mr R Saxon (both non-financial)
- Item 18 – Mr G Farlow and Mr R Greene (both non-financial)
- Item 19 – Mr T Prag and Dr A Sinclair (both non-financial)
- Item 20 – Mr G Farlow, Mr M Reiss and Mr R Saxon (all non-financial)
- Item 23 – Mr M Green (financial)

At this point in the meeting, the Chair drew attention to an Energy Exhibition by the Principal Engineer Energy & Engineering taking place in Committee Room 1 during the morning and early afternoon and invited Members to attend.

The Chair also highlighted that a number of staff from the Development and Infrastructure Service had left the Council since the previous meeting of the Committee through the voluntary redundancy programme and, on behalf of the Committee, expressed appreciation at their work over the years and wished them well in the future.

Thereafter, the Committee **NOTED** and welcomed that:-

- Wester Ross had recently been awarded Biosphere Reserve status by The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO);
- Approval for European funding for Employability and Business Growth activity was secured at the end of March and this had enabled the Development and Infrastructure Service to launch its Graduate Placement Grant, Employment Grant Scheme and Youth Training Scheme. In addition, two procurement exercises would shortly take place:
  - to appoint providers to deliver employability support services for young people and adults seeking to progress towards and into work; and

- for specialist business advisory services to complement the core Business Gateway service available for growing businesses.
- the Highland LEADER programme had recently been launched and would provide an opportunity for enterprises and groups to apply for funding.

### **3. Presentation – BT Scotland Taisbeanadh – BT Alba**

A presentation was made by Mr Brendan Dick, Director, BT Scotland providing an update on the current rollout of superfast broadband across the Highlands, during which he outlined the targets set by the Scottish Government to deliver fibre optic broadband across the country and highlighted the opportunities superfast broadband could bring to rural communities and small businesses. He drew attention to the higher than national average take-up of next generation broadband in Highland and summarised the deployment programme for increased coverage in the area during 2016.

During discussion, the following points were made:-

- the Council's previous work in relation to the Integrated Services for Digital Network (ISDN) and its collaboration with Highlands and Islands Enterprise (HIE) on broadband were highlighted;
- concern was expressed regarding the lack of information and availability of services in some regions within BT commercial areas and that funding could be used to better inform individuals experiencing problems;
- emphasis should be made on the demand for superfast broadband in the Highlands, particularly in remote areas;
- concern was expressed regarding the poor standard of repairs to the road network following construction work in connection with the installation of cabling;
- BT's recent announcement that it was to recruit 35 engineers in the Highlands and Islands was welcomed;
- concern was expressed regarding the length of time it could take in some rural areas to have a phone line reinstalled in homes which had been disconnected;
- the potential for having a dedicated team of call centre staff who could be briefed regularly on potential issues within remote and rural areas was highlighted;
- there had been a significant drop in broadband speeds over Christmas and New Year in Skye and, whilst the installation of cabinets in the area was welcomed, concern was expressed that some communities might miss out on coverage due to their distance;
- the opportunity for facilities companies, including water and roads, to work together with BT during the installation of fibre optic cabling was highlighted;
- the installation of fibre optic cabling in areas lacking in suitable coverage should be mandatory when granting planning permission to future-proof new housing developments;
- concern was expressed that small businesses in Nairn attempting to take up superfast broadband had not been given a clear indication as to when the service would be available and that customers had not been directed to the information available on HIE's website and the Think Broadband website;

- the loss of service for extended periods of time during adverse weather conditions and delays experienced in reconnecting households was highlighted;
- concern was expressed regarding the quality of response provided by call centres during adverse weather;
- the take up of broadband by small businesses was highlighted and reassurance was sought that measures were in place to check the validity of requests for services by individuals claiming to be a small business; and
- reassurance was sought that small communities would benefit from the rollout of superfast broadband as their sustainability depended on it.

The Chair having thanked Mr Dick for his attendance at the meeting and his presentation, the Committee otherwise **NOTED** the presentation.

#### 4. **Capital Expenditure Monitoring for Major Projects to 31 March 2016** **Sgrùdadh Caiteachais Chalpa airson Phròiseactan Mòra gu 31 Màrt 2016**

There had been circulated Report No. PDI/21/16 by the Director of Development and Infrastructure which invited Members to approve the capital expenditure monitoring position for the period to 31 March 2016 for all major projects over £1million.

