

The Highland Council
No. 20 2020/2021

Minutes of Meeting of the **Highland Council** held REMOTELY on **Thursday, 25 March 2021** at 10.35am and continued on **Friday, 26 March 2021** at 9.00am.

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

Present:

Mr G Adam	Mr D Louden
Mr B Allan	Mrs L MacDonald
Mr R Balfour	Mr A MacInnes
Mrs J Barclay	Mrs D Mackay
Mr A Baxter	Mr D Mackay
Mr B Boyd	Mr W MacKay
Mr R Bremner	Mr G MacKenzie
Mr I Brown	Mr S Mackie
Mr J Bruce	Mr A Mackinnon
Mrs C Caddick	Ms A MacLean
Mrs I Campbell	Mr C MacLeod
Miss J Campbell	Mr D MacLeod
Mrs G Campbell-Sinclair	Mr D Macpherson
Mrs H Carmichael	Mr R MacWilliam
Mr A Christie	Mrs B McAllister
Dr I Cockburn	Mr J McGillivray
Mrs M Cockburn	Mr N McLean
Ms K Currie	Mr H Morrison
Mrs M Davidson	Mr C Munro
Mr J Finlayson	Ms L Munro
Mr M Finlayson	Mrs P Munro
Mr C Fraser	Mrs M Paterson
Mr D Fraser	Mr M Reiss
Mr L Fraser	Mr A Rhind
Mr R Gale	Mr D Rixson
Mr J Gordon	Mrs F Robertson
Mr K Gowans	Mrs T Robertson
Mr A Graham	Mr K Rosie
Mr J Gray	Mr G Ross
Mrs P Hadley	Mr P Saggars
Mr T Heggie	Ms N Sinclair
Mr A Henderson	Mr C Smith
Mr A Jarvie	Ms M Smith
Ms E Knox	Mr B Thompson
Mr B Lobban	Mrs C Wilson

In Attendance:

Chief Executive	Executive Chief Officer, Performance & Governance
Executive Chief Officer, Communities & Place	Executive Chief Officer, Property & Housing
Executive Chief Officer, Education & Learning	Executive Chief Officer, Resources & Finance
Executive Chief Officer, Infrastructure & Environment	Executive Chief Officer, Transformation & Economy

Mr B Lobban in the Chair (other than for Agenda items 18, 19 and 23 which were considered on 26 March when the Vice Convener (Mr A Henderson) took the Chair.

Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of Mrs I MacKenzie, Ms E Roddick, Mr A Sinclair and Mr I Ramon.

Preliminaries

Prior to the commencement of the formal business, the Convener advised the meeting of the considerable number of printed pages currently being produced/issued in respect of agendas and reports for meetings (and the significant costs involved in this regard) and that it was his intention to bring this issue to the Redesign Board to allow early consideration of alternative arrangements/new ways of working which could be put in place.

Also, the congratulations of the Council were conveyed to Brora Rangers FC following their recent victory over Heart of Midlothian FC in the second round of the Scottish Cup.

2. Declarations of Interest Foillseachaidhean Com-pàirt

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

Item 14 – Mr B Thompson and Mr A Jarvie (both Non-Financial)
Item 15 – Mr D Rixson, Mr T Heggie, Mr K Gowans and Mr A Jarvie (all Non-Financial)
Item 16 – Mr D Rixson (Non-Financial) and Mr S Mackie (Financial)
Item 17 – Mr D Rixson (Non-Financial)
Item 19 – Mr T Heggie and Mr K Gowans (both Non-Financial)
Item 20 – Mr B Thompson, Ms L Munro and Mr A Jarvie (all Non-Financial)
Item 23 – Ms L Munro, Mr A Christie and Mrs D MacKay (all Financial)
Item 27 – Mr R Gale (Non-Financial)
General – Mrs M Cockburn (Non-Financial)

3. Membership of the Council Ballrachd na Comhairle

It was **NOTED** that, following the By-Election for Ward 12 (Aird & Loch Ness) which had been held on Thursday, 11 March, Mr David Fraser had been elected as a Member of the Council.

In this regard, Mr Fraser was welcomed to the Council and responded accordingly.

4. Confirmation of Minutes Daingneachadh a' Gheàrr-chunntais

There had been submitted for confirmation as a correct record the Minutes of Meeting of the Council held on 17 December 2020/7 January 2021 and of the Special Meeting held on 4 March 2021 as contained in the Volume which had been circulated separately 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:-

In this regard, the Council **APPROVED** the Minutes of Meetings as circulated – subject to the following –

Education Committee, 11 February

*Starred Item 8 – Review of the Statutory Consultation Exercise to establish a Gaelic Medium catchment area for Gairloch Primary School – **AGREED**.

City of Inverness Area Committee. 18 February

It was **AGREED** that additional wording should be included at Item 10c – Common Good Fund Budget Setting for 2021/22 and Capital Programme – to make reference to the need for the Common Good Fund to set a financial and investment strategy.

Corporate Resources Committee, 25 February

*Starred Item 8(b) – Treasury Management Strategy Statement and Investment Statement 2021/22 and the Prudential Indicators – **AGREED**.

Sutherland County Committee, 1 March

*Starred Item 5 – Implementation of 20mph Speed Limits – to be progressed as soon as possible within Sutherland (with consultation being undertaken with communities across the County) – **AGREED**.

Tourism Committee, 17 March

*Starred Item - Preliminaries – in light of the fact that the Scottish Government had announced the earlier than expected lifting of Covid-19 restrictions in relation to tourism and travel, a Special Meeting of the Tourism Committee to be held on either 21 or 22 April 2021 (or in the previous week) and depending on the ability of Officers to prepare the required reports in adequate time – **AGREED**.

6. Community Planning Board Bòrd Dealbhadh Coimhearsnachd

There had been circulated Minutes of Meeting of the Community Planning Board held on 5 November 2020 (approved by the Board on 1 February 2021) which were **NOTED**.

7. Climate Change Working Group Buidheann-Obrach Atharrachadh na Gnàth-shìde

There had been circulated Minutes of Meeting of the Climate Change Working Group held on 29 January 2021 which were **APPROVED**.

8. Brexit Working Group Buidhean Obrach Brexit

There had been circulated Minutes of Meetings of the Brexit Working Group held on 14 January 2021 which were **APPROVED**.

