

**The Highland Council
No. 8 2016/2017**

Minutes of Meeting of the Highland Council held in the Council Chamber, Council Headquarters, Glenurquhart Road, Inverness on Thursday, 9 March 2017 at 10.35am.

**1. Calling of the Roll and Apologies for Absence
A' Gairm a' Chlàir agus Leisgeulan**

Present:

Dr D Alston	Mrs L MacDonald
Mr R Balfour	Mrs D MacKay
Mrs J Barclay	Mr D Mackay
Mr A Baxter	Mr W MacKay (via VC)
Mr D Bremner	Mr G MacKenzie
Mrs C Caddick	Mr A Mackinnon
Mrs I Campbell	Ms A MacLean
Miss J Campbell	Mr T MacLennan
Mrs H Carmichael	Mr K MacLeod
Mr A Christie	Mrs B McAllister
Mr B Clark	Mrs I McCallum
Dr I Cockburn	Mr J McGillivray
Mrs G Coghill	Mr D Millar
Mrs M Davidson	Mr H Morrison
Dr J Davis	Ms L Munro
Mr N Donald	Mr B Murphy
Ms J Douglas	Mr F Parr
Mr A Duffy	Mrs M Paterson
Mr D Fallows	Mr G Phillips
Mr G Farlow	Mr T Prag
Mr B Fernie	Mr M Rattray
Mr M Finlayson	Mr M Reiss
Mr C Fraser	Mr I Renwick
Mr H Fraser	Mr A Rhind
Mr L Fraser	Mrs F Robertson
Mr S Fuller	Mrs T Robertson
Mr J Gordon	Mr G Ross
Mr B Gormley	Mr R Saxon
Mr K Gowans	Dr A Sinclair
Mr A Graham	Mrs G Sinclair
Mr J Gray	Mrs J Slater
Mr M Green	Ms M Smith
Mr R Greene	Ms K Stephen
Mr A Henderson	Mr J Stone
Mr R Laird	Mr B Thompson
Mr B Lobban	Mr H Wood

In Attendance:

Chief Executive	Director of Finance
Depute Chief Executive/Director of Corporate Development	Director of Community Services
Director of Development & Infrastructure	

Mrs I McCallum in the Chair

Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of Mr I Brown, Mr J Crawford, Mr D Kerr, Mr N MacDonald, Mr G Rimell, Mr J Rosie and Mrs C Wilson.

Preliminaries

The Convener, on behalf of the Council, extended best wishes to Mr John Rosie on the occasion of his 80th Birthday.

2. Declarations of Interest Foillseachaidhean Com-pàirt

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

Item 3 – Dr D Alston and Ms J Douglas (both financial)

Item 8 – Mr A Christie (non-financial) and Ms J Douglas (financial)

Item 10 – Mr A Baxter and Mr B Thompson (both financial)

Item 11 – Dr D Alston, Mr A Christie, Ms J Douglas and Mr H Wood (all financial) and Mr R Balfour, Mr G Farlow, Mr B Gormley, Mr M Green, Mrs D Mackay, Ms A MacLean, Mr K MacLeod, Mr G Phillips, Mr M Reiss and Mr I Renwick (all non-financial)

Item 16 – Ms J Douglas, Mr K Gowans, Mr M Green and Mr F Parr (all non-financial)

Item 18 – Mr G Farlow (non-financial)

Item 19i – Mr M Rattray (financial) and Mr G Farlow (non-financial)

Item 19ii – Dr D Alston, Ms J Douglas and Ms L Munro (all financial) and Mr B Fernie (non-financial)

Item 19iii – Mr A Baxter, Mrs I Campbell, Mrs M Davidson, Mr L Fraser and Ms M Smith (all financial)

Item 25 – Mr G Farlow (financial)

In addition, Mr B Gormley declared a financial interest in relation to any items which might arise during discussion in regard to the Care and Learning Service on the grounds that a family member was an employee and confirmed that he would leave the Chamber if necessary.

3. Presentation – Director of Public Health Taisbeanadh – Slàinte a' Phobail

Declarations of Interest –

Dr D Alston declared a financial interest in this item as Chair of NHS 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 him from taking part in the discussion.

Ms J Douglas declared a financial interest in this item as a Board Member of NHS Highland but, in terms of the dispensation granted by the Standards Commission, remained to participate in the discussion.

A Presentation was undertaken at the meeting by Ms E Smart, Consultant in Public Health, NHS Highland, on the Annual Report for 2016 which had been circulated separately and which focused on social isolation and loneliness.

In this regard, it was confirmed that social isolation and loneliness were important

public health issues which affected wellbeing and quality of life and could contribute towards premature death and diseases, such as dementia and depression. A number of factors had been found to contribute to these issues, including retirement, reduced disposable income, poor health, caring responsibilities and bereavement and specifically those people living in remote and rural areas had been found to be more likely to be affected.

There were various strategies which could protect individuals from loneliness and in this respect it was stressed that early intervention was key to effectiveness and prevention. In this respect, particular reference was made to the 'Reach Out' campaign which had been launched by NHS Highland and also the prioritisation of the prevention of loneliness and social isolation by High Life Highland through various initiatives targeted at communities and individuals.

During discussion, Members raised the following issues:-

- in light of the different types of loneliness and isolation which had been recognised and the detrimental impact which this had on the lives of individuals, consideration should be given to including reference to this in the 'implications' section of Council reports;
- it should be highlighted that volunteering offered an opportunity not only to interact with others but also to find new interests;
- it would be useful to consider developing the theme of the report to include those people suffering from mental illness, young people and pupils with additional support needs;
- a list of community transport schemes and information as to how 'Highland Befrienders' were supported by NHS Highland should be circulated to all Members for information;
- a multi-agency approach was needed to deal with the issues which had been identified and an example of where this had already worked well included the Forestry Commission's 'Branching Out' initiative which provided activities in a woodland setting for adults who used mental health services;
- there was a need to commend the 'Reach Out' initiative which included a pledge for members of the public in their local communities to make a commitment to help those who might need support;
- support was also expressed for the 'Men's Shed' initiative and it was suggested that consideration should perhaps also be given to the idea of 'Repair Cafés' which could offer a meeting place for volunteers with repair skills to interact with local communities;
- the research had clearly demonstrated how simple low cost social interventions could help and it should therefore be a priority for Community Planning Partners to consider flexible approaches to enable staff to respond quickly and effectively to issues as and when they arose, e.g. providing home carers with extra time to interact with clients on a regular basis;
- communities themselves also had a role in addressing the issues around social isolation through initiatives such as lunch clubs, whist drives etc. and there were excellent examples where this proven to be effective across the Highlands;
- loneliness and social isolation were now much more prevalent than had previously been the case and it was suggested that this was partly due to the fragmented nature of modern society where families were often much more dispersed than in previous years; and
- young people often used and found support from social media if they felt lonely and/or isolated but it had to be recognised that this was not always an option for older people who were less likely to be familiar with the use of technology.