During discussion, the following comments were made:-

- a request was made for figures relating to the amount of interest paid on borrowing to fund individual capital projects. In response, Members were advised that this would be difficult as loan repayments were not made on a project by project basis and that the query could be raised under a report on treasury management strategy to be discussed at the meeting of the Council the following day;
- whilst appreciation was expressed at the completion of Stage 1 of the Kinnairdie Link Road, Dingwall, attention was drawn to the erection of an electrical box in front of the gardens at the County Buildings Junction and a request was made for this to be moved;
- the progression of construction works to replace the Muir of Ord Railway Bridge and the commencement of Stage 1 of the Inverness West Link were welcomed by Members;
- whilst concern had been expressed at the delay to the Kingussie Office rationalisation, it was explained that the entire roof of the building required replacing following an inspection by an engineer and that this had necessitated a reapplication of listed building consent which was subsequently granted;
- the Council's building programme had benefitted the Highlands and kept many developers in work, particularly with regard to the affordable housing programme, and whilst it had been a good time to borrow, given the low interest rates, cash reserves had been well utilised to minimise borrowing for capital projects; and
- with regard to reference within the report to Wick Office, the Director of Development and Infrastructure confirmed that works on this project were estimated to be completed in late 2016.

The Committee **APPROVED** the capital expenditure monitoring position for the period to 31 March 2016 for all major projects over £1million.

**5. Scottish Government Housing Investment Programme  
Prògram Airgead-Tasgaidh Taigheadais Riaghaltas na h-Alba**

**Declarations of Interest**

**Dr A Sinclair declared a non-financial interest in this item as a member of Lochalsh and Skye Housing Association but, having applied the test outlined in Paragraphs 5.2 and 5.3 of the Councillors' Code of Conduct, concluded that her interest did not preclude her from taking part in the discussion.**

**Mr G Farlow declared a financial interest in this item as a Council house tenant but, in terms of the dispensation granted by the Standards Commission, remained to participate in the discussion.**

There had been circulated Report No. PDI/22/16 by the Director of Development and Infrastructure which updated Members on the Scottish Government's Housing Investment Programme for 2016/17 and outlined the Highland Council's funding and development strategy to meet this programme and the Scottish Government's target of 50,000 new affordable homes over the next five years.

During discussion, the following comments were made:-

- in the context of low demand in Caithness for affordable housing, there was a high number of buy to let properties in the area which were currently vacant and that money being used on constructing new housing could be better spent on refurbishing existing empty properties;
- it was highlighted that housing associations received different grant rates compared to local authorities. In response, it was suggested that it was easier for local authorities to borrow money through their own borrowing methods than it was for housing associations to borrow in the private sector;
- there was a hidden demand for housing in Sutherland for affordable housing and the figure of 3% quoted within the report possibly referred to the area in and around the A9 on the east coast and did not reflect the real demand within the area;
- more should be done to encourage people to move and repopulate areas of Sutherland where schools were being mothballed; and
- frustration was expressed at the lack of available land being put forward by developers for housing and that the current situation had necessitated the use of existing council housing stock. It was suggested that ways of encouraging developers to bring forward land identified within the Inner Moray Firth Local Development Plan for development should be investigated.

The Committee **NOTED** the new affordable housing investment programme and supply targets as set out by the Scottish Government and **AGREED** to the new financial parameters for the delivery of new council houses as set out in section 4.2 of the report.

**6. Property Revenue Maintenance Budget for 2016/17 – Proposed Budget Allocation**  
**Buidseat Obair-ghlèidhidh Teachd-a-steach Seilbhe airson 2016/17 – Riarachadh Buidseit a Thathar a’ Moladh**

There had been circulated Report No. PDI/23/16 by the Director of Development and Infrastructure which set out proposals for the allocation of the 2016/17 Property Revenue Maintenance Budget using the same basis as has been adopted in previous financial years.

A request was made for a copy of the report to be submitted to local committees. In response, the Director of Development and Infrastructure advised that the report was already regularly submitted to Ward Business Meetings. Following a further request, the Chair advised that should it be considered appropriate in the future then the current arrangement could be reviewed.

