

The Highland Council

Minutes of Meeting of the **Audit and Scrutiny Committee** held in the Council Chamber, Council Headquarters, Glenurquhart Road, Inverness on Thursday, 29 November 2018 at 10.30am.

Present:

| | |
|----------------------|----------------------------|
| Mr G Mackenzie | Mr A Graham |
| Mr P Saggars | Mr R Laird |
| Mr R Balfour | Mr B Lobban (substitute) |
| Mr B Boyd | Mr D Louden |
| Mr R Bremner (by VC) | Mr S Mackie |
| Mr J Bruce | Mrs A Maclean |
| Miss J Campbell | Mr D Macpherson |
| Mr A Christie | Mr H Morrison (substitute) |
| Mr G Cruickshank | Mrs M Paterson |
| Mr L Fraser | Ms M Smith |

Non-Members also present:

Mr A Sinclair

Officials in Attendance:

Mr D Yule, Depute Chief Executive/Director of Corporate Resources
 Mr S Fraser, Head of Corporate Governance
 Mr A Summers, Head of Environmental and Amenity Services
 Ms T Urry, Head of Roads and Transport
 Mr B Porter, Head of Resources
 Mr F Macdonald, Head of Property and Facilities Management
 Mr K Forbes, Property Manager – Estates Management
 Miss D Sutherland, Corporate Audit Manager
 Ms E Johnston, Corporate Audit & Performance Manager
 Ms S McKandie, Benefits & Welfare Manager
 Ms N Wallace, Environment Manager
 Mrs W Anderson, LEADER Programme Administrator
 Mr B Cameron, Housing Policy & Investment Manager
 Mr J Campbell, Senior Auditor
 Mrs L Dunn, Principal Administrator
 Ms A Macrae, Committee Administrator

Also in attendance:

Ms J Brown, Director Public Sector Assurance, Grant Thornton
 Mr J Boyd, Senior Manager, Grant Thornton

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

Mr G Mackenzie in the Chair

**1. Apologies for Absence
Leisgeulan**

Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of Mr G Adam, Mrs J Barclay, Mrs M Davidson, Mr C Fraser, Mr T Heggie and Mrs B McAllister.

**2. Declarations of Interest
Foillseachaidhean Com-pàirt**

Item 3: Mr D Louden (non-financial)

**3. Internal Audit Reviews and Progress Report
Ath-bhreithneachaidhean In-sgrùdaidh agus Aithisg Adhartais**

Declaration of Interest – Mr D Louden declared a non-financial interest in this item as a member of the Inner Moray Firth Leader Group, 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 was circulated Report No. AS/18/18 dated 19 November 2018 by the Corporate Audit Manager which summarised the final reports issued since the date of the last meeting, together with details of work in progress and other information relevant to the operation of the Internal Audit Section.

The Development & Infrastructure Service’s Team was congratulated by the Chair on the audit opinion of ‘full assurance’ which had been achieved on the audit review of the Leader Programme 2017/18.

In discussion, concern was expressed that a number of the high priority actions in Appendix 1 were listed as ‘not started’ and whether this was due to staffing issues within the Service. Specific reference was made to those actions relating to cyber security, review of EU funded schemes and review of local full fibre network. The Chair advised that this was a year long programme and that audits would commence as the year progressed.

The Corporate Audit Manager advised that since the preparation of the Plan a vacancy had arisen within the Team. Discussions were ongoing in regard to filling that post but it was likely this would have to be carried until the end of the financial year. Action was being taken to ensure the highest risk areas were covered and explanations were provided as to why the high priority audits mentioned had not yet commenced. There was a need to consider the best time to schedule audits, in terms of the Team’s workload throughout the year and to ensure Services were not subject to a number of audits at the same time. It was likely that some of the lowest risk audits may have to be removed from the Plan due to the vacant post.

Thereafter, reference was made to the potential to review the priority levels set out in Appendix 1 in the report where there was the opportunity to generate income, bearing in mind the Council’s focus on being more commercially minded. The Corporate Audit Manager advised that she would be content to undertake a review of priorities as part of the audit planning process for next year.

Discussion then followed on the audit opinion of 'reasonable assurance' in relation to Rental Income. Concern was expressed at the slow progress being made towards the creation of a comprehensive asset register for the Council, the challenges this created for the budget setting process, and the need for this issue to be elevated to Executive Leadership Team level. A further point was raised in relation to the potential to review the length of the Council's leases. In response, Members were provided with an update on the work being undertaken by the Asset Management Team to review the Council's assets and on the opportunities to realise savings for the Council.

Thereafter, the appointment of a Project Officer in respect of the former Janitorial houses, and the revenue the occupation of these properties would generate for the Council was welcomed.

In response to a question it was confirmed that more detailed information would be provided to Mr D Loudon outwith the meeting in relation to the number of inaccuracies within the K2 property system. Information was also sought and provided on the adequacy of and challenges with the K2 programme.

Thereafter, the Committee **NOTED** the:-

- i. final Reports referred to in Section 3.1 of the report;
- ii. current work of the Internal Audit Section outlined at Section 4 of the report; and
- iii. performance information provided at Section 5 of the report.

4. Action Tracking Report Aithisg a' Leantainn Gnìomhachd

There was circulated Report No. AS/19/18 dated 21 November 2018 by the Corporate Audit Manager.

In discussion, the following main points were raised by Members:-

- the slippage on the review of the Burials and Cremations policy was extremely disappointing and information was sought and provided on the recruitment challenges which had delayed the appointment of the Burials and Cremation Officer;
- an explanation was sought and provided on the process for the retention, storage and disposal of historic paper records. It was confirmed that burial records would be stored in fire proof cabinets in Service Points;
- an assurance was sought and provided that there was flexibility to allow the advanced purchase of lairs given the demand from relatives and also given the financial implications for some families and undertakers. The Head of Environmental and Amenity Services advised this was only an issue where a cemetery was reaching capacity and undertook to investigate a specific matter raised in the Dingwall and Seaforth Ward;
- the implications of the review of the management rules for cemeteries in relation to having ornaments and memorabilia on lairs given the sensitivities around this issue;
- in relation to the statutory consultation to be carried out on the management rules for cemeteries, there was a need to better understand and manage the different expectations of communities across Highland relative to the Council's policy and audits of performance;

- in particular, the expectations of the public and Members in relation to grass cutting in cemeteries could not always be delivered within the available resources and therefore the need to consider other potential sources of funding if an enhanced level of maintenance was being sought;
- concern was expressed at slippage on the high priority items set out in Appendix 3 to the report and particularly in relation to any slippage on the programme for bridge inspections. An assurance was provided that bridge inspections were being undertaken and performance reported to the Environment, Development and Infrastructure Committee. Reports to Local Committees would also be provided going forward;
- the potential to provide a pictorial representation at cemeteries in relation to the placement of ornaments to assist with grass cutting. The Head of Environmental and Amenity Services advised that he would investigate this matter further; and
- as a general point, the potential for a cost benefit analysis to be carried out on the savings generated from implementing the audit recommendations weighed against the cost of the extra resources required.