Decision

Having thanked Ms Smart for her presentation, the Council **NOTED** the position.

It was also **AGREED** that a list of the Community Transport Schemes which were supported by NHS Highland should be circulated to all Members and that consideration should be given to broadening the terms of the report to include the impact of loneliness on other groups of people.

Agenda Item 11 - Midwifery and Mental Health Projects delivered by Citizens Advice Bureaux

At this point, and following discussion, Mrs C Caddick, seconded by Ms M Smith, **MOVED**, in view of the number of members of the public in attendance at the meeting to listen to the debate on Agenda Item 11 (Midwifery and Mental Health Projects delivered by Citizens Advice Bureaux), that this item of business should be brought forward on the agenda and considered after Agenda Item 7.

As an **AMENDMENT**, the Convener, seconded by the Leader, moved that the order of business should remain as stated on the agenda.

On a vote being taken, the **MOTION** received 36 votes and the **AMENDMENT** received 26 votes, with 1 abstention, and the **MOTION** was therefore **CARRIED**, the votes having been cast as follows:-

For the Motion:

Mr R Balfour, Mr A Baxter, Mrs C Caddick, Mr A Christie, Mr B Clark, Dr I Cockburn, Dr J Davis, Mr A Duffy, Mr G Farlow, Mr C Fraser, Mr L Fraser, Mr S Fuller, Mr B Gormley, Mr K Gowans, Mr M Green, Mr R Laird, Mrs L MacDonald, Mrs D MacKay, Mr D Mackay, Mr G MacKenzie, Ms A MacLean, Mr K MacLeod, Mrs B McAllister, Ms L Munro, Mr B Murphy, Mr F Parr, Mrs M Paterson, Mr G Phillips, Mr T Prag, Mr I Renwick, Mrs T Robertson, Mr R Saxon, Mrs G Sinclair, Mrs J Slater, Ms M Smith, Mr H Wood

For the Amendment:

Mrs J Barclay, Mr D Bremner, Mrs I Campbell, Mrs H Carmichael, Mrs G Coghill, Mrs M Davidson, Ms J Douglas, Mr D Fallows, Mr B Fernie, Mr M Finlayson, Mr H Fraser, Mr J Gordon, Mr R Greene, Mr A Henderson, Mr B Lobban, Mr A Mackinnon, Mr T MacLennan, Mrs I McCallum, Mr J McGillivray, Mr D Millar, Mr H Morrison, Mr M Rattray, Mr M Reiss, Mr A Rhind, Mr G Ross, Dr A Sinclair

Abstention:

Ms K Stephen

Decision

The Council **AGREED** to change the order of the agenda in order to allow consideration of Agenda Item 11 after Agenda Item 7.

4. Confirmation of Minutes Dearbhadh a' Gheàrr-chunntais

There had been submitted for confirmation as a correct record the Minutes of Meeting of the Council held on 15 December 2016 and the Minutes of the Special

Meeting held on 16 February 2017 as contained in the Volume which had been circulated separately and which were **APPROVED**.

5. Minutes of Meetings of Committees
Geàrr-chunntasan Choinneamhan Chomataidhean

There had been submitted for confirmation as correct records, for information as regards delegated business and for approval as appropriate, the Minutes of Meetings of Committees contained in Volume circulated separately as undernoted:-

Isle of Skye & Raasay Committee, 19 December
Ross & Cromarty Committee, 12 January
Lochaber Committee, 18 January
Planning, Development & Infrastructure Committee, 25 January
Education, Children & Adult Services Committee, 26 January
Pensions Committee, 1 February
Gaelic Implementation Group, 1 February
Resources Committee, 8 February
Communities & Partnerships Committee, 9 February
Caithness Committee, 14 February
Community Services Committee, 15 February
Nairnshire Committee, 20 February
Sutherland County Committee, 22 February
City of Inverness Area Committee, 23 February
Isle of Skye & Raasay Committee, 27 February
Education, Children & Adult Services Committee, 1 March
Audit & Scrutiny Committee, 2 March

The Minutes, having been moved and seconded were, except as undernoted, **APPROVED** – matters arising having been dealt with as follows:-

Ross & Cromarty Committee, 12 January

***Starred Item: Item 6: PP. 719: Tain Common Good Fund – Tain Mussels**

The Council **AGREED**:-

- i. to approve the sale of the mussel boat by open advertisement;
- ii. that monies generated from the sale of the mussel boat be ring-fenced for the mussel fishery; and
- iii. that the lease of the pier at Meikleferry be terminated.

Lochaber Committee, 18 January

***Starred Item: Item 5: PP. 727: Inverness and Highland City-Region Deal**

The Council **NOTED** the elements within the Highland City-Region Deal that concentrated on development skills on a pan-Highland basis and **AGREED** that an emphasis should be put on urgently addressing the skills gap in Lochaber which was likely to be exacerbated by recent economic changes in the area.

Education, Children & Adult Services Committee, 26 January

***Starred Item: Item 9: PP. 754: Statutory Consultation – Closure of Kinbrace Primary School**

The Council **AGREED** to discontinue education provision at Kinbrace Primary

School, dividing its catchment area between those of Helmsdale and Melvich Primary Schools.

Resources Committee, 8 February

***Starred Item: Item 10b: PP. 786: Treasury Management Strategy Statement and Investment Statement 2017/18**

The Council **APPROVED** the Treasury Management Strategy Statement and Investment Statement for 2017/18.