The Committee **APPROVED** the proposed work categories, budget allocations and project proposals for the 2016/17 Property Revenue Maintenance Budget.

**7. Planning Performance Framework and Quarter 4 Performance Review**  
**Frèam Dèanadas Dealbhadh agus Ath-bhreithneachadh Dèanadais Cairteil 4**

There had been circulated Report No. PDI/24/16 by the Director of Development and Infrastructure which advised Members on the delivery of the Development Management, Building Standards and the Development Plan services for the last Quarter of 2015/16.

The Committee **NOTED** the performance updates for the Development Management, Building Standards and the Development Plans teams.

**8. Service Structure Review**  
**Ath-sgrùdadh air Structar Seirbheis**

There had been circulated Report No. PDI/25/16 by the Director of Development and Infrastructure which set out restructuring of areas of the Service to realise savings following voluntary redundancy requests which had been approved.

A request was made for a copy of the proposed management structure at appendix 1 to the report to be circulated to Members including the names of officers and their contact details.

The Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the report; and
- ii. **AGREED** that a copy of the proposed management structure including the names of officers and their contact details to be circulated to Members.

**9. Local and National Statutory Performance Indicators 2014/15**  
**Comharran Coileanaidh Reachdail Ionadail agus Nàiseanta 2014/15**

There had been circulated Report No. PDI/26/16 by the Director of Development and Infrastructure which advised that following the report presented to the

Highland Council on 10 March 2016 detailing the Local Statutory Performance Indicators 2014/15, this report provided specific information on Development and Infrastructure performance indicators.

During discussion, the following comments were made:-

- whilst the report had indicated that there had been an improvement in the reduction of the cost of core paths, this did not necessarily mean the Council had been more efficient with resources and this could be attributed to a reduction in budget arising from the loss of personnel from the Council's Access Team; and
- in highlighting the increase in cost per participant for Rangers guided walks, it was suggested that a review into the increase in charges for activities should be explored.

The Committee **NOTED** the out-turn of Statutory Performance Indicators for 2014/15 and, where relevant, their national benchmark position.

## **10. Business Gateway Slighe Gnothachais**

**Declarations of Interest – As Directors of the Board of Highland Opportunity Ltd, Mr T Prag and Dr A Sinclair each declared a non-financial interest in this item but, having applied the test outlined in Paragraphs 5.2 and 5.3 of the Councillors' Code of Conduct, each concluded that their interest did not preclude them from taking part in the discussion.**

There had been circulated Report No. PDI/27/16 by the Director of Development and Infrastructure which updated Members on performance with the Business Gateway contract for Quarter 4, Financial Year 2015/16.

During discussion, the following comments were made:-

- emphasis was made on maintaining the same quality of support Business Gateway currently provided to businesses during the transfer of Highland Opportunity Limited to the Council;
- concern was expressed regarding the future of the Enterprise Europe Network following the conclusion of its current contract in December 2016 and reassurance was sought that this service would continue;
- an increase in businesses accessing general business advice surgeries in Badenoch and Strathspey was welcomed; and
- concern was expressed regarding HIE's communication with local companies during their transfer into HIE's growth programme.

The Committee **NOTED** the Business Gateway performance for the Operational Year 2015/16.

## **11. Tourism, Events and Film Update Leasachadh Turasachd**

There had been circulated Report No. PDI/28/16 by the Director of Development and Infrastructure which summarised the work undertaken by the Council's

Tourism and Film Unit and proposed changes to its operations including the renewal of a Service Delivery Agreement with VisitScotland for 2016-17.

In speaking to the report, the Tourism Co-ordinator advised that actual 2015/16 spend of just under £45k and proposed 2016/17 spend of £50k had been omitted from the table at Appendix 1; however, these figures had been incorporated within the total spends specified within the table.