9. Recovery Board Bòrd Ath-shlànachaidh

There had been circulated Minutes of Meetings of the Recovery Board held on 25

January 2021 which were **APPROVED**.

10. Redesign Board
Bòrd Ath-dhealbaidh

There had been circulated Minutes of Meeting of the Redesign Board held on 1 February 2021 which were **APPROVED**.

11. Membership of Committees, etc
Ballarachd Chomataidhean, msaa

It was **NOTED** that Ms M Smith, Ms P Hadley, Mr C MacLeod and Mrs P Munro had now formed the group 'Highland Matters'.

In this regard, it was also **NOTED** that membership of the Council was now as follows:

Ind (27)/ SNP (18)/ Cons & Unionist (10)/ Lib Dem (9) /H.Matters (4)/ Lab (3)
Suth Ind (1)/Real Ind (1)/Non-Aligned – 1

The formula in respect of the number of places on Strategic Committees remained unchanged at 7/5/3/3.

The Council also **AGREED** the following changes:-

Gaelic Committee – Miss J Campbell to replace Mr A MacKinnon
Pensions Committee – Mr C Munro to replace Mr A MacKinnon
Redesign Board – Mr D Fraser to replace Mr A MacKinnon
Recovery Board – Mr C Munro to replace Mr A MacKinnon

12. Question Time
Am Ceiste

The following Questions had been received by the Head of Corporate Governance:-

(i) Mr K Gowans

To the Chair of the Communities & Place Committee

'At a time when we should be encouraging children to engage in outdoor play against the constraints of the pandemic, play areas are being closed are due to lack of funding for basic maintenance.

This is unacceptable.

With all the other challenges that children and families are facing as a result of the pandemic, the re-opening of play parks needs to be a priority to support health, well-being and exercise opportunities for everyone in our communities.

I have asked that these play parks are made available to children and families as a priority, unfortunately the responses I have received have indicated there is no budget that has been allocated to undertake the remedial work necessary to allow this Council to open these play areas.

It is clear that our play parks are being closed because of a long-term lack of investment in maintenance, despite the enormous benefit these provide throughout

our communities, and further, there is no indication that this funding issue has been addressed going forward.

Would you agree with me that this situation is completely unacceptable for our communities, unfair on Officers and reflects adversely on the Council, therefore core funding now must be made available to bring our play parks up to an acceptable operational level to support our communities through the pandemic and a new strategy needs to be developed by the Redesign Board?’

The response had been circulated.

In terms of a supplementary question, and given that children and families were being denied access to play areas and equipment at a time when such amenities had taken on an elevated importance as a result of the pandemic, it was queried whether the Chair of the Communities and Place Committee would agree to release funds to resolve the situation as a priority and provide core funding to ensure that there was adequate resource going forward.

In response, it was confirmed that the work around play parks had been devolved to Area Committees and as such the Chair did not have any authority to release funding. Whilst he could give no guarantees, he undertook to explore, along with Members of the Administration and leaders of the SNP group who were negotiating on the matter, whether any surplus funds were available for such purposes.

(ii) Mr A Baxter

To the Chair of the Housing & Property Committee

‘How much has the Highland Council spent, in each of the last three financial years, on using outside contractors to make repairs to council tenant heating systems?’

The response had been circulated.

In terms of a supplementary question, it was queried whether the Chair of the Housing and Property Committee agreed that the figures in the response which had been circulated were shocking and were a combination of the Council making the wrong choice and fitting unsuitable biomass boilers in tenants’ homes and relying on external contractors for repairs and what the Administration would do to recruit and train Council staff to undertake such work rather than relying on expensive contractors from out with the Council area.

In response, it was confirmed that the spend on maintaining heating systems was welcomed, some of which was needed regardless of the type of system installed. However, the point about unsuitable heating systems was accepted. Tenants deserved the most flexible, cheap and environmentally friendly heating systems possible and there had been a journey to get to that point although there had been a significant improvement over the past two to three years with a shift to electric heating systems and a reduction in the number of emergency repairs to some of the more problematic systems. There was a commitment to ensuring improvement in the heating systems used and supported repairs being carried out by Highland-based staff and in terms of whether repairs were carried out by in-house staff or external contractors, there were advantages to both options.

(iii) Mr A Baxter

To the Chair of the Communities & Place Committee

‘How many winter maintenance vehicles have been out of service for more than a 24 hour period since the commencement of winter gritting operations on 14th October 2020 and what arrangements are in place to make sure that there is a continuity of service?’

The response had been circulated.

In terms of a supplementary question, it was queried as to the outcome of the report to the Commissioner and the Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency and the Council’s internal investigations in respect of an incident whereby a wheel had come off a Highland Council gritting vehicle during the winter and what assurance staff and residents had that the Council’s fleet was suitably resourced and safe.

In response, it was confirmed that the details of the report on the incident would be obtained from the Transport Manager and a response provided to all Members of the Council.

(iv) Mr A Baxter

To the Leader of the Council

‘Since my question to you at the full Council meeting on 10th September 2020, what steps have you taken to devolve further Council business and decision making to Area Committees?’

The response had been circulated.

In terms of a supplementary question, it was queried as to why, after four years of the current Administration and five years of the Leader being in her position, devolution to Area Committees had been in his opinion so ‘timid’ with no direct plan produced.

In response, it was confirmed that if Councillor Baxter wished to make further suggestions as to what he considered should be devolved then that would be taken into account. If he wished to see a move towards a strategic plan, it was suggested that this be raised at the next Area Chairs’ meeting shortly after Easter.

(v) Mr A Jarvie

To the Leader of the Council

‘At the last Council, I posed the following question before Question Time was removed from the agenda –

“As this Council enters its fourth budget, can you name four localism programmes that this Council has approved and successfully rolled out to communities?” You listed the top achievement of the localism programme as –

“The Council’s decision to distribute the Crown Estate Funding to our 10 Area Committees at its meeting in September 2020”

If this is the top achievement of this Council’s localism programme, why did you vote against it at the September 2020 meeting?’

The response had been circulated.

In terms of a supplementary question, it was highlighted that, at the last meeting of the Council, a question had been included on the agenda in respect of achievements in localism and one of the top achievements had been listed as the Crown Estates funding. However, it was noted that the Leader had voted against the funding methodology which had been agreed. It had also been agreed (at the last meeting) to remove Question Time from the agenda to allow time for discussion on urgent issues related to Covid-19 and Brexit but it was now queried as to whether this had in fact been an attempt to remove scrutiny from the original question.