It was also **AGREED** that the Minutes should be amended to reflect that Mr B Murphy had been present at the meeting.

City of Inverness Area Committee, 23 February

***Starred Item: Item 15: Supplementary PP.7: School Investment Priorities in Inverness**

The Council **AGREED** that investment in School capacity and condition should be prioritised during the review of the Capital Programme.

Education, Children & Adult Services Committee, 1 March

***Starred Item: Item 7: Supplementary PP. 32: Statutory Consultation – Relocation of Dunvegan Primary School**

The Council **AGREED** the relocation of Dunvegan Primary School to a new site at Lonmore.

***Starred Item: Item 8: Supplementary PP. 32: Statutory Consultation – Closure of the Black Isle Education Centre**

The Council **AGREED** that education provision at the Black Isle Education Centre be discontinued and replaced with a service providing specialist support to pupils, based at the former Killen Primary School.

6. Highland and Western Isles Valuation Joint Board Co-Bhòrd Luachaidh na Gàidhealtachd is nan Eilean Siar

There had been circulated for information Minutes of Meeting of the Valuation Joint Board held on 30 November 2016 which were **NOTED**.

7. Membership of Committees, etc Ballrachd Chomataidhean, is eile

The Council **AGREED** the following –

South Planning Applications Committee – Ms K Stephen to become a Substantive Member for Ward 18

11. Midwifery and Mental Health Projects delivered by Citizens Advice Bureaux Biùrothan Comhairleachaidh a' Phobaill – Maoineachadh Pròiseict Eadar-amail

Declarations of Interest –

Dr D Alston as Chair of the Board of NHS Highland, Mr A Christie as General Manager of Inverness, Badenoch and Strathspey Citizens Advice Bureaux and Mr H Wood as an employee of Inverness, Badenoch and Strathspey Citizens Advice Bureaux declared financial interests in this item and left the room during discussion.

Ms J Douglas declared a financial interest in this item as a Board Member of NHS Highland but, in terms of the dispensation granted by the Standards Commission, remained to participate in the discussion.

The following Members declared non-financial interests in this item 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 them from taking part in the discussion:-

Mr R Balfour as a Director of Inverness, Badenoch and Strathspey Citizens Advice Bureaux

Mr G Farlow as a Director of North, West and Central Sutherland Citizens Advice Bureaux

Mr B Gormley as the Council's Advisor to Lochaber Citizens Advice Bureaux

Mr M Green as Director of Nairn Citizens Advice Bureaux

Mrs D Mackay as a Director of East Sutherland Citizens Advice Bureaux

Mrs A MacLean as a Director of Ross and Cromarty Citizens Advice Bureaux

Mr K MacLeod as a Director of Inverness, Badenoch and Strathspey Citizens Advice Bureaux and Director of Merkinch Enterprise

Mr G Phillips as a Director of East Sutherland Citizens Advice Bureaux

Mr M Reiss as Director of Caithness Citizens Advice Bureaux

Mr I Renwick as Director of Skye and Lochalsh Citizens Advice Bureaux

As agreed at the Resources Committee meeting on 8 February, there had been circulated Report No. HC/5/17 dated 24 February 2017 by the Director of Finance which provided an update in respect of the funding arrangements to Citizens Advice Bureaux for the delivery of two projects – Mental Health and Midwifery – to provide appropriate money and welfare advice for pregnant mums and those experiencing mental ill health.

In this regard, and during a summary of the report, the Director made reference to the potential funding arrangements and in this regard stressed that it was not recommended that use be made of Council reserves which were currently at a very low level and below the recommended minimum of 2%.

During discussion, Members raised the following issues:-

- thanks should be conveyed to the Officers for the report and also to the representatives from the Citizens Advice Bureaux who had attended recent meetings with the Leader of the Council to provide information in this regard;
- this was a very difficult position in view of the numerous issues involved, not least the success of both of these projects and the value of the work undertaken by Citizens Advice Bureaux across the Highlands which was inestimable;
- it had to be noted that the Resources Committee had agreed combined funding of £102k to continue delivery of both projects until 31 March 2017 but that a formal evaluation of the projects had not yet been undertaken;
- it would perhaps be appropriate for Officers to further liaise with representatives from the Citizens Advice Bureaux and other agencies who were providing similar advice in order to identify a way forward which would

- be advantageous for all concerned;
- the significant difference made through early intervention and the targeting and resourcing of projects such as this could not be underestimated;
 - the continued funding of these projects by the Council over recent months (when no other funding was available) was welcomed;
 - the real difference with these projects was that they had been ground-breaking in terms of being proactive and preventative although it was recognised that this was difficult to quantify on a financial level;
 - consideration should perhaps be given to undertaking a review of these and other similar services through the Community Planning Partnership;
 - the midwifery project in particular had received national recognition as an exemplar model for delivering universal services and this model supported two of the Early Years Collaborative key changes of early support for pregnancy and beyond and also addressing child poverty; and
 - in light of the value of these projects, consideration should be given to providing funding for a further year, with funds coming from Treasury Management and also use of Council reserves.

At this point, the Chief Executive reiterated advice given earlier in the meeting by the Director of Finance in relation to use of Council reserves, namely that any such use was not recommended against the background of the current low level of reserves with balances sitting at 1.6% which was approximately £2.3m below the recommended minimum of 2%.

The meeting adjourned at this point (12.25pm) and resumed at 12.55pm.

Thereafter, the Leader of the Council, seconded by Mr T Prag, **MOVED** that the Council agree to fund up to £50k from savings from Treasury Management and to undertake a full review of the projects and also a wide ranging review of debt advice and related services with community partners to inform the new contracts.

As an **AMENDMENT**, Mr S Fuller, seconded by Ms M Smith, moved that the Council should agree the £109k required to fund the Midwifery and Mental Health services commissioned via the Citizens Advice Bureaux for a further year until March 2018 on the basis of 50% of this funding coming from savings from Treasury Management and 50% from reserves. Also, that the Council should take the lead in calling for a wide ranging review of this and related advice services to take place through community partnerships.