During discussion, the following comments were made:-

- the importance of Council officer attendance at cruise industry trade shows to attract potential business opportunities was emphasised;
- concern was expressed regarding a lack of updates on proposed improvements to infrastructure at Portree harbour as cruise ships found it difficult to reach the quay during bad weather, resulting in the loss of potential business. It was suggested that the Council should take a lead in making improvements and, in response, the Chair suggested that these concerns be raised with the Harbours Management Board;
- the report highlighted the importance of tourism and film to the economy of the Highlands, particularly in remote and fragile areas;
- the successful marketing of the North Coast 500 route was highlighted and it was suggested that the importance of attracting business from users of the route should be emphasised to local communities and businesses. It was also suggested that specific signage be displayed to direct those following the route and consideration be given to the provision of public toilets and litter picking along the route. It was felt that consideration should be given to a report being submitted to this Committee on initiatives to replicate the success of the North Coast 500 route in other parts of the Highlands, perhaps encompassing the Western Isles and Perthshire for example.
- more should be done to emphasise the UNESCO designations afforded to the North West Highlands Geopark and Wester Ross Biosphere, particularly given the upsurge in tourists from China to Europe as the most common destination for them;
- the success of hosting the Scottish Open Golf tournament at Castle Stuart and the benefits it had brought to the Highlands was emphasised;
- reference was made to the fantastic film and television coverage in the Highlands which attracted tourists to the area. However, whilst this was welcomed particularly in rural areas, the infrastructure was not necessarily adequate to cope with the influx of large numbers of people. Consideration should be given to the Council working with HIE and VisitScotland to help local communities develop local infrastructure so that facilities were ready and open earlier in the season. Also, in the marketing of iconic film/television locations in Highland, more should be done to promote responsible tourism;
- the Council should lobby Highland MPs for tax breaks for the film and television industry for filming in the Highlands as companies would often go to Ireland to film due to the lower tax they would pay;
- a notable success in cruise tourism was the increased interest in Fort William as a cruise destination with a significant number of cruise calls planned for 2017. It was advised that a great deal of credit for this should go to a small group of volunteers who had raised money for the provision of pontoons. However, as there was a shortfall in funding for the pontoons, it



- was hoped that no individual volunteers would be required to pay off any shortfall in funding as this would deter volunteers in future;
- reference was made to the significant economic returns the UCI Mountain Bike World Cup in Fort William and the World Orienteering Championships held jointly in Highland and Moray brought to the area. Information on the economic returns to the area from Cruise tourism was requested as well as information on the destinations of coach trips provided for cruise ship passengers, so as to allow local shops, restaurants etc to be prepared. In response, while regional figures were not known, Cruise Scotland had estimated that Cruise tourism brought economic returns to Scotland of around £60m; and
  - XpoNorth Conference, which was a creative industries event, was being held from 7 to 9 June, 2016 in Eden Court, Inverness.

Thereafter, the Committee:-

- i. **AGREED** to authorise the Director of Development and Infrastructure to conclude a Service Delivery Agreement with VisitScotland for 2016/17 that incorporated the activities detailed in the report;
- ii. **APPROVED** a payment to VisitScotland of up to a maximum of £70k for financial year 2016-17 including £60k towards marketing activity; and
- iii. **AGREED** that a report be submitted to a future meeting on how the Council could support the tourist industry replicate, in other areas, the North Coast 500 touring route.

## 12. Home Energy Efficiency Programmes for Scotland – Area Based Scheme Prògraman Èifeachdais Lùth Dachaigh airson Alba – Sgeama Stèidhichte air Sgìrean

There had been circulated Report No. PDI/29/16 by the Director of Development and Infrastructure which confirmed the updated position on the Home Energy Efficiency Programme for Scotland – Area Based Scheme (HEEPS-ABS) in Highland and the move to Scotland's Energy Efficiency Programme (SEEP).

During discussion, the following comments were made:-

- the report referred to a small district heating scheme for sheltered houses around Seaforth House and it was advised that the correct name was Strathburn House Care Home; and
- in terms of funding criteria for the Highland Area Programme one of the criteria for acceptance was for the property to be within council tax band A, B or C. It was advised that there was no flexibility to change this. However, in the move to Scotland's Energy Efficiency Programme there might be scope to have a programme that was more Highland focused.

The Committee **APPROVED** the development of a Highland plan for Scottish Energy Efficiency Programme.

At this point the meeting adjourned for lunch and the meeting resumed at 1.35 p.m.

## 13. Energy Efficiency Action Plan Plana-gnìomh Èifeachdais Lùtha

There had been circulated Report No. PDI/30/16 by the Director of Development and Infrastructure which set out the requirement for energy efficiency action in Council buildings and also identified various improvements and proposals required to reduce annual energy consumption and costs.