At this point, the Convener confirmed that this supplementary question was not considered to be acceptable and as such there was no response required.

(vi) Mr A Jarvie

To the Chair of the Education Committee

'How many children in the Highlands with Additional Support Needs have a PSA or ASN Teacher resource and how many of these received that support in the Highlands before a formal diagnosis?'

The response had been circulated.

In terms of a supplementary question, it was queried as to how many children were waiting to get a diagnosis before they got PSA support in class. The legislation stated that children got support to meet their needs and a diagnosis could help but their needs did not simply change just because a diagnosis came along. As such, it was suggested that this was something that should be tracked and monitored by the Council to avoid children having to wait for too late into their education to get the right support if/when needed.

In response, it was confirmed that the relevant support was put in place as and when it was needed. The Council also took a holistic approach to supporting young people which included all learners but particularly those with additional support needs. With or without a diagnosis, a child received support when needed. Very clearly, if a child had a diagnosis and that diagnosis indicated that a very specific kind of resource or support was needed then that was provided.

(vii) Mr S Mackie

To the Chair of the Education Committee

'According to Endometriosis UK, endometriosis devastates the lives of women and their families and will effect up to one in ten Highlanders. Education at a young age is cited as the best way to raise awareness of the condition for both women and men and can help identify symptoms as early as possible.'

Given the prevalence of this endometriosis and the importance of understanding this condition in early life, what is currently being taught on this subject in Highland Schools?'

The response had been circulated.

In terms of a supplementary question, and given the work currently underway by Endometriosis UK, particularly around support for education authorities which was relatively widespread in English Schools, it was queried as to whether the Chair of the Education Committee would agree to meet with Mr Mackie, the relevant Council Officers and Endometriosis UK to see how Highland could be at the forefront of endometriosis education in schools.

In response, and in thanking Mr Mackie for the work which he had done and his interest in this topic (including looking to support how the Council could become more aware and support young people with endometriosis), it was agreed that the relevant Officers in the Education Improvement Team would take forward engagement with Endometriosis UK, the Health and Wellbeing Inclusion Officer and Mr Mackie as requested.

13. Notices of Motion Brathan Glusaid

The following Notices of Motion had been received by the Head of Corporate Governance:-

(i)'In response to increasing public concern on road safety resulting in several Area Committees passing motions in favour of 20mph speed limits in built up areas, and in order to sustain the uptake in active travel resulting from the Covid-19 pandemic and to advance the Council's climate change targets, the Council calls on the Administration Leadership to engage urgently with the Scottish Government to revive legislation which will make 20mph the default speed limit in built up areas and allow Councils to vary this depending on local opinion and make sufficient funds available for Councils to allow them to undertake the necessary traffic calming measures and signage'.

During discussion, Members raised the following issues:-

- there had already been widespread support for the introduction of 20mph speed limits from Local Committees following an upsurge in popular concern about road safety;
- the current Traffic Regulation Orders were considered to be overly bureaucratic and took up a lot of Officers' time and as such a change to legislation to make 20mph the default speed limit would considerably help this situation;
- road traffic arrangements had been changed during the past year due to the Covid-19 pandemic but as these arrangements now began to revert to what had been in place previously, there was a need to find an appropriate and permanent solution to take account of the health and environmental benefits associated with increased levels of cycling and walking in local communities;
- this was a complex area but it was felt that the Scottish Government needed to change the law to ensure that 20mph was the default speed limit in built up areas in particular, not least to also address issues related to road safety;
- Highland Council had to join with other Local Authorities and CoSLA to lobby the Scottish Government on this issue and in this regard it was highlighted that this was especially important prior to the Summer season when it was anticipated that there would be a significant increase in cars, campervans, etc across the Highlands;
- it was the case that increasingly traffic was taking precedence over people in local areas and this had to be changed, not least in terms of the implications for health and safety;

- it had been stated that a reduction in the speed limit from 30mph to 20mph would only add a few minutes to a car journey and this should be recognised;
- whilst there was no issue with the proposal to implement the 20mph speed limit in specific areas where it had been proved that this was required, and empowering local communities in this regard, there was concern about making this a 'default' position across all areas. As such, it was suggested that there was a need for more clarity on the definition of a 'built up' area within this Notion of Motion;
- research had shown that there was a considerable degree of bureaucracy and cost associated with the implementation of 20mph speed limits and it should be acknowledged that it involved much more than the changing of a sign in a specific area;
- it was also the case that there had been some unintended consequences in areas where a 20mph speed limit had been introduced and there was evidence which suggested that it had not in fact reduced the number of casualties or collisions;
- it was felt that there should be new signs at the entrances to towns and villages to highlight any new 20mph speed limits which were being introduced as this would provide clarity for drivers;
- there was concern about the high level of fumes from vehicles which were waiting at 'islands' on the approach to towns and villages and as such consideration should be given as to whether there was any way to change this situation, perhaps through the removal of these 'islands' if possible;
- it was the case that mandatory traffic calming measures had to be appropriate for specific areas;
- it was disappointing that Police Scotland were not placing a priority on implementing 20mph speed limits at present in the Highland area and it was hoped that this would change in future;
- there was a need to convey thanks to the Road Safety Team for the work currently being undertaken in local areas;
- it was the case that there were many roads in Inverness where speed limits were not adhered to at present and this was real concern;
- it was felt that alternative approaches should be considered to deal with this problem and a focus not only given to new speed limits which could be very costly and bureaucratic;
- it had to be highlighted that there were roads in Inverness, including in the Central Ward, where speed limits differed on the same stretch of road and this was causing additional problems in addition to non-compliance;
- in terms of the reduction in speed limits, it was pointed out that even a small reduction in speed had a major effect in reducing the harm caused if a pedestrian was struck by a motor vehicle;
- new 20mph speed limits had been put in place in some areas of the Highlands but had had limited impact as Police Scotland had been very open in confirming that they were not able to enforce them due to restricted manpower. However, it was noted that this was not the case in all areas and in some cases these limits were being enforced and observed more widely; and
- in terms of road safety, it had to be accepted that education of drivers was key to addressing the issues which had been raised.

Thereafter, Mr G Adam, seconded by Mr R Gale, **MOVED** the terms of the Notice of Motion as detailed.