The Committee **NOTED** the action tracking information provided including the revised target dates for the completion of outstanding actions.

5. Code of Corporate Governance Còd Riaghladh Corporra

There was circulated Report No. AS/20/18 dated 15 November 2018 by the Head of Corporate Governance.

In discussion, the following main points were raised by Members:-

- an explanation was sought and provided in regard to procedure where councillors had a complaint against each other in terms of it being dealt with internally and externally by the Standards Commission;
- confirmation was sought and provided that all reports to Council and Committees must include Gaelic impact assessments, and the list set out in the report was not definitive; and
- the Chair provided confirmation that while there was a record of all the training which had taken place, historically Members attendance had not been recorded. However a system was now being put in place to ensure attendance was being monitored going forward.

The Committee:-

- NOTED** the progress on delivering the 2017/18 Code of Corporate Governance; and
- APPROVED** the 2018/19 Code of Corporate Governance.

6. Corporate Complaints Progress Adhartas Ghearanan Corporra

There was circulated Report No. AS/21/18 dated 20 November 2018 by the Depute Chief Executive/Director of Corporate Resources.

In discussion, the following main points were raised by Members:-

- an explanation was sought and provided on the spike in complaints in relation to land and property. Members were advised this was a broad category across the Council which for example included public toilets. A piece of work was to be undertaken to review the recording of complaints under this category, so that it was more transparent;
- the potential to separate out complaints which were operational issues and those which related to political or policy decisions of the Council. The Benefits and Welfare Manager undertook to investigate this matter further;
- clarification was sought on the reasons for the reduction in the overall number of complaints which had been received. This was mainly due to the new renewal process which had been put in place for garden waste bins and the weather conditions over the grass cutting season which had resulted in less maintenance being required;
- confirmation was sought and provided that there was a statutory process in place to ensure that when a complaint was closed the complainant was satisfied that it had been dealt with; and
- it was surprising that more complaints were not being made electronically.

The Committee **NOTED**:-

- i. the Council's six month performance for Stage 1 and Stage 2 complaints;
- ii. the decrease in the number of complaints received and also that the number of complaints continued to be a low volume within the context of the scale of the Council's customer base and the scope of services provided;
- iii. the continued improvement in performance at Stage 1 and the ongoing work around Stage 2; and
- iv. that support officers continued participation in the Local Authority Complaint Handlers Network.

7. Lean Review of Internal Audit Process Ath-sgrùdadh Lom air In-Sgrùdadh

There was circulated Report No. AS/22/18 dated 30 October 2018 by the Depute Chief Executive/Director of Corporate Resources.

In discussion, a point was raised on the potential to quantify the level of savings Internal Audit generated for the Council and the opportunity for performance indicators to be introduced to capture this information. The Corporate Audit and Performance Manager advised that this issue was being considered and advised of the need to undertake a cost benefit analysis approach in relation to the burden capturing this information may place on officers across the Council.

The Committee **NOTED** the successful completion of the Lean review of the internal audit process which has been conducted by staff in the Audit & Performance Team, Corporate Resources Service. This has resulted in improved processes which will offer efficiencies in the way the Internal Audit Plan is delivered and benefit staff within the Team and across the Council.

8. Members Survey on the Effectiveness of Audit and Scrutiny Committee Suirbhidh Bhall mu Èifeachdas na Comataidh Sgrùdaidh

There was circulated Report No. AS/23/18 dated 1 November 2018 by the Depute Chief Executive/Director of Corporate Resources.

The Chair advised that Members would be consulted on proposals to review the role and remit of the Committee and a discussion paper had been prepared by the Corporate Audit & Performance Manager.

This included a proposal to reduce the size of the Committee to give it more focus and provide for more effective scrutiny, in common with other similar scrutiny bodies in Scotland. The consultation would also include information on the political representation that would apply for the different scenarios proposed.

Members' training was an important part of the review and concern was expressed at lack of take up of training opportunities which had been provided. The proposal was to identify training that was more appropriate to Members' needs, including online training, and also to consider the most suitable time for that training to be rolled out. The consultation paper also proposed there should be an increased focus on outcomes, and how these should be measured and monitored, rather than on the process.

In response to questions, the Chair advised that deadline for comments on the consultation paper was the end of January 2019, and it was hoped to implement the outcome of the review after the Council recess next year.

In discussion, Members welcomed the review and raised the following main points:-

- the survey would be undertaken on an annual basis and it would be helpful in future if Members could add textual comments to provide for a better understanding of their views;
- a key determinate of the length of meetings was Members engagement in scrutinising the papers presented;
- support was expressed for the need to be more focused on performance and outcomes in addition to the governance around policy and procedure and the potential to derive more benefits from the range of corporate performance data collected annually;
- there was a need to consider how the Committee's scrutiny role sat with the current role of the strategic committees;
- the number of Members on the Committee reflected that the Council was a large organisation from a Scottish perspective and perhaps the attendances at Committee may be a more important consideration. However, it was recognised the size of the Committee was raised regularly in External Audit reports;
- there would be benefit in considering best practice elsewhere with specific reference to how Parliamentary scrutiny committees conducted their business;
- the potential to draft in expertise from out with the Council to provide fresh new ideas and suggestions on improved ways of working. The Chair confirmed that lay membership was an option in the paper;

- the opportunity for more business to be held in private to allow for a more full and frank discussion at the Committee and the need for further advice to be taken on this matter; and
- the proposal to undertake the survey on annual basis would allow for benchmarking in terms of whether the review was making a difference going forward.

The Committee:-

- i. **AGREED** that the survey be conducted annually;
- ii. **AGREED** to the development of online learning resources for Members on their role in scrutiny; and
- iii. **NOTED** the Committee Chair and Vice-Chair's intent to review the role and remit of Committee.

9. External Audit Update Report Aithisg às Ùr air Sgrùdadh on Taobh A-muigh

There was circulated an External Audit update report provided by the Council's External Auditors (Grant Thornton).

In presenting the report, the External Auditor highlighted the timeline for the Account Commission's Best Value Assurance report. This report sought to provide the Commission with assurance on the Council's statutory duty to deliver Best Value, including follow up of the Council's previous report in 2010.

Thereafter, Members were advised that it was not anticipated the introduction of IFRS9: Financial Instruments would have a material impact on the Council's budget. This was a complex area and further work was being undertaken on the implications.

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

The meeting ended at 12.15pm.

The Highland Council

Minutes of Meeting of the **Isle of Skye and Raasay Committee (Comataidh an Eilein Sgitheanaich agus Ratharsair)** held in the Chamber, Tigh na Sgire, Park Lane, Portree on **Monday, 3 December, 2018 at 10.30 am.**

Present:

Mr J Finlayson
Mr J Gordon

Mr R MacDonald

In attendance:

Mr W MacKinnon, Ward Manager, Chief Executive's Service
Mr F Nixon, Group Manager, Scottish Fire and Rescue Service
Mr M Colliar, Station Manager, Scottish Fire and Rescue Service
Mr R Middlemiss, Area Manager, Scottish Fire and Rescue Service
Mr D Esson, Education Quality Improvement Manager, West, Care and Learning Service
Ms J Bruce, Principal Housing Officer, Community Services
Mr D Kennedy, Access Officer, Development & Infrastructure Service
Mr A MacInnes, Administrative Assistant, Chief Executive's Service

Also in attendance:

Mr R MacKenzie, Area Manager West, NHS Highland
Shadri Nel)
Katrina Martin) Portree High School/ Eilean a Cheò/Misty Isle Youth Forum
Julia Coe)

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

Mr J Gordon – Cathraiche (Chair)

Business

1. Apologies for Absence Leisgeulan

There were no apologies for absence.