On a vote being taken, the **MOTION** received 48 votes and the **AMENDMENT** received 20 votes, with 1 abstention, and the **MOTION** was therefore **CARRIED**, the votes having been cast as follows:-

For the Motion:

Mrs J Barclay, Mr D Bremner, Mrs C Caddick, Mrs I Campbell, Miss J Campbell, Mrs H Carmichael, Mrs G Coghill, Mrs M Davidson, Mr N Donald, Mr D Fallows, Mr B Fernie, Mr M Finlayson, Mr H Fraser, Mr L Fraser, Mr J Gordon, Mr A Graham, Mr J Gray, Mr M Green, Mr R Greene, Mr A Henderson, Mr B Lobban, Mrs D MacKay, Mr D Mackay, Mr W MacKay, Mr A Mackinnon, Mr T Maclennan, Mr K MacLeod, Mrs B McAllister, Mrs I McCallum, Mr J McGillivray, Mr D Millar, Mr H Morrison, Ms L Munro, Mr B Murphy, Mr F Parr, Mrs M Paterson, Mr T Prag, Mr M Rattray, Mr M Reiss, Mr A Rhind, Mrs F Robertson, Mrs T Robertson, Mr G Ross, Mr R Saxon, Dr A Sinclair, Ms K Stephen, Mr J Stone and Mr B Thompson.

For the Amendment:

Mr R Balfour, Mr A Baxter, Mr B Clark, Dr I Cockburn, Dr J Davis, Mr A Duffy, Mr G

Farlow, Mr C Fraser, Mr S Fuller, Mr B Gormley, Mr K Gowans, Mr R Laird, Mrs L MacDonald, Mr G MacKenzie, Ms A MacLean, Mr G Phillips, Mr I Renwick, Mrs G Sinclair, Mrs J Slater and Ms M Smith.

Abstention:

Ms J Douglas

Decision

It was **NOTED**:-

- i. that the Council's core contract with Citizens Advice Bureaux was entering its final year and had a contract value of £1,217,465 which included Welfare Mitigation funding of £102,804 per annum;
- ii. that the Council had provided project funding of £116,759 during 2016/17 for the delivery of the Mental Ill health and Midwifery projects;
- iii. whilst some Bureaux had external funding streams to deliver mental ill health projects at the time that the Council's funding had been initially approved, those funding streams had since terminated;
- iv. NHS Highland was unable to provide a contribution of funding to support these projects from 1 April 2017; and
- v. the Council's current funding for both projects was due to terminate on 31 March 2017.

The Council **AGREED** to fund up to £50k from savings made from Treasury Management and to undertake a full review of the projects and a wide ranging review of debt advice and related services with Community Partners to inform the new contracts.

In terms of Standing Order 18, it was AGREED to take Agenda Item 9 at this point in the meeting.

**9. Commission on Highland Democracy – Interim Report
Coimisean air Deamocrasaidh na Gàidhealtachd – Cunntas às Ùr**

There had been circulated Report No. HC/4/17 dated 27 February 2017 by the Acting Head of Policy which introduced the interim report of the Commission on Highland Democracy (attached as Appendix 1 to the report).

The Chair of the Commission, Mr Rory Mair, was in attendance at the meeting and took the opportunity to thank Dr Stephen Carr, Principal Policy Officer, for the work which had been undertaken over recent months.

Also, and during a summary of the interim report, he confirmed that thousands of conversations had been undertaken with people across the Highlands to better understand their views on the current state of local democracy and what they wanted to happen in the future. Key findings to date included that current decision making was exclusive, that people wanted more involvement and engagement, that there was a need for empowered consumers, that there should be integrated local democracy on a day to day basis and that balanced decision making should include professional Officers, elected and appointed decision makers and also communities.

In this regard, the Commission would now test and interrogate these findings and publish a final report in May 2017.

During discussion, Members raised the following issues:-

- there was a need to extend thanks to both Mr Rory Mair and Dr Stephen Carr for the invaluable work which had been undertaken over recent months;
- it was clear from this work, and also the work on the redesign of the Council, that the focus had to be on the devolving of power and budgets in the future in order to meet objectives and make a real difference to communities across the Highlands;
- there was a need also to reconsider the previous methods of consultation and involvement, perhaps involving Council staff across the area wherever possible;
- thanks should also be conveyed to the hundreds of Highland citizens who had provided input to this process;
- it had to be recognised that the centralisation of decision making was not seen by local people to be primarily a geographical issue but rather a case of a small group of highly empowered individuals taking decisions in a way that had little or no reference to anyone outside that group;
- in terms of rethinking consultation and engagement methods, and in order to assess public opinion before decisions were made, consideration should be given to not just making agendas and reports available online (as at present) but also to allowing members of the public to comment on these agendas/reports in advance of meetings being held;
- a number of decisions were currently made by Officers under delegated powers and there was need to review this situation in order to provide for the future involvement of communities wherever possible;
- the role of Members in the decision making process had to be clarified in order that responsibilities were made clear for the general public;
- the implementation of ‘participative democracy’ would pose challenges for both Members and Officers in terms of the future delivery of services and it had to be appreciated that new skills would need to be developed in this respect;
- there were different expectations in relation to what was meant by ‘local decision making’ and it would be extremely important that this was managed correctly;
- social media was an extremely important and effective method of communication with people across the Highland area and should be used whenever possible;
- it had to be appreciated that a ‘culture change’ was needed across the organisation in terms of implementing participation from local communities; and
- early agreement of the information to be used in relation to specific consultation issues was crucial, not least in terms of co-ordination with other agencies across the Highlands.

Decision

The Council **NOTED** the progress which had been made by the Commission as detailed in the report.

The meeting adjourned for lunch at 1.45pm and resumed at 2.20pm.

8. Redesign of the Highland Council Ath-dhealbhadh Chomhairle na Gàidhealtachd

Declarations of Interest –

Mr A Christie declared a non-financial interest in this item as a Director of the Highland Third Sector Interface 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.

Ms J Douglas declared a financial interest in this item as a Board Member of NHS Highland but, in terms of the dispensation granted by the Standards Commission, remained to participate in the discussion.

There had been circulated Report No. HC/3/17 dated 1 March 2017 by the Chief Executive which set out the final recommendations from the Redesign Board for the redesign of the Council.

It was noted that this concluded the six phases of work of the Redesign Board and recognised that the redesign proposed should be a continuous process with some recommendations for this Council to take forward while others could be endorsed as recommendations for consideration by the new Council.