As an **AMENDMENT**, Mr A Jarvie, seconded by Mr S Mackie, moved that that the Council should agree to make representations to and lobby the Scottish Government

to legislate for easier implementation of 20mph zones. Also, for the creation of a Government budget to assist Local Authorities with the rollout of 20 mph zones and to further enable Local Authorities to deliver Government targets.

On a vote being taken, the **MOTION** received 57 votes and the **AMENDMENT** received 8 votes, with 4 abstentions, and the **MOTION** was therefore **CARRIED**, the votes having been cast as follows:-

For the Motion

Mr G Adam, Mr B Allan, Mr R Balfour, Mrs J Barclay, Mr A Baxter, Mr B Boyd, Mr R Bremner, Mr I Brown, Mrs C Caddick, Mrs I Campbell, Miss J Campbell, Mrs H Carmichael, Mr A Christie, Dr I Cockburn, Mrs M Cockburn, Ms K Currie, Mrs M Davidson, Mr M Finlayson, Mr C Fraser, Mr D Fraser, Mr R Gale, Mr J Gordon, Mr K Gowans, Mr A Graham, Mr J Gray, Ms P Hadley, Mr T Heggie, Mr A Henderson, Ms E Knox, Mr B Lobban, Mr D Louden, Mrs L MacDonald, Mr A MacInnes, Mr D Mackay, Mrs D Mackay, Mr W Mackay, Mr G Mackenzie, Mr A Mackinnon, Mrs A MacLean, Mr C MacLeod, Mr R MacWilliam, Mrs B McAllister, Mr J McGillivray, Mr H Morrison, Mr C Munro, Ms L Munro, Mrs P Munro, Mrs M Paterson, Mr M Reiss, Mr D Rixson, Mrs T Robertson, Mr K Rosie, Mr G Ross, Ms N Sinclair, Mrs M Smith, Mr B Thompson and Mrs C Wilson.

For the Amendment

Mr A Jarvie, Mr C Smith, Mr D MacLeod, Mr D Macpherson, Mrs F Robertson, Mr J Bruce, Mr P Saggars and Mr S Mackie.

Abstentions

Mr J Finlayson, Mr L Fraser, Mr N McLean and Mr A Rhind.

Decision

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

(ii) 'Highland Council welcomes the prospect of funding streams coming directly to Highland through the UK Government's commitment to a Levelling Up Fund, a Community Renewal Fund and in future a Shared Prosperity Fund.

However, the Council is concerned that presently Highland is not recognised as one of the UK's priority areas for the two funding streams which were announced in the UK Budget 2021. The Council is of the view that Highland should be a priority area and agrees to lobby to ensure that this is addressed urgently with reports coming back to the next Council meeting as to progress.'

During discussion, Members raised the following issues:-

- Highland had currently been placed in the lower categories in connection with the Levelling Up Fund and the Community Renewal Fund but it was suggested that the methodology which had been used in this regard had had some significant omissions. In this respect, it was suggested that, with help from Officers, the specific data sets which were required should be compiled and submitted to the UK Government to allow reconsideration of Highland's placement within the categories;
- it was acknowledged that the UK Government had already put in place a number of new arrangements which had significantly benefitted the

Highlands, including the Furlough Scheme and the current Vaccination Programme, but it was felt that there were issues which were relevant to adjusting placement within the stated categories for these Funds and these had to be highlighted as soon as was possible;

- in terms of being able to replace the European funding which had previously been allocated to the Highland area, it was critical that any issues in relation to allocation from the new Shared Prosperity Fund were resolved as soon as possible;
- it was essential that the necessary work on the data sets was initiated and completed as quickly as possible with a progress report to the next meeting of the full Council;
- this was an extremely timely Notice of Motion on what was a very complex set of issues and the urgency in taking the necessary action could not be overstated;
- it was noted that, alongside written correspondence, dialogue would be undertaken with MPs and meetings arranged with senior politicians as needed;
- a substantial piece of work was already being undertaken by Council Officers on this issue, in conjunction with Highlands & Islands Enterprise, and this was welcomed;
- it was recognised that many areas of the country would be impacted through the loss of European funding and as such it was suggested that there could be a role for the Brexit Working Group in helping to ensure that all matters were addressed in order to maximise the allocation from the new Funds to the Highland area;
- it was felt that it was a fundamental weakness that other Local Authorities appeared to have been better prepared in the past to take advantage of opportunities and situations like this than Highland Council and it was therefore essential to move to a position of anticipating (at a very early stage) likely policy announcements from both the UK and Scottish Governments in future. As such, it was suggested that this should be taken forward by all Members of the Council on the basis of working together and making use of the individual strengths and capabilities of individual Members (and Officers) for the benefit of the Highland area;
- there had to be a consistent and coherent strategy of communication in future at all levels of the Council in order to take full advantage of funding opportunities as and when they became available, perhaps through a policy and research unit;
- it was suggested that a very strong case should be made that the Highlands could not be viewed as 'one entity' as the situation was very different in Inverness from other parts of the area and as such there were varying degrees of need when it came to 'levelling up' and regeneration; and
- a summary of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats should be included as part of the work to be undertaken on this process.

Decision

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

(iii)'Highland Council calls on the UK Government to reverse the decision to cut the Overseas Aid Budget. Were this implemented, it would have one of the most devastating impacts on the world's poorest people of any decision made by any Government short of going to war. As there is a link to the GDP, the Overseas Aid Budget will, as a matter of course, be reduced by £3bn which will have a massive and devastating impact and to add a further £4bn is inhumane and an embarrassment to any

civilised country.

It is estimated by one of the Government's own supporters that this cut will cost 100,000 lives, 5.6 million children will not be vaccinated, 4 million people will be deprived of clean water and 1 million girls will lose their education.

This cut is not only cruel it is also short sighted as any action that reduces medical help and hygiene in the middle of a global pandemic puts the whole world at greater risk. Please oppose this action and ask the UK Government to maintain the Overseas Aid Budget at .7% of GDP.'