2. Declarations of Interest Foillseachaidhean Com-pàirt

There were no declarations of interest.

3. Minutes Geàrr-chunntas

There were circulated for information, Minutes of Meeting of the Isle of Skye and Raasay Committee (Comataidh an Eilein Sgitheanaich agus Ratharsair) held on 3 September, 2018, which were approved at the Highland Council meeting held on 6 September, 2018, the terms of which were **NOTED**.

4. **Scottish Fire and Rescue Service Local Committee Performance Report** **Aithisg Coileanaidh Comataidh Ionadail Seirbheis Smàlaidh agus Teasairginn na h-Alba**

There was circulated Report No SR/15/18 by the Local Senior Officer, Scottish Fire and Rescue Service which provided an update on progress against the priorities outlined in the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service Area Committee Plan for Skye and Raasay 2016-2018. The report also contained previously agreed information and performance as requested by the Committee.

In discussion, the following main points were raised:-

- As part of the transformation of the Fire Service, there would be 56 full time Rural Fire Officer posts created to support the Retained Service in rural areas across Scotland. This was in addition to the current structure. One of these posts would be based in Portree. Further, new Rapid Response Units would be based in three Stations on Skye and Raasay and would hopefully assist in improving the availability in the Stations receiving them. This was a great investment with new equipment and technology which would have a positive impact on the Service's operational response.
- The Service was actively recruiting in a number of communities to improve station and fire appliance availability and there had been some new appointments to stations in Broadford, Staffin and Dunvegan. There was currently some difficulty in recruiting to the station in Uig, but the service was actively promoting vacancies locally in the hope of attracting applicants. One of the benefits of the new Rural Fire Officer post was that the Officer would be able to act as back up cover where there were gaps in station availability on the Island.
- Day time availability of Fire Personnel in rural areas was a significant challenge for the Service given that primary employment of personnel was during the day. However in rural areas the incidents that stations attended were very low and most domestic incidents happened during the night when availability of stations was good. The Service was actively recruiting personnel where there were gaps in availability.
- It was queried if the costs of dealing with muirburning incidents were increasing each year. It was explained that while no exact costs could be given, such incidents were expensive for the Service to deal with given the prolonged time fire crews had to be in attendance.
- Although the number of wildfires had been low in the area, some of them had been very serious and it was queried what the service was doing to tackle this. It was explained that an analysis of such incidents identified seasonal variations e.g. muirburning season and holiday periods. The Service had introduced a number of fire reduction strategies and thematic action plans targeting these types of incidents. Working in partnership with other key agencies, the Service was working hard to reduce these incidents overall and targeting key groups ahead of known peak activity periods.
- In terms of the Fire Service acting as First Responders to health care in the area, it was advised that once terms and conditions had been nationally agreed this would enable the Service to move to this new role in supporting health services, particularly in rural areas in certain types of medical emergency. Trials of training Officers in out of hospital cardiac arrest had been

carried out which had been very successful and it was intended this would be one of the new roles of the Fire Service.

Having scrutinised the report, the Committee **NOTED** the Local Performance Report.

5. NHS Highland – Progress Update with Implementation of the Ritchie Report NHS na Gàidhealtachd – Cunntas Adhartais mu Bhuileachadh Aithisg Ritchie

Mr Ross MacKenzie, Area Manager West, NHS Highland was in attendance and provided an update on the implementation of Sir Lewis Ritchie's report into Out-of-Hours Care in Skye, Lochalsh & South West Ross.

The Committee were briefed on action being taken to implement a number of recommendations made by Sir Lewis Ritchie into Out-of-Hours Care in relation to:- Urgent Care Services from Portree Hospital; Community Beds – to maintain current provision pending future discussion on provision in North Skye; Closer Interagency and Public Participation; Collaboration with Ambulance Service; Collaboration with NHS 24; First Responders – Developing Community Schemes; Workforce Capability and Capacity; Housing Solutions; Road Issues; Transport & Accessibility; Digital Innovation; Glenelg/Arnisdale capacity; Raasay recruitment; Centre for Excellence and Training; Lochcarron service model; Use of NHS 24; Work Streams and Community engagement to implement recommendations.

In discussion, the following main points were raised by Members:-

- In terms of urgent care services in Skye it was encouraging to note that 5 new Advanced Nurse Practitioners (ANP) had been recruited and were being trained. This was in addition to the current 3 ANP in post at present. It was intended to resume a 24 hour care service from around about May, 2019, subject to the successful completion of staff training;
- The public were encouraged to use the NHS 24 service for medical issues so that they could be directed to the most appropriate resource and ensuring there was no delay in their care.
- In relation to community beds, it was felt that trying to recruit staff for this service would be challenging given recruitment difficulties in the area. The community had made some helpful comments regarding problems with the NHS recruitment website and as a result some jobs were now being advertised via a different website.
- Workforce capacity and housing for key staff were major concerns. There was a need to be more proactive to find housing solutions for key staff. Work was ongoing regarding housing provision on the new Broadford Hospital site and the NHS were liaising with the local Housing Association to find a joint housing solution.
- It was noted with sadness that there was a fatality on Raasay yesterday and it was queried if there were any lessons to be learned from this incident.
- Transport and accessibility of medical care for Raasay was a work stream issue being looked at. In terms of transport some boat charter provision was being considered and there would be talks with Calmac regarding Out of Hours cover. Access to medical care was the biggest issue to resolve for Raasay and 4 Support Workers for the Island would have provided 24 hour cover, but due to sickness absence amongst team members and that the Support Workers did not have to live on the Island, had prevented this happening.

- There was discussion regarding the future provision of beds at Portree Hospital, whether they were to be hospital beds or community beds and an option appraisal exercise by the Scottish Future Trust (SFT) had been suggested. However, there were concerns about the SFT not being independent for such an exercise.
- The Scottish Government's Health Secretary in a letter to Rhoda Grant MSP had advised that there would be no more funding to implement the recommendations in Sir Lewis Ritchie's report. In this respect, it was felt that the Scottish Government needed to make a clear statement to the Community if it was going to fund the recommendations contained in the Ritchie report or not. If not, the view was expressed that this would represent the end of what traditionally was NHS provision in North Skye. There was a need for the Scottish Government to fund the recommendations. Portree was the main population centre on Skye and Skye was an international tourist hub. Therefore, Portree should have a 24 hour urgent care unit which Sir Lewis Ritchie said should be equitable with the provision in Broadford.
- There was optimism and expectation that funding would be available for Sir Lewis Ritchie's recommendations as there could not be radical and wide ranging changes without this. At least half of the recommendations would require additional resources.