In this regard, there had also been circulated Minutes of Meeting of the Redesign Board held on Tuesday, 28 February 2017 which were **APPROVED**.

During discussion, Members raised the following issues:-

- there was a need to convey thanks to the Members, Officers, Trade Union and staff representatives who had contributed to the very productive cross party and cross service work of the Board over recent months;
- it was hoped that the new Council would create a successor to continue the work of the Board in terms of redesign;
- staff should be particularly commended for their identification of issues which could be used to undertake fundamental change across the Council;
- a 'can do' approach should be implemented across all Services in future and particularly in terms of engagement with the general public and communities across the area;
- the statement of Council values (challenging, open to ideas, participating and empowering) should be highlighted whenever and wherever possible);
- the Council had to be open in future to new ways of delivering services, including through commercial approaches and through consultation and engagement with communities across the area;
- in terms of the recommendations which had been made, it was suggested that these should perhaps be re-ordered to enable development of the structure and management of Council operations to be considered in the first instance followed by consideration of proposals for governance thereafter;
- further information was required in terms of how the proposed Policy Development Groups would operate and also any plans for the potential reorganisation of Planning Committees at some point in the future;
- review of the Scheme of Delegation would require to be undertaken at an early date, together with submission of a revised Scheme of Decentralisation;
- clarification was also required in terms of whether it was proposed to reduce the number of Senior Management posts within the Council in future and as part of redesign proposals;
- close working relationships with community planning partners was essential in terms of taking forward the proposals within the report;
- it would be imperative for consideration to be given to the issues arising from the work undertaken by the Commission on Highland Democracy at the same time as those arising from the redesign work; and

- there should be a focus in future on areas such as ‘people’, ‘doing things’ and ‘resources’ in terms of the arrangements to be set in place by the new Council.

Decision

The Council **AGREED** the following:-

- i. that the redesign statement at Appendix 1 to the report (already agreed by the Council) should be presented to the new Council for approval and implementation;
- ii. that the statement of purpose, values and outcomes (already agreed by the Council) should be amended as highlighted at Appendix 2 to the report and presented to the new Council for approval;
- iii. that the booklets listing all Council functions and their prioritisation (agreed at the Council meeting in September 2016) should be used for the induction of new Members after the May Election, for identifying future areas for review and for informing the redesign of governance and service structures to be considered by the new Council;
- iv. the review recommendations listed in Appendix 3 to the report to enable function redesign. In this regard, it was noted that as further review work was undertaken further recommendations would come to the new Council for consideration;
- v. to endorse the approach to being more commercially minded as described in Paragraphs 5.6 to 5.11 of the report as a way of sustaining services and jobs across the region and to recommend to the new Council the creation of a Commercial Board as part of its governance arrangements;
- vi. that stopping or withdrawing services could not be ruled out if they were discretionary and no longer affordable. However, before considering this as an option and where the service was valued, the Council should first do checks for efficiency, alternative ways of delivering the service, income potential to sustain it, reducing service levels and using the Audit Scotland framework for stopping services;
- vii. to endorse the development of the Community Gateway idea through the Community Planning Partnership which would provide a support or brokerage service to encourage further community action. Also noted that this would be one way to support the attitudinal change sought and demonstrate that the Council was being more community-minded;
- viii. to endorse the current elements of the redesign change programme for staff and Members as detailed in Paragraph 7.2 of the report and that the programme should continue to develop, with early attention to the support required for localism and public participation objectives and any structure changes;
- ix. to endorse the proposals for governance as set out in Paragraph 8.4 of the report (subject to an amendment to include reference to an ‘Audit & Scrutiny’ Committee as opposed to a ‘Scrutiny’ Committee as detailed in the report) and recommended it to the new Council with the detail to be developed;
- x. to recommend to the new Council the setting up of a successor to the Redesign Board to continue and develop the programme of redesign;
- xi. that the Chief Executive be tasked by the Council to develop proposals for the structure and management of Council operations based on the criteria set out in Paragraph 8.6 of the report, including the process and timescale for implementing the redesigned structure and that this be recommended to the new Council; and
- xii. that Officer time to support redesign be continued through to the end of June 2017 at a cost of £7,000 and to support the Commission on Highland

Democracy up to £5,000 which was within the budget set for 2016/17. This would enable the activities in Paragraph 9.1 of the report to be taken forward.

**10. Presentation – District Assessor – 2.00pm
Taisbeanadh – Measadair Sgìre – 2.00f**

Declarations of Interest –

Mr A Baxter and Mr B Thompson declared financial interests in this item as Non-Domestic Rate payers 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 them from taking part in the discussion.

During a presentation, Mr B Gillies, District Assessor, provided a summary of the roles and responsibilities of the Highland and Western Isles Valuation Joint Board and the District Assessor and highlighted the 2017 re-valuation exercise which would come into effect on 1 April 2017. In this regard, and following confirmation that non-domestic rates were a property tax with the Assessor having responsibility to determine a fair and reasonable rateable value, it was explained that the rate poundage, together with reliefs and exemptions, was set by the Scottish Government and Local Authorities were tasked with collecting the rates due which in Highland had raised £128m during the previous financial year.

It was further clarified that a ‘rateable value’ was an open market value of a property on a specific date. Known as the “tone” date, all properties were assessed at the same point in time which for the 2017 re-valuation had been 1 April 2015. Re-valuations were carried out in recognition that over time property values could change and normally took place every five years. In determining value, various bodies were consulted, both nationally and locally, and methodology used to ensure that valuations were reasonable. There was an appeal process in place and, at the last re-valuation, eleven thousand appeals had been received, the majority of which had been resolved by informal discussion.

During discussion, Members raised the following issues:-

- clarification was sought, and provided, as to how the rateable value for licensed premises was determined and whether turnover was taken into account;
- it was noted that payment methods and arrangements were a matter for consideration by the Director of Finance;
- the current anomaly which existed in Inverness in relation to zoning depths of shops was queried as it appeared to be inconsistent with the rest of Scotland;
- further information was required on the differential between small hotels and B&Bs/Guest houses as in many instances these were of similar size but with the former perhaps having dining facilities. These types of premises were very important in rural areas and this had to be recognised;
- confirmation was sought, and provided, that land and heritage were also taken into account unless specifically exempt by law;
- it was more difficult for smaller business to appeal if they did not have easy access to professional Chartered Surveyors. In this regard, an approximation of the success rate of appeals was sought; and
- any suggestions for the inclusion of items on future Valuation Joint Board agendas could be considered from Members as long as these suggestions fell within its remit.