During discussion, Members raised the following issues:-

- this was a short-sighted and inhumane decision by the UK Government which broke a manifesto commitment and would have the effect of severely impacting people who were among the poorest and most vulnerable across the world;
- cutting essential aid in the middle of a global pandemic increased the risks for everyone and came at a time when what was actually required was a global strategy with collective responsibility to deal with the issues arising from Covid-19;
- this cut represented a reduction of almost 30% in funding in real terms and the catastrophic impact of that at the present time had to be recognised;
- it also had to be acknowledged that the reputation of the United Kingdom had been severely diminished across the world as a result of this decision;
- in poorer countries, investment in the education of both women and girls had been proved to boost economic growth, improve health and reduce conflict and this had been greatly helped by the Overseas Aid Budget so to reduce that budget now risked undermining all the of the valuable work which had already been undertaken in previous years;
- it should be highlighted that the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, to which the United Kingdom was a signatory, embodied a number of principles which were now effectively being ignored by the UK Government through implementation of this reduction in the budget;
- it was the case that substantial sums of money had been allocated by the UK Government to various issues in relation to Covid-19 and as such it was not acceptable that this came at the same time as such a drastic reduction to the Overseas Aid Budget;
- it was acknowledged that the Overseas Aid Budget had been criticised in the past through concerns about 'wastefulness' but this had to be compared against similar accusations which had been made in respect of more recent expenditure in relation to Covid-19 issues;
- it was a fact that the Overseas Aid budget had shaped lives through community development which was a science forged by aid over the previous 40 years and as such this was a very poorly time decision in regard to its reduction;
- whilst acknowledging the issues which had been raised in relation to the reduction in this budget, it was also important to highlight that the UK Government had allocated more funding to the Covid-19 Vaccines Global Access scheme (COVAX) than any other country in the world. As such, this was a global initiative which aimed to provide equitable access to vaccines for the poorest countries at a vitally important time and this also had to be recognised;
- also, there was a hugely significant effort currently being undertaken 'behind the scenes' to combat the virus and the UK was at the forefront of this

(contributing more than all the other European countries combined) in terms of genomic sequencing which might be unseen work but was nevertheless of vital importance, not least at the present time; and

- it was hoped that this reduction in the Overseas Aid Budget would be urgently reconsidered at this time to allow the United Kingdom to continue to be regarded as a world leader in this regard.

Decision

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

(iv) In recognising the opportunity which the Covid-19 recovery presents to permanently change the working culture of this Local Authority, the Council agrees to establish a Property and Workforce Committee which will have the remit of tying together the various strands and good work done so far into one Committee, to develop a cohesive policy to rationalise the property holdings and to offer flexible and attractive working options to existing and prospective staff.

Rationalisation of property does not simply mean to sell at market value. It opens up the possibilities of more asset transfers to our communities and even to demolish and relocate the Council HQ and for the Council to take the lead in developing the old site, using the increased proceeds to invest in the Highlands.

During discussion, Members raised the following issues:-

- there had been discussions undertaken within various Committees over the past year in relation to the possibilities for the Council to change the way that it worked, including the physical fabric and structure, on a permanent basis. However, these discussions had taken place in isolation and as such the proposed Notice of Amendment sought to bring this together through the formation of one new Committee to allow consideration of all options available in a sensitive and rational way;
- in thanking the proposers of the Notice of Motion for their engagement on this issue, it was highlighted that there had already been substantial work undertaken within the Housing & Property Committee and the Redesign Board, with potential savings already identified, and as such it was not felt that there was a need to create another new Committee;
- there had already been considerable change to the Committee structure over recent years and cognisance had to be taken of both the additional workload and cost which would be associated with creating another Committee at this time;
- this was a very important issue for the Council but it had to be highlighted that considerable discussion on various elements of future proposals would also be expected to be undertaken at a local level across the Highlands and as such it was suggested that another Committee at HQ level was necessarily needed; and
- the Workforce Planning Review, which included a focus on places of work in future, had already been the subject of considerable work and was now nearing completion.

Thereafter, Mr A Jarvie, seconded by Mr A Baxter, **MOVED** the terms of the Notice of Motion as detailed.

As an **AMENDMENT**, Mr B Thompson, seconded by Mr R Bremner, moved the following that the Council should agree to recognise the opportunity which the Covid-19 recovery presented to permanently change the working culture of the Local

Authority and to continue to develop a cohesive policy to rationalise property holdings and offer flexible and attractive working options to existing and prospective staff.

Also, that Members should further welcome the focus of the Council's Redesign Board in respect of workforce planning and rationalisation of property. As such, rationalisation did not simply mean to sell at market value but to open up the possibilities of more asset transfers to communities or even to demolish and relocate the Council HQ. Also, for the Council to take the lead in developing the old site and to use the increased proceeds to invest in the Highlands.

On a vote being taken, the **MOTION** received 10 votes and the **AMENDMENT** received 54 votes, with 2 abstentions, and the **AMENDMENT** was therefore **CARRIED**, the votes having been cast as follows:-

For the Motion

Mr A Baxter, Mr J Bruce, Mr D MacLeod, Mr A Jarvie, Mr W Mackay, Mr D Mackay, Mr S Mackie, Mr D Macpherson, Mr P Saggars and Mr C Smith.

For the Amendment

Mr G Adam, Mr B Allan, Mrs J Barclay, Mr B Boyd, Mr R Bremner, Mr I Brown, Ms I Campbell, Miss J Campbell, Mrs G Campbell-Sinclair, Mrs H Carmichael, Mr A Christie, Mrs M Cockburn, Dr I Cockburn, Ms K Currie, Mrs M Davidson, Mr M Finlayson, Mr J Finlayson, Mr C Fraser, Mr D Fraser, Mr L Fraser, Mr R Gale, Mr K Gowans, Mr A Graham, Mr J Gray, Mr T Heggie, Mr A Henderson, Ms E Knox, Mr B Lobban, Mr D Louden, Mrs L MacDonald, Mr A MacInnes, Mrs D Mackay, Mr G Mackenzie, Mr A Mackinnon, Mrs A MacLean, Mr C MacLeod, Mr R MacWilliam, Mrs E McAllister, Mr J McGillivray, Mr H Morrison, Ms L Munro, Mrs P Munro, Mr C Munro, Mrs M Paterson, Mr M Reiss, Mr A Rhind, Mr D Rixson, Mrs F Robertson, Mrs T Robertson, Mr K Rosie, Mr G Ross, Ms N Sinclair, Mrs M Smith and Mr B Thompson.

Abstentions

Mr R Balfour and Mr N McLean.

Decision

The Council **AGREED** to recognise the opportunity which the Covid-19 recovery presented to permanently change the working culture of the Local Authority and to continue to develop a cohesive policy to rationalise property holdings and offer flexible and attractive working options to existing and prospective staff.