Thereafter, the Cathraiche (Chair) thanked Mr MacKenzie, Area Manager West, NHS Highland for his presentation.

6. Celebrating the Year of Young People A' Comharrachadh Bliadhna na h-Òigridh

There was circulated Report No. SR/16/18 by the Education Quality Improvement Manager (West) which provided an update of the variety of activities undertaken with Portree High School Associated School Group to support The Year of Young People.

Also in attendance were S6 pupils on behalf of Portree High School/ Eilean a Cheò/Misty Isle Youth Forum who had worked on developing a new "Positive Relationships and Bullying Prevention Policy and Guidance". This included consulting young people across Highland to create the new policy and guidance. The policy had been launched on 14 June, 2018 at the High Life Highland, Highland Youth Parliament Annual Conference. This was the first Care and Learning Policy which had been developed by young people across Highland from initial consultation through to its launch. The S6 pupils gave an account of their experiences and role in developing the policy. The new policy had the positive impact of Head Teachers seeking the assistance of pupils to help other pupils to tackle the problem of bullying in Schools and talking to the bullies to find out what was happening in their lives to act like this and recognising that the bully may also need support. There was also more awareness in Schools of the Bullying Policy and less stigma around the subject and pupils felt more able to talk about bullying issues. Further, in terms of online bullying, best practice was to treat this the same way as any other form of bullying.

The Committee commended the work of the Misty Isle Youth Forum in developing the "Positive Relationships and Bullying Prevention Policy and Guidance". Their approach to developing the policy had been impressive, with a great deal of honesty on the subject by both pupils and teachers and working together to deliver a new strategy and policy. The Leadership shown at the Forum and from the School was exceptional.

In discussion, the following main points were raised by Members:-

- The Year of Young People themes on Participation; Education; Health and Wellbeing; Culture; Equality and Discrimination and Enterprise and Regeneration could be seen in all schools in the area and this was very positive. Encouragement and support to schools would be provided for them to continue with these themes and importantly to celebrate and promote the pupils achievements.
- Smaller Schools such as Elgol and Raasay had seen a wide range of developments taking place, working with a range of different partners. This showed that communities and schools working together could bring positive outcomes for pupils.
- The wide range of activities being carried out in schools was commended and congratulated. Highlights of the Year of Young People, included The Misty Isle Youth Forum who not only represented other young people but also their communities and it highlighted what young people could do. Other highlights included Portree High School linking with Columba 1400; Leadership opportunities; examples of intergenerational work and the ongoing range of health initiatives in schools;
- The holistic approach to education and cultural interactions was commended;
- It was queried if the interaction of Portree High School with Columba 1400 could be rolled out to all schools on Skye. It was explained that while it would be beneficial to continue with this initiative there would be significant cost implications for schools. However, schools did have links with Columba 1400 and work was ongoing to see how these links could be formalised.

Thereafter, the Committee **NOTED** the report and update on the variety of activities undertaken with Portree High School Associated School Group to support The Year of Young People.

In accordance with Standing Order 9, with the consent of the meeting, item 8 on the agenda was taken at this point.

8. Housing Performance Report Aithisg Deanadais Taigheadais

There was circulated Report No. SR/18/18 by the Director of Community Services which provided information on how the Housing Section performed in relation to Scottish Social Housing Charter and other performance indicators up to 30 September 2018.

In discussion, the following main points were raised by Members:-

- It was queried what advice was available for people on Universal Credit and did the Council have appropriate resources to offer this advice. It was advised that the Council had a Policy Officer in its Housing Policy and Investment team who focused on Universal Credit. This Officer worked closely with local staff on the changes to Universal Credit. The Council also had a Welfare Support team and offered housing support through 'New Start'.
- it was advised that due to Scottish Government changes to secure tenancies, new rules meant there could not now be an end date to a secure tenancy. It was uncertain what the impact of this would be on the availability of tenancies locally over the winter period.

- There had been a decrease in the number of people presenting themselves as homeless, anecdotal evidence suggested that because people knew that there was a shortage of accommodation locally there were fewer people presenting themselves as homeless or they may present themselves elsewhere as homeless.
- Anti social behaviour cases were low, but continued to be monitored as some of the cases involved repeat offenders.
- There had been an increase in the number of people giving up their tenancies in less than a year. The reasons for this were uncertain but may be due to people moving away for specialist health and social care reasons; to gain support from families living elsewhere; moving away for employment or transfers between the Council and other landlords. Further analysis of the reasons behind this increase would be provided in a future report.

Thereafter, the Committee **NOTED** the information provided on housing performance in the period 1 April 2018 to 30 September 2018.

7. Roads Maintenance Programme 2019/20 Prògram Càradh Rathaidean airson 2019/20

There was circulated Report No.SR/17/18 by the Director of Community Services which provided details of the proposed 2019/20 Roads Maintenance Programme for the Isle of Skye and Raasay. A further update on the Programme was tabled at the meeting.

In discussion, the following main points were raised by Members:-

- There was optimism that the roads budget would not face further cuts in the next financial year. The new Chief Executive had attended a staff and public engagement session recently on Skye and feedback from this was that staff and the public stressed the importance of ensuring that the road network and infrastructure was a priority for them. Arising from a recent Roads Seminar in Inverness, there may be a review of the criteria to determine the roads budget allocation for different areas. The Director of Community Services had stated that the Isle of Skye had the worst roads in Highland and therefore it was felt that the criteria of road condition should be considered. The Chief Executive had stressed the importance of localism and therefore there was a need to ensure that sufficient resources were available for roads on Skye.
- Additional funding for the road infrastructure on Skye was needed given the significant increase in visitors to the Island. Millions of pounds from tourism was being generated on Skye and the tax revenues were going to the UK Government and Scottish Government. There was a need for this revenue to be invested locally, in order for Skye to have a sustainable tourist industry.
- when there were major road repairs to be undertaken on Skye, the equipment had to be brought onto the Island from elsewhere which caused delays. If the local roads team had the necessary equipment based on Skye, the works could be carried out much quicker. The roads team had also suffered reductions in staff numbers over time due to successive budget cuts.

Thereafter, the Committee **APPROVED** the proposed 2019/20 Road Maintenance Programme for the Isle of Skye & Raasay.

**9. West Highland and Islands Amended Core Paths Plan, Skye and Raasay Area
Plana Atharraichte Phrìomh Cheuman na Gàidhealtachd an Iar agus nan Eilean,
Sgìre an Eilein Sgitheanaich agus Ratharsair**

There was circulated Report No. SR/19/18 by the Director of Development & Infrastructure which presented a Draft Amended Core Paths Plan for the Skye and Raasay area.