Decision

Having thanked Mr Gillies for his presentation, the Council **NOTED** the position.

Additional Urgent Item: Additional £1 million Capital for Road Maintenance

There had been circulated Joint Report No. HC/14/17 dated 1 March 2017 by the Director of Community Services and the Director of Finance which invited approval of £1 million spend of additional capital monies on roads infrastructure.

In this regard, it was confirmed that the Scottish Government had allocated an additional Capital Grant of £2.046m to the Council for 2017/18. From this, it was proposed that £500k should be allocated towards Strategic Timber Transport Fund projects (which in turn could generate up to 70% additional funding) and £500k should be allocated towards Structural Maintenance Priority Schemes.

During discussion, Members raised the following issues:-

- this additional allocation was welcomed on the basis that it could benefit all of the Highland area;
- the current poor condition of Highland roads had to be recognised and this additional allocation could allow further additional monies to be received in due course;
- whilst appreciating the additional allocation, it had been previously agreed to defer a review of the Capital Plan so that the new Council could consider the position but these new proposals appeared to conflict with that decision;
- it had to be highlighted that the clear priority from the City of Inverness Area Committee had been school provision but the proposal before Members was to allocate additional funding to roads. However, while acknowledging greater investment was needed for schools, it was noted that the amount involved was relatively small and would be insufficient to make any significant difference to school provision;
- clarification was sought, and received, as to how and when the Structural Maintenance Priority Schemes had been determined and what consultation had taken place; and
- it was important that the new Council continued to lobby the Scottish Government for further additional funding for both schools and roads in the Highland area.

Decision

The Council:-

- i. **AGREED** the recommendation to split the £1 million additional capital allocation on the basis of 50% Strategic Timber Transport Schemes and 50% structural maintenance;
- ii. **APPROVED** the list of schemes at Tables 2 and 3 in the report for Strategic Timber Transport Schemes and road resurfacing works; and
- iii. **AGREED** that, should Strategic Timber Transport Schemes match funding be unsuccessful, the £500k be re-allocated across the Areas using the Road Condition Survey parameters, with scheme selection being decided by Members at a Local Area level.

12. Long Term Management - Crown Estate in Scotland Co-chomhairle air Àm ri Teachd Oighreachd a' Chrùin

There had been circulated Report No. HC/6/17 dated 27 February 2017 by the

Director of Development & Infrastructure which introduced the Scottish Government's consultation on the long term management of the Crown Estate in Scotland, highlighted key proposals and provided a copy of the Council's draft response for consideration.

During discussion, Members raised the following issues:-

- there was a need to convey thanks to the Officers concerned for the excellent response which had been circulated;
- further information was required in relation to the interim body which was to be set up to manage Crown Estate issues at a local level;
- early clarification was needed from the Scottish Government in relation to the Coastal Community Fund and specifically how this was to be delegated and distributed at a local level;
- clarification was sought, and received, in regard to particular question responses concerning further devolution of the Crown Estate (Q.19), the power to vary management arrangements held by other parties over time (Q.20) and whether strategic activities should be managed at a local level (Q.44);
- considerable revenue was raised by the Crown Estate in Scotland, with particular reference being made to the Beatrice Wind Farms, and it was suggested that consideration should be given to a pilot project to establish land/community ownership, respective liabilities, potential for land reform and use/distribution of funds at a local level wherever possible; and
- in consultation exercises, Officers routinely arranged early briefings for Members to allow comments and feedback to be received and as such it was essential that all Members attended these briefings whenever possible.

Decision

The Council **APPROVED** the draft response to the Scottish Government consultation as detailed in the report.

13. Local and National Statutory Performance Indicators 2015/16 Comharran Coileanaidh Reachdail agus Slatan-tomhais Nàiseanta 2015/16

There had been circulated Report No. HC/7/17 dated 14 February 2017 by the Chief Executive which provided information on the outcome of local and nationally benchmarked Statutory Performance Indicators (SPIs) for 2015/16.

In this regard, the report showed improved performance by 5% or more in 2015/16 on 32 indicators, with 31 indicators showing a decline of 5% or more. Overall, 75% of SPIs had improved by 5% or more or performance had been maintained compared to 74% in the previous year. It was also highlighted that for the 80 indicators which were also nationally benchmarked, there were 7 in the top quartile and 22 in the bottom quartile.

During discussion, reference was made to indicators in the bottom quartile and specifically the percentage of adults aged 65 and over with intensive needs receiving care at home and it was suggested that there should be a strong focus on this issue, perhaps as part of future work on transformational change within Services.

Also, in regard to the primary school education indicators within the report which it was noted were still under development, it was confirmed that it was clear that there was not a consistent approach to the collection of this data across the country and that teachers in the Highland area generally erred on the side of caution when

arriving at their judgements. It was therefore not considered appropriate to compare schools with very different circumstances in different parts of the country and as such it was hoped that fuller and more reliable information would be available in future years.

Finally, it was suggested that there should be liaison within relevant agencies in terms of improving on the current level and content of SPIs wherever possible in the future.

Decision

The Council **NOTED** the outturn of the Indicators for 2015/16 and where relevant their national benchmark position.

It was also **AGREED** that reports should be submitted to Strategic Committees in the next cycle in order to provide detailed analysis of the indicators and improvement actions whilst noting the changes to the Audit Direction for 2016/17 onwards.

14. How Councils Work - Roles and Working Relationships in Councils: Are You Still Getting It Right?

Mar a tha comhairlean ag obair – Dreuchdan agus dàimhean obrach ann an comhairlean: a bheil sibh ga fhaighinn ceart fhathast?

There had been circulated Report No. HC/8/17 dated 10 February 2017 by the Depute Chief Executive/Director of Corporate Development which confirmed that the Accounts Commission had published a report prepared by Audit Scotland titled 'How Councils Work' which was a follow up to the report published in 2010 on 'Roles and Working Relationships in Councils – Are You Getting It Right?'