Members further welcomed the focus of the Council's Redesign Board in respect of workforce planning and rationalisation of property. As such, rationalisation did not simply mean to sell at market value but to open up the possibilities of more asset transfers to communities or even to demolish and relocate the Council HQ. Also, for the Council to take the lead in developing the old site and to use the increased proceeds to invest in the Highlands.

14. Revenue Budget 2021/22 to 2023/24 – Update Buidseat Teachd-a-steach agus Cìs Comhairle

Declarations of Interest

Mr B Thompson and Mr A Jarvie 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 them from taking part in the discussion.

There had been circulated Report No. HC/2/21 dated 12 March 2021 by the Executive Chief Officer, Resources and Finance.

During discussion, Members raised the following issues: -

- it was queried as to why there had been little corporate and/or press communication in regard to the current budget position and the relatively large surplus;
- in response to information being sought on the reduction to the numbers of Early Education Support Officers which it was felt had not been fully explained in earlier budget reports, it was pointed out that this had been fully explained in Appendix 9 of the Council's March budget report and involved a rebasing of overall investment, with no job losses, and ongoing progress to be regularly reported to the Education Committee;
- there was concern in relation to the poor state of the road network in many parts of the Highlands and the need for immediate action to be taken to tackle this issue where possible, especially the extensive number of potholes that were a significant safety issue and of considerable worry to many constituents;
- also, in relation to the road network, avoiding short-term repairs and implementing a longer-term 'spend to save' approach was suggested;
- long-term cost reduction should be a key consideration and in this regard several of the projects agreed by the Council as part of the budget setting process would benefit from further investment. As such, and rather than rushing to spend all available funds on roads, it was suggested that the best long-term use of resources should be fully considered at the Council meeting in June;
- in response to concern about the damage being done to the road network by large vehicles involved in windfarm construction and the timber industry, attention was drawn to the schemes in place to seek contributions towards road maintenance from those industries;
- in relation to the procurement of resources, it was disappointing that some quarries were only open at night;
- further information would be helpful on the outcomes from the installation of solar panels on Council buildings;
- attention was drawn to the significant and unquantifiable issues facing the Council, such the implications from Brexit, ongoing Covid-19 issues and the level of further funding which might be forthcoming;
- ongoing consultation with communities on their investment aspirations was vital;
- the need for improved sustainable play park provision was highlighted;
- in terms of the road network, it should be recognised that additional staff and equipment were required for road maintenance in at least several Council areas;
- it was vital that if the final decision on expenditure of the surplus for 2020-21 was to be taken at the Council meeting in June, projects were ready to be started immediately after that meeting;

- issues suggested for additional expenditure included roads, play parks, and post-lockdown recovery measures for education;
- it was noted that the Leader of the Council had agreed to hold a further meeting with the Chair and Vice Chair of the Easter Ross Area Committee to discuss the serious and ongoing challenges with road maintenance across that area of the Highlands. In that regard, the Leader also confirmed that she was available to meet with any Member at any time to discuss issues which they wished to bring to her attention;
- while the Council's performance on roads maintenance compared unfavourably to other local Authorities in Scotland, it had to be acknowledged that the Highland area had the largest road network in the country. As such, it was suggested that the Scottish Government should be lobbied for a fairer share of capital investment relative to total asset base to be allocated to the area;
- any future investment by the Council had to take the 'carbon footprint' fully into account;
- road maintenance staff were thanked for their tremendous work, often with insufficient resources, across the Highlands;
- attention was drawn to the urgent work required to improve white lining on roads in many parts of Highland, some of which was faded and a safety issue. In this regard, reference was also made to the busy tourist season which was anticipated and the toll which this could take on the roads, as well as the potentially poor impression which it would give to visitors and the inconvenience and danger to local residents;
- it was important that a thorough, consistent and fair approach was used to decide on future investment, noting that all Members had issues of concern in their local areas;
- of the surplus of £44.1m, it was noted that £9.8m had been allocated to Phase 1 investment priorities, with £24.7m for non-allocated reserves, which left a sum of £9.6m still available to invest; and
- as an example of a spend to save initiative, attention was drawn to the Health and Prosperity Strategy which aimed to invest £3.69m over two years to produce cost avoidance of £18.7m; and
- it was suggested that the debate on investment in roads should be tackled as part of the Change and Transformation Programme and a Special Meeting arranged in this regard.

Decision

Members **NOTED** the contents of the report and how the plans for Phase 2 investment would be developed for presentation at the June meeting of Council.

15. Annual Report of Statutory Performance Indicators and Best Value 2019/20 Aithisg Bhliadhnaidh Thaisbeanairan Coileanaidh Reachdail agus Luach as Fheàrr 2019/20

Declarations of Interest

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 T Heggie and Mr A Jarvie (Directors of High Life Highland)
Mr D Rixson (Council representative on the Lochaber Housing Association)
Mr K Gowans (Family member employed by High Life Highland)

There had been circulated Report No. HC/3/21 dated 11 March 2021 by the Chief Executive.

During discussion, Members raised the following issues: -

- the importance of the report and the value of continuous improvement was highlighted, including the new methods of recording performance which were welcomed;
- it should be noted that the information contained in the report covered the period from April 2019 to March 2020 (and therefore did not cover the Covid-19 crisis period) but further improvements had been made since that time;
- in terms of ranking, the Council had fallen from 20th to 24th in Scotland in respect of educational attainment which was a disappointment and it was queried as to whether this was due to schools being too full and lacking appropriate tools and support. In response, it was confirmed that the draft action plan for Education, which had been shared with the Education Committee in February 2021, aimed to address improvement needs, particularly in relation to attainment, and regular updates would continue to be provided;
- the Council's ranking under Environmental Services for various road types had also fallen, with one having dropped from 24th to 27th and it was suggested that new ways of working were perhaps now required to tackle the backlog of road maintenance. In this regard, the road maintenance staff were commended and thanked for their hard work during challenging circumstances and severe weather on a road network which was the longest in Scotland;
- the reduction in street-light energy consumption since 2017 was welcomed;
- it was queried as to why road maintenance performance appeared to be on target to be better than the average of the three previous years when it was widely considered that the condition of the roads in Highland was deteriorating;
- Highland was ranked 28th in Scotland for people aged 65+ with long term care needs receiving care at home and information was sought and provided on what was being done to address this issue;
- the excellent work being undertaken with NHS Highland in relation to adult social care was acknowledged and it was hoped that the recommendations from the Feeley report would be adopted and that Highland could aim to be a leader in this area. In terms of the importance of improving upon the current ranking of 28th for Highland, as well as the need for a better system nationally, it was highlighted that the working relationship between the Highland Council and NHS Highland was much improved;
- the Care Academy was to put carers at the forefront of people's minds and in this regard all Members were urged to do all that they could within their communities to promote care work as a career;
- the importance of improved infrastructure to reduce the number of looked after children in Out of Authority Care was emphasised and the positive news about recent permanent placements of children, as well as the increased number of prospective foster and adoptive parents, was welcomed;
- assurance was sought and received that the redesign of amenity services would be continued at an improved pace;
- it was suggested that High Life Highland should be referenced in future reports, particularly for their work across Culture and Leisure services;
- attention was drawn to the importance of improving Highland town centres and high streets for local residents and visitors;
- it was hoped that Housing Service home visits would be able to restart again soon;
- the ranking of 23rd for the reported 41% of household waste being recycled