In discussion, the following main points were raised by Members:-

- Hill path repair work was done in a sensitive way, using local materials, to recognised techniques in order to keep the path looking as natural as possible. There were exceptions to this however, such as the path to the 'Old Man of Storr' where there was no alternative but to construct a large wide path due to the large number of visitors to that location.
- Non hill paths were constructed in a way that they could be used for multi purposes;
- There was no Council funding for the amended Core Paths Plan and it was uncertain if following Brexit, improving public access funding from the Scottish Rural Development Programme would still be available. However, if it did continue, the Core Paths Plan would be in place and should be considered for funding.
- There had been significant increases in visitors to locations such as the 'Old Man of Storr' (circa 205,000 people) and the 'Fairy Pools' (circa 180,000 people), and the Fairy Glen on Skye and there was a need to try and keep people to paths to avoid erosion to the wider area.

The Committee **APPROVED** the Skye and Raasay area of the West Highland and Islands Amended Core Path Plan to be published for formal consultation.

**10. Street Naming – Development at Kyleakin, Isle of Skye
Ainmeachadh Sràide – Leasachadh ann an Caol Acain, An t-Eilean Sgitheanach**

There was circulated Report No. SR/20/18 by the Head of Policy and Reform which invited the Committee to homologate the name for a new development of 18 properties in Kyleakin as Charles Cameron Place. The Gaelic translation being Ceàrn Theàrlaich Chamshroin.

The Committee **AGREED** to homologate the naming of the new development in Kyleakin as proposed by the Developer as follows:

Charles Cameron Place - Ceàrn Theàrlaich Chamshroin

The meeting concluded at 1.05 pm.

The Highland Council

Minutes of Meeting of the **Care, Learning and Housing Committee** held in the Council Chamber, Council Headquarters, Glenurquhart Road, Inverness on Thursday 6 December 2018 at 10.05 am.

Present:

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| Mr A Baxter | Mr W MacKay (video conferencing) |
| Mr B Boyd | Mr G MacKenzie |
| Mrs I Campbell | Mrs I MacKenzie |
| Mr A Christie | Mr D Macpherson |
| Mrs M Cockburn | Mr R MacWilliam |
| Ms K Currie | Mrs B McAllister |
| Mr J Finlayson (Vice Chair) | Ms L Munro (Vice Chair) |
| Mr A Graham | Mr D Rixson |
| Mr T Heggie | Mrs F Robertson |
| Mr A Jarvie | Mr G Ross |
| Ms E Knox | Mr A Sinclair (Substitute) |
| Mr D Mackay | Ms N Sinclair |

Religious Representatives:

Ms S Lamont

Youth Convener:

Ms E Leitch

Non-Members also present:

| | |
|-----------------------------------|-----------------|
| Mrs J Barclay | Mr R Laird |
| Mr R Bremner (video conferencing) | Mrs D Mackay |
| Mr K Gowans | Mrs T Robertson |

In attendance:

Ms S Campbell, Interim Director of Care and Learning
 Mr W Gilfillan, Director of Community Services
 Mr B Porter, Head of Resources, Care and Learning Service
 Ms K Ralston, Interim Head of Children's Services, Care and Learning Service
 Dr J Vance, Interim Head of Education, Care and Learning Service
 Mr D Goldie, Head of Housing and Building Maintenance, Community Services
 Mr B Northedge, Sustainable Education in Highland Communities Programme Manager, Care and Learning Service
 Mrs F Shearer, Education Quality Improvement Manager, Care and Learning Service
 Mr B Cameron, Housing Policy and Investment Manager, Community Services
 Mr M Mitchell, Finance Manager, Finance Service
 Ms M Macleman, Principal Tenant and Customer Engagement Officer, Community Services
 Ms J Douglas, Care and Learning Alliance (Third Sector)
 Ms G Newman, Highland Children's Forum (Third Sector)

Ms S Blyth, Highland Parent Council Partnership
 Ms G Hainey, Tenant Representative
 Mr A Tubb, Tenant Representative
 Miss J Maclennan, Principal Administrator, Chief Executive's Office
 Miss M Murray, Committee Administrator, Chief Executive's Office

Also in attendance:

Mr J McIntyre, Strontian Community School Building Ltd
 Mr J Tait, Strontian Community School Building Ltd
 Mr I Murray, Chief Executive, High Life Highland
 Mrs A Mason, Highland Archivist, High Life Highland

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

Mr J Finlayson in the Chair

Preliminaries

Prior to the commencement of formal business, the Chair thanked former Chair, Mr A Baxter, for his service to the Committee and welcomed Ms S Campbell, Ms K Ralston and Dr J Vance to their first meeting of the Committee in their new roles as Interim Director of Care and Learning, Interim Head of Children's Services and Interim Head of Education respectively.

In addition, he explained that it had been intended to bring a report on the work and impact of the third sector to today's Committee. However, it would now be presented in January 2019. He went on to state that third sector commissioned children's services had worked hard in a collaborative way to bring together information that highlighted their services and the positive impact they had on children and families, and recognition of the importance of third sector services would not be diminished by postponing the report to the January Committee. In the meantime, there were stalls in the foyer where third sector representatives were available to discuss the services they provided and how they were working with the Council and other partners, including children and families themselves, to support and improve outcomes for children and families throughout Highland.

Business

1. Apologies for Absence
Leisgeulan

Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of Ms P Munro, Mr C Smith, Ms M Newdick, Prof H van Woerden and The Very Rev S Murray.

2. Declarations of Interest
Foillseachaidhean Com-pàirt

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

Item 3 – Mr A Christie and Mr D Rixson (both non-financial)
 Item 4 – Mr D Rixson (non-financial)

Item 5 – Mr A Christie (financial)

Item 6 – Mr A Christie and Mr R MacWilliam (both non-financial)

Item 8 – Mr K Gowans, Mr A Jarvie, Ms E Leitch, Mr D Macpherson and Ms L Munro (all non-financial)

3. Homelessness: Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan Dìth Dachaigh: Plana gus Dachaighean a Thoirt Seachad gu Luath

Declarations of Interest: Mr A Christie and Mr D Rixson declared non-financial interests in this item as General Manager of Inverness, Badenoch and Strathspey Citizens Advice Bureau and the Council's appointee to Lochaber Housing Association respectively but, having applied the test outlined in Paragraphs 5.2 and 5.3 of the Councillors' Code of Conduct, concluded that their interests did not preclude their involvement in the discussion.

There had been circulated Report No CLH/55/18 dated 26 November 2018 by the Director of Community Services.

The Chair highlighted that it had been anticipated that initial Scottish Government funding to develop the Highland Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan would be between £30,000 and £40,000. However, it had now been confirmed as £61,000. That being the case, the Head of Housing and Building Maintenance recommended that, in addition to appointing an additional temporary post to lead on the development of the plan during calendar year 2019, the funding be used to carry out focussed work to try and find permanent housing solutions for the clients who had been in temporary accommodation the longest.

In addition, the Head of Housing and Building Maintenance highlighted that 25% of homeless applicants were in the 18-25 years age category, not 6% as stated in the report.