In discussion the following points were raised by Members:-

- confirmation was sought that all renewable heat incentive scheme payments were being applied for and received;
- it was felt that not all the Council's energy efficiency requirements could be met by behavioural change and an automated system might be required. Also, the Council centralised its payment of fuel bills and local Managers/Head Teachers did not have ownership of the budget for the energy being used. If there was more local ownership of energy usage, this could help energy efficiency;
- an assurance was sought that the control of Heat Management Systems was in the hands of Schools as one could not involve school children in energy conservation if they did not have the control to turn heating on and off;
- in relation to decisions made by the Council on the budget, it was understood that schools would be able to keep half of any savings resulting from a reduction in energy cost at their school. This would provide an incentive to schools to save energy;
- more was required to be done in terms of energy conservation than was currently planned; and
- the issue of new builds having a high specification for insulation was raised. In the summer months these buildings did not cool down, creating heat traps for occupants.

The Committee **APPROVED**:-

- i. the Energy Efficiency Proposals as set out in Section 3 of the report; and
- ii. the Draft Energy Efficiency Action Plan contained in Appendix 1 of the report.

#### **14. Housing in the Countryside Taigheadas air an Dùthaich**

There had been circulated Report No. PDI/31/16 by the Director of Development and Infrastructure which presented current issues being experienced in relation to housing in the countryside within pressurised development areas (Hinterland areas). The Council's current policy approach had undergone scrutiny through two recent planning appeals which concluded that the use of legal agreements to tie a new house to the operational land that justified the house conflicted with national policy. The report outlined a number of options and a recommended way forward for handling planning applications for housing in the countryside in Hinterland areas. Members were advised of minor changes to the recommendations tabled at the meeting.

During discussion, the following comments were made:-

- disappointment was expressed at those mortgage lenders who had refused, not for any specific reason, to lend to people with Section 75

planning obligations. It was extremely rare for a crofter to default on a mortgage and Banks could have had their lending insured by, for example, the Crofting Commission;

- allowing consideration of permitting temporary accommodation on site to allow a new business to establish with the view of a fresh application being submitted at a later date was welcomed;
- discussion with the Crofting Commission on the recommended way forward was welcomed. As part of those discussions it was suggested that the possibility of croft land being sub divided to get a house built be explored, as there was significant pressure on the availability of croft land in areas such as the Black Isle;
- a review of the recommended way forward was requested with a report back to Committee to see if the new approach to handling planning applications for housing in the countryside in Hinterland areas was working and that the measures were not too stringent;
- it was queried if existing Section 75 agreements could now be challenged as a result in the change in policy. It was felt that there would be existing Section 75 agreements coming forward for discharge and each one would be dealt with on its merits;
- the expertise in assessing business cases for the need to accommodate an agricultural working on site would be available in-house from former Highland Opportunity Limited employees, who had transferred to the Council;
- it would be preferable to see woodland crofts taken into consideration in the new policy and consideration be given to the provision of new crofts in the Inverness and Inner Moray Firth area; and
- it was understood that there was a charge of 20% VAT on new builds which was a pressure on young families trying to get finance. It was queried if there was scope for the Crofting Commission and Highland Council to liaise with Banks, with a view to Banks providing more favourable lending terms to small landholders/crofters, particularly those on low incomes.

Thereafter, the Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the recent appeal decisions, advice from the Scottish Government and analysis of the Council's current approach in Section 2;
- ii. **NOTED** the options presented in Section 3 of the report;
- iii. **AGREED** the recommended way forward in Section 4 that Officers undertake the task of reviewing the Housing in the Countryside and Siting and Design SG in consultation with the Crofting Commission;
- iv. **AGREED** to remove the use of legal agreements, which tied the house/croft house to the working of the land, and apply the new assessment criteria as presented in (Option 3) in Section 3 when determining planning applications from this point onwards; and
- v. **AGREED** that a report reviewing the recommended way forward for handling planning applications for housing in the countryside in Hinterland areas be submitted to this Committee in nine months.

#### **24. Proposed Inner Hebrides and the Minches Special Area of Conservation for Harbour Porpoise**

In terms of Standing Order 18, the Committee **AGREED** that agenda item 24 be considered at this juncture.