was disappointing. In response to a query as to why this was significantly different to the levels advertised at some Recycling Centres, it was explained that the levels advertised at Recycling Centres related directly to activity at that location;

- it was suggested that it would be helpful if more waste could be processed in Highland. In this respect, reference was made to work currently being undertaken to develop transfer stations;
- the rank of 23rd for the average time taken to process planning applications was of concern, especially for businesses;
- it was hoped that the average case duration for homelessness of 43 weeks could be improved;
- the positive rate of collection for Council Tax was welcomed and the staff involved were thanked;
- the improved report format was welcomed as being much easier to read;
- the Council spent significantly more supporting capital investment than other Councils in Scotland, partly due to the relatively large size of the asset base, such as roads and buildings. While this demonstrated focus and determination to address the challenges faced, it also suggested that Highland was not adequately resourced by the Scottish Government;
- positive news within the report included the asset management (condition) score of 82.4% for 2019-20;
- it was pointed out that the funding to some services had been reduced but public expectation had remained the same;
- the Redesign Board had focused on workforce planning and was now looking at property and, in this regard, attention was drawn to the workshop for Members on 29 April 2021 which would focus on asset suitability and the Council's overall estate;
- the planned meeting to discuss roads issues was welcomed as it was important to make informed decisions and to take into account the Council's large network of roads and bridges; and
- it was noted that further debate on the statistics within the report would take place at the relevant Committee meetings and this would facilitate the development of appropriate action plans.

Decision

Members NOTED:-

- (i) the performance of the Council's SPIs for 2019/20 against the targets set as outlined in Appendix 2 of the report;
- (ii) the initial analysis of areas for improvement in Appendix 4 of the report and the commentary and planned improvement actions;
- (iii) that Service Plans would be presented to Strategic Committees early in the new financial year and that Members should expect the opportunity to scrutinise plans in response to the information contained in the report at that time; and
- (iv) the External Audit opinion on the Council's delivery of Best Value in relation to the Council's Best Value Assurance Report (BVAR) and associated BVAR Improvement Plan as outlined at Section 8 of the report.

16. **Prototype Fusion Reactor opportunity for Caithness and North Sutherland** **Ginealach Ùr de Readhactaran Niùclasach**

Declarations of Interest

Mr D Rixson declared a non-financial interest in this item as the Council representative on the Lochaber Environmental Group and Mr S Mackie declared a financial interest as Chair of the Dounreay Stakeholder Group but, having applied the test outlined in Paragraphs 5.2 and 5.3 of the Councillors' Code of Conduct, concluded that this did not preclude them from taking part in the discussion.

There had been circulated Report No. HC/4/21 dated 12 March 2021 by the Executive Chief Officer, Infrastructure and Environment.

During discussion, Members raised the following issues: -

- this was a potentially world leading opportunity for Caithness and North Sutherland to be at the forefront of new technology and, along with significant interest from around the world, there was widespread community and stakeholder support in the area for this proposal;
- it had to be highlighted that the opportunity to inject hundreds of millions of pounds into the area throughout the lifetime of the site would create hundreds of jobs and could be truly transformational;
- Caithness had the skills, experience and award leading supply chain as well as a generation of young people who wanted to remain in the area and as such this proposal had to be supported and recognised as a potentially transformative opportunity;
- depopulation had been a major concern in the area for many years and this proposal represented a 'once in a lifetime' opportunity for young people in particular;
- along with the very positive impact on the area, including through the creation of approximately 700 new jobs, the stability which this would bring had to be highlighted, not just for the Caithness area but ultimately for the whole of the Highlands;
- this opportunity also brought hope for the area and as such it was imperative that it was fully supported across the Chamber;
- this was one of the most important reports to come before the full Council and it had to be stressed that Caithness was very well placed to take advantage of the opportunity, including the fact that 89% of people in the area had already expressed support for the proposal;
- the Caithness Area priorities document had previously included reference to Caithness as the 'Energy County' and this took account of the collective energy of the local population which had been demonstrated fully over the past year in the determination to recover from the effects of the pandemic;
- the proposal was a natural successor to Dounreay and it was felt that this report (and the following report) created a very exciting vision for the future of Caithness and the whole of the Highlands;
- apprenticeships and training were key to retaining young people in the area and this proposal would provide that and more if successful;
- it had to be noted that there was a minority view in the area which did not support this proposal, mainly in light of the current 'unknowns'. As such it was highlighted that there had been no environmental assessment to date, no clarity over what the initial £220m investment would be spent on and where, no regulatory processes agreed by any Government and no details on future

transportation arrangements. It was therefore suggested that there was a need for caution, not least in terms of managing the expectations of the local community at this stage;

- it was felt that there also needed to be a discussion with more of a focus on tackling climate change and harnessing the enormous renewable potential which remained untapped in the area on the basis that technology was already available in that regard;
- it would be helpful if a detailed breakdown could be provided on where new jobs would be located if the proposal was successful, what type of jobs would be available in the local area and the funding to be provided by the UK Government;
- further information was also sought on whether the Scottish Government was in favour of the proposal and whether there would be a long-term cost impact on the Council in terms of any future investment required; and
- it was stressed that, although the terminology was often used, this really was a 'once in a lifetime' opportunity for the Highland area and as such should be fully supported.