It was noted that the Accounts Commission report had been circulated separately and could be accessed at the following link:- www.audit-scotland.gov.uk/report/how-councils-work-roles-and-working-relationships-in-councils-are-you-still-getting-it-right

In this regard, the report provided a summary of the key issues highlighted and revisited the main themes within the challenges currently being experienced by Councils, as well as making suggestions for actions which the Council should take which were particularly relevant within the context of the preparation for the new Council in May 2017.

During discussion, it was suggested that consideration should be given to undertaking exit interviews with Members who were leaving the Council at the end of the current term.

It was also suggested that there should be a particular focus on the issues highlighted within the report in regard to the role of Councillors, longer term planning and alternatives for service delivery in the future.

Decision

The Council **AGREED** to endorse the key issues and themes arising from the Accounts Commission report, the good practice already in place within the Council and the future actions to be taken to continue to promote good governance within the new Council from May 2017 onwards.

15. Highland Armed Forces Community Covenant Update Aithisg mu Chùmhnant Bhliadhna nam Feachdan Armaichte

There had been circulated Report No. HC/9/17 dated 22 February 2017 by the Depute Chief Executive/Director of Corporate Development which outlined the work carried out by the partners to the Highland Armed Forces Community Covenant in the last twelve months and set out future priorities.

In this regard, specific and detailed information had been provided in relation to the five key outcomes which had been agreed in order to support the Armed Forces Community, namely the Economy, Children & Young People, Caring Communities, Housing and Empowering Communities.

It was also highlighted that reference should have been made in the report to Mr Allan Duffy who had also held the position of Armed Forces and Veterans' Champion in the current term of the Council.

During discussion, it was suggested that there needed to be a focus on the identification of potential employment opportunities for veterans (including spouses) and the availability of housing in the area.

Also, and in commending the Covenant as a statement of support between the armed forces and the civilian community within the Highlands, thanks were conveyed to Dot Ferguson, Senior Ward Manager (Ross, Skye & Lochaber) and the Director of Care and Learning for the considerable work which had been undertaken over recent years.

Finally, and in regard to Events planned for 2017, it was noted that WW1 Commemorations would include the Battle of Arras, the Battle of Ypres and the Battle of Cambrai with all Services being held at the War Memorial in Cavell Gardens, Inverness.

Decision

The Council **AGREED** to welcome the continued work of the Highland Armed Forces Community Covenant Partnership undertaken to date and to endorse the future priorities as outlined at Section 9 of the report.

16. High Life Highland – Appointment of Independent Directors High Life na Gàidhealtachd – Comataidh Ainmeachaidh

Declarations of Interest – Ms J Douglas, Mr K Gowans, Mr M Green and Mr F Parr as Directors of High Life Highland and Mr K Gowans on the grounds that his wife was an employee of High Life Highland declared non-financial interests in this item 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 them from taking part in the discussion.

It was noted that recommendations had been received from the High Life Highland Nominations Committee in relation to the position of Independent Director as follows:–

Mr Donald McLachlan to be re-appointed
Ms Tracy Ligema to be appointed

Decision

The Council **AGREED** the recommendations from the High Life Highland

Nominations Committee as detailed.

**17. Highland Opportunity Limited – Appointment of Single Interim Director
Cothrom na Gàidhealtachd Earranta – Cur an Dreuchd Stiùiriche Singilte
Eadar-amail**

It was noted that, in terms of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973, Councillors appointed (by the Council) to be members of a company, board, etc. ceased to be members of that body on polling day.

In this regard, the Board of Highland Opportunity Limited (and its subsidiary companies) was comprised solely of Council Directors and it was therefore proposed that the Director of Development & Infrastructure should be appointed as the Single Interim Director for the period from 4 May 2017 and until Councillors were formally appointed (or re-appointed).

Decision

The Council **AGREED** that, from 4 May 2017 and until the Council formally appointed (or re-appointed) Councillors to these Boards, the Director of Development and Infrastructure should be appointed as the Single Interim Director for Highland Opportunity Limited (and its subsidiary companies).

**18. Ship to Ship Oil Transfer Scheme
Sgeama Glusad Ola o Long gu Long**

Declaration of Interest – Mr G Farlow declared a non-financial interest in this item as the Council’s representative on KIMO UK 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.

The Council was advised that the revised Ship to Ship Oil Transfer Scheme proposals from the Cromarty Firth Port Authority had not yet been submitted to the Maritime & Coastguard Agency and that this was not expected until around June.

On that basis, and as agreed at the Council meeting on 15 December 2016, a further update would be presented to a future meeting in due course.

Decision

The Council **NOTED** the position as detailed.

It was also **NOTED** that the Leader of the Council had received a Petition in this regard before the meeting.

**19. Notices of Motion
Brathan Glusaid**

The following Notices of Motion had been received in accordance with Standing Order 10.1 –

Declarations of Interest –

Mr M Rattray declared a financial interest in the following item as an employee of the Port of Cromarty Firth Services and left the room during discussion.

Mr G Farlow declared a non-financial interest in the following item as the Council's representative on KIMO UK 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.

(i) 'The Council agrees that if the Cromarty Firth Port Authority, also known as the Port of Cromarty Firth, submit their application for ship to ship oil transfers prior to the Local Authority Elections on 4 May 2017, the Chair of the Planning, Development and Infrastructure Committee will call a special working group meeting of Councillors from around the Cromarty and Moray Firth Wards so Local Members can influence the Highland Council submission'.

Signed: Mrs L MacDonald, Mr C Fraser, Mrs G Sinclair, Mr S Fuller, Mr L Fraser, Mr M Green, Mrs T Robertson, Mr R Balfour

Decision

The Council **NOTED** that the above Notice of Motion had now been withdrawn.

Dr D Alston as Chair of the Board of NHS Highland and Ms L Munro as an employee of NHS Highland declared financial interests in the following item and left the room during discussion.

Ms J Douglas declared a financial interest in this item as a Board Member of NHS Highland but, in terms of the dispensation granted by the Standards Commission, remained to participate in the discussion.

Mr B Fernie declared a non-financial interest in this item as Chair of Caithness Health Action Team (CHAT) 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.