During discussion, the following issues were raised:-

- thanks were expressed to the Scottish Government for the Rapid Rehousing initiative which was hugely helpful in terms of working with local authorities to address homelessness;
- a concern was raised about drug misuse in Caithness and it was suggested that consideration be given to a multi-agency seminar on the issue. It was further suggested that a representative of the Highland Alcohol and Drugs Partnership be invited to the Committee to discuss what was being done to address it. The Head of Housing and Building Maintenance suggested that it would helpful to have further discussions locally. Members added that, at a recent meeting of Caithness Community Partnership, it had been agreed to establish a multi-agency working group to address drug misuse and associated issues in Caithness, and all Local Members were entitled to attend the Community Partnership;
- the figures in the report were stark, and reflected how the UK-wide housing crisis was affecting Highland communities;
- minimising the number of under 21s in shared temporary accommodation had to be one of the principal aims of the Housing Service if it wanted to break the cycle of homelessness and poverty that many communities faced, and Members welcomed previous comments in that regard having been taken into account.

Linked to that was the need for more affordable housing in rural areas as, in addition to ensuring that rural communities were as sustainable as possible, it was necessary to keep young people within their own communities and support networks as much as possible to help them through the traumatic experience of homelessness;

- information was sought on how the Rapid Rehousing Plan would meet the needs of those who had a history of being unable to sustain a tenancy in the long term, often due to issues such as alcohol and/or drug dependency, poor mental health etc. The need for a sustainable solution to ensure that they had the best chance to succeed in their lives, whilst at the same time ensuring the public sector was not incurring more costs than necessary, was emphasised. In that regard, the Head of Housing and Building Maintenance highlighted that a feature of the Action Plan at Appendix 2 of the report was the establishment of a business case for developing Council-owned specialist accommodation for clients with high support needs;
- concern was expressed that there had been a significant increase in the number of people in employment presenting as homeless, and that the number would continue to increase as wages stagnated and interest rates rose;
- attention was drawn to the average weekly rent of various types of accommodation as set out in paragraph 7.2 of the report, and concern was expressed that someone in employment who was placed in a private sector HMO or B&B would have to pay £186.00 per week, thereby making it more difficult for them to maintain a job and find somewhere to live in the long term;
- where the Council relied on the private sector to provide temporary accommodation it was a profit-generating exercise for the landlords, and the Council and those in the accommodation were paying the price;
- the fact that families could expect to be in temporary accommodation for a year was cause for concern;
- the housing crisis was a consequence of a generation of failed housing policy and the biggest thing that could be done to address it was to build Council houses. However, the Council was playing catch-up in that regard, and that would continue due to land constraints and infrastructure/education pressures;
- in relation to the housing need figures by housing market area in paragraph 2.6 of the report, Members did not agree with the inclusion of approximately 15,000 private rented sector homes. It was contended that the private rented sector was a problem, not a solution, and should not be regarded in the same way as the social rent and owner/occupier sectors;
- information was sought, and provided, on the number of people currently on the Highland Housing Register;
- concern was expressed that although 25% of all new housing developments was affordable housing it might be several years before the houses were available as developers were prioritising their own properties, with affordable houses being left until the end of the scheme. Information having been sought on what the Council could do to ensure that affordable houses were built at the same rate as other houses in the development, the Head of Housing and Building Maintenance explained that it was a matter for the Development and Infrastructure Service and undertook to liaise with the Head of Development and Regeneration;
- the high separation/divorce rate was adding to the need for more affordable homes;
- few young people nowadays had the opportunity to have their own home, and many were living at home with their parents into their thirties;

- voids resulted in a loss of rent and council tax, and speeding up the turnaround would create revenue that could be reinvested in housing for those most in need. An example was cited of a housing association property not being re-let for a year due to a kitchen refurbishment, and the Head of Housing and Building Maintenance suggested that Mr D Macpherson liaise with him in that regard;
- reference was made to instances of estates changing hands and families who had lived in estate properties for generations being evicted. Information having been sought on whether the Housing Service worked with estate owners to ensure they realised their commitment to their long-term tenants, the Head of Housing and Building Maintenance undertook to consider how the service might want to engage with estate owners who had housing to help them help the Council prevent homelessness;
- reference was made to a survey which had asked people how long they would last before they became homeless if they became unemployed tomorrow. The answer was often until the next pay cheque, which demonstrated the fragility of many people's housing situation;
- an event outwith the control of the Council, such as large scale redundancies, could create a wave of homelessness, and that was why the Scottish Government initiative was good as it was rapid and responsive;
- it was necessary to ensure that both the Council and tenants understood their responsibilities, and that appropriate infrastructure was in place to support more vulnerable tenants or those that led a chaotic lifestyle. At present a small number of clients took up a disproportionate amount of time and if that could be addressed through a Housing First approach it would free up officer/agency time to address the bigger picture;
- the proposals were not simply about increasing the number of tenancies but doing things in a different way that sustained tenancies, helped people recover and gave hope back to those who had lost it, and Members looked forward to seeing the first reports that showed a difference had been made to people's lives;
- many people who became homeless were simply victims of circumstance;
- Inverness South was one of the most affluent wards in Inverness but problems existed there too and Members were experiencing an increasing number of cases relating to Universal Credit. An example was cited and information was sought, and provided, on how much the issue of homelessness was being exacerbated by the rollout of Universal Credit;
- in relation to the potential provision of accommodation in other areas of Highland for those currently in temporary accommodation in Inverness, concern was expressed that, where a couple had separated and there were children involved, moving one parent to another area would have a detrimental impact. Further information was sought, and provided, in that regard;
- the proposed recruitment of three Rapid Rehousing Officers was welcomed;
- it was recognised that there were difficult choices to be made when balancing the needs of those who were homeless against those with particular medical needs;
- the fact that consideration was being given to developing specialist accommodation was welcomed as it could allow more flexibility in coping with temporary accommodation needs;
- clarification was sought, and provided, regarding the anticipated costs set out in Appendices 1 and 2;

- given that there were likely to be substantial job losses, information was sought, and provided, on whether there was some way of forecasting what the demand for housing was likely to be and what proactive steps the Council was taking to ensure that people did not have to be placed in HMOs or other temporary accommodation that did not meet their needs;
- the Tenant Advisor highlighted that, according to Inclusion Scotland figures, 50% of tenants in Scotland identified as having an impairment, and there were many more on the Highland Housing Register. A hidden disability was not obvious to many people but affected housing and homelessness, and there were many people who were homeless at home as they could not obtain suitable social housing;
- providing support to enable people to develop and maintain their capacity to live independently was a positive step but it had to be put into practice and should apply to all tenants, as should access to the right type of housing and ensuring that housing support services focussed on achieving positive outcomes and sustainable solutions; and
- on the point being raised, it was confirmed that the potential development of Council-owned specialist accommodation would form part of the proposed further report to Committee.

Thereafter, the Committee:-

- i. **APPROVED** the first iteration of the Highland Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan and associated Action Plan, as attached at Appendices 1 and 2 of the report, for submission to the Scottish Government;
- ii. **NOTED** that initial Scottish Government funding to develop the plan in 2019 had been confirmed as £61,000;
- iii. **AGREED** that the initial funding allocation to Highland be used to appoint an additional temporary post to lead on the development of the Highland Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan during calendar year 2019, and that the balance be used to carry out focussed work to try and find permanent housing solutions for the clients who had been in temporary accommodation the longest; and
- iv. **NOTED** that a further report would be presented to Committee with details of progress when further information on phase 2 funding was anticipated in early 2019.