There had been circulated Report No. PDI/38/16 by the Director of Development and Infrastructure which outlined the proposed consultation response to be sent to Scottish Natural Heritage regarding the proposed designation of a large section of the west Highland coast as a Special Area of Conservation for harbour porpoise interests.

In discussion, the following points were raised:-

- concern was expressed with regards to the extraordinary haste with the consultation as it did not allow for full consultation on the proposals and, it was suggested, the process should be revisited. Also it was queried if the area of Conservation was for the protection of porpoise or waters in the area as this was unclear;
- the rationale for the Special Area of Conservation was unclear. Also, it was queried what economic or other activity would be precluded by this designation;
- extending the designated area to Cape Wrath was suggested; and
- the effect on the fishing industry had not been covered in great detail in the response as the Council had no jurisdiction in that matter. However, by flagging it up in the response, it would publicise it to those with a remit for the fishing industry.

The Committee **APPROVED** the response subject to the comments made during discussion.

#### **15. National Roads Development Guide Iùl Leasachaidh nan Rathaidean Nàiseanta**

There had been circulated Report No. PDI/32/16 by the Director of Development and Infrastructure which invited the Committee to note the 'National Roads Development Guide' and approve its use for guidance in the design of new developments.

It was advised that representatives of the Society of Chief Officers of Transport in Scotland were involved in the roads collaboration programme which the Chair of Community Services was Chair of that Committee also, so there was a good link there.

The Committee **NOTED** the 'National Roads Development Guide' and **APPROVED** its use subject to local variations as guidance in the design of new developments in conjunction with the Council's existing 'Roads and Transport Guidelines for New Developments'.

#### **16. Approval of Local Flood Risk Management Plans Aonta airson Planaichean Riaghladh Cunnart Thuiltean Ionadail**

There had been circulated Report No. PDI/33/16 by the Director of Development and Infrastructure which asked Members to approve the content of both "Findhorn, Nairn & Speyside Local Flood Risk Management Plan" (to be published by Moray Council) and the "Highland & Argyll Local Flood Risk Management Plan" and recognised that The Highland Council, as lead local authority for the latter, had the statutory duty to publish before 22 June 2016.

During discussion, the following comments were made:-

- the significant work that had gone into the Local Flood Risk Management Plans was recognised and this had been done in collaboration with the Responsible Authorities for Flood Risk Plans;
- Forestry Commission Scotland was a Responsible Authority and would be involved in the Steering Group so that they would be able to advise on their harvesting plans and the impact of this on flood plains, river catchment areas and roads; and
- a progress report was requested for a future meeting of this Committee updating Members on progress with Flood Risk Management Plans.

The Committee **AGREED**:-

- i. the content of the Highland & Argyll Local Flood Risk Management Plan allowing publication by The Highland Council to take place in June 2016; and
- ii. the content of the Findhorn, Nairn & Speyside Local Flood Risk Management Plan allowing publication by Moray Council to take place in June 2016.

#### **17. Highland LEADER Programme Update and Internal Audit Report Cunntas às Ùr agus Aithisg In-Sgrùdaidh Prògram LEADER na Gàidhealtachd**

##### **Declarations of Interest**

**Mr G Farlow declared a non-financial interest in this item as a member of the North West Highland Fisheries Local Action Group (FLAG) 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 him from taking part in the discussion.**

**Mr R Saxon declared a non-financial interest in this item as a member of the Caithness Local Area Partnership (LAP), 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 him from taking part in the discussion.**

There had been circulated Report No. PDI/34/16 by the Director of Development and Infrastructure which provided an update on the 2014/15 Internal Audit report on the Highland LEADER 2007-13 Programme and on the new LEADER Programme 2014-2020.

The LEADER Programme supported bottom-up community development and therefore was central to the Council's commitment to empower communities and to support associated community, business and infrastructural developments.

Following consideration, the Committee **NOTED**:-

- i. the findings of the 2014 Internal Audit report into the Highland LEADER Programme 2007-13; and

- ii. progress with preparation for the 2014-20 Highland LEADER Programme.