(ii) 'We, the undersigned, ask Highland Council to request NHS Highland to have an independent review into the processes used in their decision to change to a midwife led maternity service in Caithness and North Sutherland.

In addition, we ask for immediate attention to be given to the many unsatisfactory issues that are evident with the delivery of the new service, be that transport, welfare, expense and accommodation, etc.

In addition, that a forum is created to discuss the operation of the policies and management of risk involved in the management of the new service.

The latter two requests require a Chair to be from the community or an Elected Member.

Signed: Mr B Fernie, Mr M Reiss

Decision

The Council **NOTED** that the above Notice of Motion had now been withdrawn.

Declarations of Interest –

Mr A Baxter, Mrs I Campbell, Mrs M Davidson, Mr L Fraser and Ms M Smith declared financial interests in the following item as owners of small businesses but, having applied the test outlined in Paragraphs 5.2 and 5.3 of the Councillors' Code of Conduct, concluded that their interest did not preclude them from taking part in the discussion.

(iii) 'The Highland Council welcomes the additional business rates support measures announced by the Scottish Government on 21 February 2017. However, these additional measures are only for one year and seek to address just one of the significant concerns of the current rates system which the current revaluation exercise has exposed.

These very real concerns include the role and accountability of the Assessors across Scotland, frequency of revaluations, transparency and scrutiny of Rateable Values calculations and notice of formal rateable value changes to stakeholders.

In addition, how the Scottish Government sets policy regarding exemptions, rate poundage, small business bonus scheme, higher tax supplement questions, the link between a system for tax generation and economic development policy.

The Highland Council urges the Scottish Government to complete their review (Barclay Review) of business rates and discuss the outcomes with local authorities as a matter of urgency'.

Signed: Mrs M Davidson, Mrs H Carmichael, Mr J Crawford, Miss J Campbell

During discussion, it was suggested that the second and third paragraphs within the Motion should be removed, particularly in terms of expressing concern about the role and accountability of the Assessor which was not considered to be appropriate.

It was also suggested that there was a need to highlight that there were also issues in relation to the charging of rent (and not just rates as had been listed in the Motion).

Thereafter, Mrs M Davidson, seconded by Mrs H Carmichael, **MOVED** the terms of the Notice of Motion as detailed.

As an **AMENDMENT**, Dr I Cockburn, seconded by Mr K Gowans, moved that the second and third paragraphs of the Notice of Motion should be removed.

On a vote being taken, the **MOTION** received 38 votes and the **AMENDMENT** received 10 votes, with no abstentions, and the **MOTION** was therefore **CARRIED**, the votes having been cast as follows:-

For the Motion:

Mr R Balfour, Mr A Baxter, Mrs C Caddick, Mrs I Campbell, Miss J Campbell, Mrs H Carmichael, Mr A Christie, Mrs G Coghill, Mrs M Davidson, Dr J Davis, Mr N Donald, Ms J Douglas, Mr D Fallows, Mr B Fernie, Mr H Fraser, Mr L Fraser, Mr J Gordon, Mr A Graham, Mr J Gray, Mr R Greene, Mr A Henderson, Mr B Lobban, Mrs D MacKay, Mr D Mackay, Mr T Maclennan, Mr K MacLeod, Mrs B McAllister, Mrs I McCallum, Mr D Millar, Mrs M Paterson, Mr T Prag, Mr M Reiss, Mrs F Robertson, Mr G Ross, Mr R Saxon, Dr A Sinclair, Ms K Stephen and Mr H Wood.

For the Amendment:

Dr I Cockburn, Mr C Fraser, Mr S Fuller, Mr K Gowans, Mr R Laird, Mrs L

MacDonald, Mr G MacKenzie, Mr I Renwick, Mrs G Sinclair and Ms M Smith.

Decision

The Council **AGREED** the terms of the Notice of Motion as detailed.

20. Recess Powers Cumhachdan Fosaidh

The Council **AGREED** that, during the period from 10 March to 3 May 2017 inclusive, powers should be delegated to the Chief Executive, Depute Chief Executive/Director of Corporate Development and Directors, in consultation with the Convener, Leader of the Council, Leader of the Opposition and relevant Chair, to deal with business arising during that time.

The Council also **AGREED** that, during the period from 4 May to 17 May 2017 inclusive, powers should be delegated to the Chief Executive to deal with business arising during that time.

In this regard, it was **NOTED** that a report would be prepared for the first meeting of the Council or the relevant Committees following these periods where the powers had been exercised.

21. Deeds Executed Sgrìobhainnean Lagha a Bhuilicheadh

It was **NOTED** that a list of deeds and other documents executed on behalf of the Council since the meeting held on 15 December 2016 was available in the Members' Library and on the Council's Website.

22. Exclusion of the Public Às-dùnadh a' Phobail

The Council **RESOLVED** that, under Section 50A(4) of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973, the public should be excluded from the meeting for the following items on the grounds that they involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 6, 8 & 9 of Part 1 of Schedule 7A of the Act.

23. Land and Property Talamh is Seilbh

(a) Land and Property Report

There had been circulated to Members only Report No. HC/10/17 dated 24 February 2017 by the Director of Development & Infrastructure which provided details in relation to a Land and Property report.

Decision

The Council **AGREED** the recommendations as detailed in the report.

(b) Potential Sale

There had been circulated to Members only Report No. HC/11/17 dated 28 February 2017 by the Director of Development & Infrastructure which provided details of a

potential sale to be undertaken by the Council.

Decision

The Council **AGREED** the recommendations as detailed in the report.

**24. Equal Pay
Pàigheadh Co-ionann**

There had been circulated to Members only Report No. HC/12/17 dated 20 February 2017 by the Depute Chief Executive/Director of Corporate Development which provided details in regard to Equal Pay claims.

Decision

The Council **AGREED** the recommendations as detailed in the report.

**25. Business Case for Commercial Proposal
Cùis Gnothachais airson Moladh Malairteach**

Declaration of Interest – 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 to Members only Report No. HC/13/17 by the Commercial Manager which provided details of a business case in relation to a commercial proposal to be taken forward by the Council.

Decision

The Council **AGREED** the recommendations as detailed in the report.

The meeting ended at 5.35pm.