4. Tenant Participation and Engagement Update Cunntas às Ùr mu Chom-pàirteachas Luchd-màil

Declaration of Interest: Mr D Rixson declared a non-financial interest in this item as the Council's appointee to Lochaber Housing Association but, having applied the test outlined in Paragraphs 5.2 and 5.3 of the Councillors' Code of Conduct, concluded that his interest did not preclude his involvement in the discussion.

There had been circulated Report No CLH/56/18 dated 26 November 2018 by the Director of Community Services.

The Chair acknowledged the work of the Council's Principal Tenant and Customer Engagement Officer, Mandy Macleman, and Tenant Participation Officers, Lorna Simpson, Joan Sutherland, Karin McKay and Kate MacLennan.

In introducing the report, the Head of Housing and Building Maintenance congratulated Lorna Simpson, Tenant Participation Officer, Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross, who had won the Tenant Participation Champion award at the Tpas Awards 2018, and had been shortlisted for a Highland Council Quality Award. South Kessock Tenant and Residents Association had also won two Tpas awards. He went on to present slides on a number of events that had taken place including Safe, Well and Connected events in Lochaber and Kingussie; Senior Safe Highland, Dingwall; Inverness Tenants Forum; Rate your Estate, South Kessock; and a visit by Orkney tenants to Wick Interested Tenants.

During discussion, the following issues were raised:-

- the report and the tenant participation activity taking place were welcomed;
- Members commended the Senior Safe Highlander event that had taken place in Caol, which had been well handled by the agencies involved, tackled serious issues without causing anxiety on the part of the elderly people present and been a source of useful information;
- reference was made to a Rate your Estate event in Hilton where there had been very little engagement by tenants, and information was sought, and provided, in terms of where there were areas of high tenant participation, what the difference was in those areas and how participation could be increased in Hilton;
- Members added their congratulations to those who had won Tpas awards;
- an update was sought, and provided, in relation to the four performance indicators where the Council had been in the bottom quartile of registered social landlords in 2017;
- information was sought on engagement with Elected Members regarding Rate your Estate events;
- Tenant Participation Officers were the approachable face of the Council and were hugely valued by communities. Their approach to resolving issues was an example of best practice and it was suggested that, at a time when every officer hour was at a premium, consideration be given to how their skillset could be utilised more widely. The Chair and Vice Chair undertook to raise the matter with the Leader of the Council;
- similar events to Rate your Estate had taken place in Tain and Balintore for a number of years, involving local Members, Tenant Participation Officers, Community Wardens, and housing and waste management representatives. The events had resulted in a substantial clean-up operation in Mansfield Estate which had had a positive impact to the extent that a garden competition was now in operation. However, disappointment was expressed regarding the level of weeds in Mansfield Estate and Balintore, and information was sought on the scrutiny that took place with regard to the funding paid by the Housing Service for the provision of amenity services. In addition, information was sought on why the moss cleaning activity in Balintore had come to a halt and when it would resume. The Director undertook to raise the issues with the service directly and respond to Mrs F Robertson;
- Members commended the Caithness, Sutherland and East Ross Tenants Forum and encouraged Members who had not yet attended a tenant group to go along, show their support and see the work being undertaken;
- each area had its own characteristics and it was not an easy process to get tenants involved;
- tenant representative, Mr A Tubb, described the remit of the Finance and Participation Working Group and explained that he hoped to be able to produce a

report for the Committee, on behalf of the Working Group, in the first half of 2019; and

- it was important to learn from the areas where success was being achieved and continue to build on engagement with tenants.

The Committee otherwise **NOTED** the recent tenant engagement activities in Highland and the recognition of these by the Scottish Housing Regulator and the Tenant Participation Advisory Service.

5. NHS Highland Assurance Report Aithisg Barantais NHS na Gàidhealtachd

Declaration of Interest: Mr A Christie declared a financial interest in this item as a Non-Executive Director 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 his involvement in the discussion.

There had been circulated Report No CLH/57/18 dated 9 November 2018 by the Interim Director of Care and Learning.

During discussion, the following issues were raised:-

- it was important to note the work the Third Sector did with young people undergoing Speech and Language Therapy;
- Members commended the significant amount of work undertaken by Health Visitors to increase the uptake of 27-30 month surveillance contact, and Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services to see 100% of referrals within 18 weeks;
- whilst breastfeeding rates were not where they needed to be there had been a significant improvement and it was important to recognise the work that had been undertaken in that regard;
- underpinning many of the statistics in the report was the work of the Third and Voluntary Sectors, which brought together groups of vulnerable people and provided an environment that encouraged them to be open to receiving other types of professional help. As the next round of budget decisions approached, it was important to give due consideration to the structure that lay behind the report and the outcomes wanted for children and young people in Highland;
- an update was sought, and provided, on the work being undertaken by the Community Planning Partnership in relation to recruitment;
- a new cross-party working group had been established to consider IT issues and it was suggested that the numerous IT issues affecting access to NHS Highland systems be brought to its attention;
- information was sought, and provided, on whether the Child Health Commissioner had any concerns regarding the Assurance Report and the priorities that had been identified; and
- in relation to Speech and Language Therapy, on the point being raised, it was confirmed that the impact of the Scottish Attainment Challenge and Emerging Literacy work taking place would be reported to Committee in January 2019.

The Committee otherwise scrutinised and **NOTED** the data and issues raised in the report.

6. Presentation: Strontian Primary School Project
Taisbeanadh: Pròiseact Bun-Sgoil Shròn an t-Sithein

Declarations of Interest: Mr A Christie and Mr R MacWilliam declared non-financial interests in this item as Directors of the Highland Small Communities Housing Trust but, having applied the test outlined in Paragraphs 5.2 and 5.3 of the Councillors' Code of Conduct, concluded that their interests did not preclude their involvement in the discussion.

There had been circulated Report No CLH/58/18 dated 26 November 2018 by the Interim Director of Care and Learning.

The report introduced a presentation by Mr J McIntyre and Mr J Tait, representatives of Strontian Community School Building Limited, who had led on the funding, design and construction of the new Strontian Primary School, a community asset now leased to the Council. Information was provided on the various stages of the project and their reflections on it, including the issues that had been experienced. They paid tribute to local Member, Mr A Baxter, for his steadfast support, and the Head of Resources for his constructive and helpful approach. In addition, it was highlighted that the school was recruiting for a new Head Teacher and Members were encouraged to promote the position to anyone who might be interested.