**18. European Fisheries Fund Axis 4 Programme Update and Internal Audit Report**  
**Cunntas às Ùr agus Aithisg In-Sgrùdaidh Prògram Maoin Iasgach Aiseal 4 na h-Eòrpa**

**Declarations of Interest - As members of the North West Highland Fisheries Local Action Group (FLAG), Mr G Farlow and Mr R Greene each declared a non-financial interest in this item but, having applied the test outlined in Paragraphs 5.2 and 5.3 of the Councillors' Code of Conduct, each concluded that their interest did not preclude them from taking part in the discussion.**

There had been circulated Report No. PDI/35/16 by the Director of Development and Infrastructure which provided a brief update on the closure of the Axis 4 European Fisheries Fund (EFF) in Highland and the outcome of a recent Internal Audit report and an update on the launch of the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF).

The significant work of staff, private representatives and agencies on FLAG in this area was acknowledged and, thereafter, the Committee **NOTED**:-

- i. the funding delivered under the EFF Axis 4 Fund in Highland and programme closure;
- ii. the findings and conclusions of the Internal Audit Report; and
- iii. the progress on forthcoming European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF).

**19. Transition of Highland Opportunity Loan Fund Activity to the Highland Council**  
**Eadar-ghluasad Gnìomhachd Maoin Iasaid Cothrom na Gàidhealtachd gu Comhairle na Gàidhealtachd**

**Declarations of Interest – As Directors of the Board of Highland Opportunity Ltd, Mr T Prag and Dr A Sinclair each declared a non-financial interest in this item but, having applied the test outlined in Paragraphs 5.2 and 5.3 of the Councillors' Code of Conduct, each concluded that their interest did not preclude them from taking part in the discussion.**

There had been circulated Report No. PDI/36/16 by the Director of Development and Infrastructure which invited the Committee to nominate Members to the Board of Highland Opportunity Investments Ltd (HOIL) and to agree the tiered loan approvals process proposed for the approval of business loans and Business Loans Scotland loans by the Highland Council.

Following consideration, the Committee:-

- \* i. **AGREED** the extension of HOIL board membership as suggested meantime; and
- ii. **APPROVED** the two tier loan approvals process proposed at section 2 of the report.

**20. Caithness and North Sutherland Regeneration Forum – Minutes**  
**Fòram Ath-bheothachaidh Ghallaibh agus Chataibh a Tuath – Geàrr-chunntas**

**Declarations of Interest – As Members of the Caithness and North Sutherland Regeneration Partnership Advisory Board, Mr G Farlow, Mr M Reiss and Mr R Saxon each declared a non-financial interest in this item but, having applied the test outlined in Paragraphs 5.2 and 5.3 of the Councillors’ Code of Conduct, each concluded that their interest did not preclude them from taking part in the discussion.**

There had been circulated, for information, the Minutes of meeting of the Caithness and North Sutherland Regeneration Forum held on 4 December 2015, the terms of which were **NOTED**, subject to item 7 – AOB being incomplete.

The Committee also **AGREED** that a copy of the presentation referred to at item 3 of the minutes by the Lead Project Manager, Scottish Hydro Electric Transmission be issued to Members of the Committee.

**21. Minutes**  
**Geàrr-chunntas**

There had been circulated for information Minutes of the Planning Applications Committees (PAC) for:-

- i. North PAC – 15 December 2015
- ii. North PAC – 12 January 2016
- iii. South PAC – 19 January 2016
- iv. North PAC – 16 February 2016
- v. South PAC – 1 March 2016
- vi. North PAC – 22 March 2016

The Committee **NOTED** the terms of the Minutes as presented.

**22. Exclusion of the Public**  
**Às-dùnadh a’ Phobail**

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

**23. Property Transactions Monitoring Report**  
**Aithisg Sgrùdaidh Ghnothachasan Seilbhe**

**Declaration of Interest – As a Director of Nairn Distillery Limited, Mr M Green declared a financial interest in this item and left the Chamber.**

There had been circulated to Members only Report No. PDI/37/16 by the Director of Development and Infrastructure which provided Members with details of the General Fund and Property Account transactions approved by the Head of Property Partnerships and Corporate Property Asset Manager under delegated authority.

The report also advised Members on sales concluded in 2015/16 and 2016/17, sales targeted for completion within the financial year 2016/17 and future years.

The Committee **APPROVED** the monitoring statements for the General Fund and Property Account transactions approved by the Head of Property Partnerships and Corporate Property Asset Manager under delegated authority, Budgeted Sales for 2016/17 and Future Years Sales.

The meeting concluded at 2.50 p.m.