During discussion, the following issues had been raised:-

- Members congratulated the project team from Strontian for their achievements. The project was a first, not only in Highland but in Scotland, and it was hoped that it would inspire other communities throughout the country, not necessarily to build a school but in terms of what could be achieved with the talent that existed in what was a relatively small community;
- the honest assessment of the challenges that had been faced was welcomed;
- the project had required a change of mindset within the Council, and thanks were expressed to officers for seeing what was potentially achievable and backing it. It was necessary to continue with that change of mindset in terms of backing novel approaches, dealing with communities and how the Council went about project management on similar builds in the future;
- the project had been more challenging for the community than the Council and this had not been aided by the mismatch between Committees whereby the Care, Learning and Housing Committee effectively acted as the client and the Environment, Development and Infrastructure Committee had the relationship with developers and contractors. This was mirrored in all school build projects and it was suggested that there was a need to review the arrangements and have responsibility for funding new schools and management of projects under the remit of a single Committee to allow proper scrutiny to take place;
- the need for a genuine independent review, not simply lessons learned, so that the issues experienced by both the community and the council could be identified was emphasised, and it was hoped that the Council's Audit and Scrutiny Committee would examine the findings of the review in detail. The Head of Resources confirmed that a review would be appropriate to capture the learning in detail and undertook to engage with community representatives in terms of how to take that forward, with a report being brought back to Committee at the appropriate time;

- whilst the model was not ideal, it was necessary to learn lessons from it, refine it, and encourage and enable other communities to utilise it, where appropriate;
- the cost of building schools had increased significantly but to build one for less than £1m was remarkable. By way of perspective, it was highlighted that the cost of resurfacing the all-weather pitch at Charleston Academy had been £400k; and
- the fact that a local contractor had been used for the build had been central to the success of the project. Reference having been made to difficulties in getting contractors to undertake projects in areas such as Skye, it was suggested that it was necessary to consider how to support local contractors to take on substantial projects.

The Chair having thanked Mr Tait and Mr McIntyre for their inspirational presentation, the Committee **NOTED** the report and presentation.

7. Sustainable Education in Highland Communities: Update Foghlam Seasmhach ann an Coimhearsnachdan na Gàidhealtachd: Cunntas às Ùr

There had been circulated Report No CLH/59/18 dated 21 November 2018 by the Interim Director of Care and Learning.

During discussion, the following issues were raised:-

- the Management of Schools Programme Manager was about to retire and Members paid tribute to his hard work throughout his career;
- the innovative way of recruiting teachers, given the rural nature of Highland, was welcomed. Tribute too was paid to Cluster Heads for their co-operation together with all the teaching and support staff involved;
- this was a vital piece of work and it was right to have taken time to pause and reflect at the start of the year;
- a consultation framework and a programme for the establishment of the remainder of the Associated School Groups (ASGs) was essential as it would give certainty to both teachers and parents;
- recognising the change and upheaval of the process it was important to also involve communities with discussions, particularly Community Councils, as in the long term this would save both time and resources. Consultation had to be meaningful with all stakeholders fully engaged;
- each ASG had different needs so one model would not fit all;
- meetings had taken place to further develop plans for school office support and generic recruitment and information was sought as to what the outcomes of the meetings had been to allow Members to debate these; and
- a call was made for more substantial education items to be considered at Committee. The report made reference to proposed future consideration by Members but this needed to be as and when developments took place;

The Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the progress on appointments to the Sustainable Education in Highland Communities Team;
- i. **NOTED** the change in Directorate responsibility for the Programme; and

- ii. **AGREED** to the development of an overall multi-year plan for the Programme covering all 29 Highland Associated School Groups, and that the associated report to Committee should include a consultation framework and timetable;
- iii. **AGREED** that reports on Sustainable Education in Highland Communities be provided as appropriate, rather than at alternate Committees; and
- iv. **AGREED** that, where reports made reference to meetings that had taken place to progress specific issues, information be provided on the outcome of those meetings.

8. High Life Highland 6-monthly Performance Update Cunntas Coileanaidh 6-miosail High Life na Gàidhealtachd

Declarations of Interest:

Mr A Jarvie, Mr D Macpherson and Ms L Munro declared non-financial interests in this item as Directors of High Life Highland but, having applied the test outlined in Paragraphs 5.2 and 5.3 of the Councillors' Code of Conduct, concluded that their interests did not preclude their involvement in the discussion.

Mr K Gowans declared a non-financial interest as his wife was an employee of High Life Highland but, having applied the test outlined in Paragraphs 5.2 and 5.3 of the Councillors' Code of Conduct, concluded that his interest did not preclude his involvement in the discussion.

Ms E Leitch declared a non-financial interest on the grounds that she had supplied some information for the report 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 involvement in the discussion.

There had been circulated Report No CLH/60/18 dated 20 November 2018 by the Chief Executive, High Life Highland (HLH).

The Chief Executive reported that generally attendance figures at HLH facilities were up and he continued by detailing a number of major events which had taken place in the previous 6 months including the transfer of music tuition and the projects which the Youth Convenor was promoting. Each of HLH's update reports focused on a specific area and this time an overview was given to Members of the Archive Service, not only in relation to the facility in Inverness but throughout Highland, detailing the numerous programmes and activities which had taken place.

During discussion, the following issues were raised:-

- HLH was commended for the good work undertaken in the previous 6 months, particularly in relation to Music Tuition. In Skye, the introduction of a new bagpiping instructor had had a huge positive impact and elsewhere the feedback had also been positive. Overall, the number of pupils undertaking lessons had increased by 14% and details were sought, and received, as to how this could be attributed;
- assurances were sought, and received, that SQA Music students were still eligible for free instrumental tuition. In this regard, it was also important that

- those families who might not be able to afford music tuition were not discriminated against;
- the positive benefits of HLH's Leadership Programme were acknowledged. Involvement with Programme enhanced the lives of young people and had helped to refocus a number of young people, some of whom had struggled with academic side of school;
 - the Chief Executive was congratulated on his appointment as Chair of Community Leisure UK (Scotland);
 - similar to other bodies HLH had needed to make savings but they were commended for achieving a significant proportion of this through its commercial side;
 - the extension of hours at the Lochaber Archive Centre was welcomed. It was suggested that to enhance attendance a newsletter could be produced. The Wick Archive facility was also commended with attention drawn to its recent architectural award but, to increase footfall, it was suggested that improved additional signage was required;
 - the digitisation of archive documents should be explored. This would make these documents more widely available;
 - the Archive Service now had an international reputation and good use was made by tourists, especially those from the United States of America who were eager to research their ancestry. In addition, retired persons also were regular users;
 - an update on progress was sought, and received, on the possibility of HLH adopting the future management of Caithness Horizons; and
 - the future of Nucleus (The Nuclear and Caithness Archive) was under consideration, bearing in mind that it was mid-point in the lease period. Ideally, HLH would like to expand the archive but this would be dependent on budget considerations.

The Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** progress against the outcomes expected in the Service Delivery Contract with the Council for the operating period to September 2018;
- ii. **NOTED** the general updates since the last report in May 2018;
- iii. **NOTED** the range of services and programmes delivered by the staff in the four archive centres across Highland; and
- iv. **AGREED** that future reports would continue to highlight one specific area of service in more detail.

9. Minutes Geàrr-chunntas

The Committee **NOTED** the following Minutes:-

- i. Highland Violence Against Women Partnership Group – 15 August 2018;
- ii. Annual General Meeting of the Local Negotiating Committee for Teachers – 14 November 2018 (draft); and
- iii. Local Negotiating Committee for Teachers – 14 November 2018 (draft).

The meeting concluded at 1.25 pm.