Decision

The Council **AGREED** to the submission of the Dounreay site as a potential site for the STEP prototype Fusion power plant as detailed in the report.

17. Highland's Hydrogen Economy & Update on Opportunity Cromarty Firth's Greenport Bid Eaconamaidh Haidridean na Gàidhealtachd & Fios às Ùr mu Thagradh Port - uaine Cothrom Linne Chrombaidh

Declaration of Interest

Mr D Rixson declared a non-financial interest in this item as the Council representative on the Lochaber Environmental 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 had been circulated Report No. HC/5/21 dated 8 March 2021 by the Executive Chief Office, Infrastructure and Environment.

During discussion, Members raised the following issues: -

- this was another 'good news' item, not least for the Port of Nigg and the Port of the Cromarty Firth who had both been working very hard in order to bring this programme forward and as such it had to be fully supported;
- it should be highlighted that hydrogen was one route towards a 'zero carbon' Scotland and also tackling fuel poverty and represented significant opportunities for the Highlands;
- thanks should be conveyed to the Officers concerned for the considerable work which had been undertaken and the collaboration with partners on this visionary project which had the capacity to be truly transformational;
- the Invergordon/Cromarty area was the best location for a hydrogen plant and it was imperative that the proposal was given every support necessary, not least to make optimum use of the energy in the Highlands;
- it was very clear that the future of energy was hydrogen and nuclear based and this (and the previous) report were very exciting in terms of future

- possibilities for the area;
- consideration should be given to the possibility of establishing a hydrogen refuelling station in the Highlands (similar to what was already in place in Aberdeen);
 - there were many linkages between this and the previous report, including the opportunities in relation to transport links and apprenticeships;
 - clarification would be needed on whether additional planning staff would be needed in future, particularly in relation to the Masterplan Consent Area; and
 - this was an excellent opportunity for diversification and collaboration with partners after the previous year's challenges and had to be supported enthusiastically by all Members of the Council.

Decision

The Council **AGREED**:-

- (i) to support development of a vision for hydrogen in Highland to be presented to a future Member Workshop which would outline in more detail the significant role for hydrogen in Highland's green energy proposition/commitment;
- (ii) in-principle support for the Opportunity Cromarty Firth project and Green Port bid, noting its potential contribution to the hydrogen economy in Highland and to national and local outcomes; and
- (iii) the actions being undertaken in collaboration with Aberdeen City Council in respect of hydrogen fuelled fleet.

18. Annual Review of Standing Orders Relating to the Conduct of Meetings Ath-sgrùdadh Òrdughan Seasmhach

There had been circulated Report No. HC/6/21 dated 8 March 2021 by the Executive Chief Officer, Performance and Governance.

In this regard, and during a summary of the report, a correction to the report was highlighted as follows – Standing Order 11a – Question Time (Public) – confirmation that it was now being proposed that questions should be received no later than 12 noon on the Wednesday in the week preceding the Council meeting (and not the Wednesday preceding the Council meeting as had been stated).

During discussion, it was suggested that it could be of benefit to the Council if the role of Convener was designated in future as having to be 'politically neutral'/not part of the Administration and that consideration in this regard should be undertaken for the next term of the Council.

Thereafter, Mr A Henderson, seconded by Mr R Bremner, **MOVED** the recommendations as detailed in the report.

As an **AMENDMENT**, Mr A Baxter, seconded by Mr P Sagers, moved - in relation to Standing Order 8 – to delete "and such special circumstances must be specified in the Minutes" and to add "At the commencement of the meeting, the Convener or Chair will read any requests for urgent business, state their decision as to whether the business shall be taken and state the reasons for the decision which must be specified in the minutes."

On a vote being taken, the **MOTION** received 46 votes and the **AMENDMENT** received 13 votes and the **MOTION** was therefore **CARRIED**, the votes having been cast as follows:-

For the Motion

Mr G Adam, Mr B Allan, Mrs J Barclay, Mr B Boyd, Mr R Bremner, Mr I Brown, Ms I Campbell, Miss J Campbell, Mrs H Carmichael, Mr A Christie, Mrs M Cockburn, Dr I Cockburn, Ms K Currie, Mrs M Davidson, Mr J Finlayson, Mr M Finlayson, Mr C Fraser, Mr L Fraser, Mr R Gale, Mr J Gordon, Mr K Gowans, Mr A Graham, Mr J Gray, Mr T Heggie, Mr A Henderson, Ms E Knox, Mr D Louden, Mr A MacInnes, Mr G Mackenzie, Mr A Mackinnon, Mrs A MacLean, Mr R MacWilliam, Mrs B McAllister, Mr H Morrison, Ms L Munro, Mr C Munro, Mrs M Paterson, Mr M Reiss, Mr D Rixson, Mrs F Robertson, Mrs T Robertson, Mr K Rosie, Mr G Ross, Ms N Sinclair, Mr B Thompson and Mrs C Wilson.

For the Amendment

Mr A Baxter, Mr A Jarvie, Ms L MacDonald, Mr D Mackay, Mr S Mackie, Mr D MacLeod, Mr C MacLeod, Mr D Macpherson, Mr J McGillivray, Mrs P Munro, Mr P Sagers, Mr C Smith and Mrs M Smith.

In a second vote, Mr A Henderson, seconded by Mr R Bremner, **MOVED** the recommendations as detailed in the report.

As an **AMENDMENT**, Mr A Baxter, seconded by Mr P Sagers, moved – in relation to Standing Order 11 – to add after the word ‘Committee’ the following - “or Chief Executive of the Council”, to read “A Member may submit to the Leader of the Council, Depute Leader of the Council, Chair of a Committee or Chief Executive of the Council, for consideration at an ordinary meeting of the Council, a written, relevant and competent question (in addition to individual written questions, individual emails from Members will also be accepted) relating to the business of the Council, to be answered in writing by the recipient in advance of the meeting.”

On a vote being taken, the **MOTION** received 46 votes and the **AMENDMENT** received 13 votes and the **MOTION** was therefore **CARRIED**, the votes having been cast as follows:-

For the Motion

Mr G Adam, Mr B Allan, Mrs J Barclay, Mr B Boyd, Mr R Bremner, Mr I Brown, Ms I Campbell, Miss J Campbell, Mrs H Carmichael, Mr A Christie, Dr I Cockburn, Mrs M Cockburn, Ms K Currie, Mrs M Davidson, Mr J Finlayson, Mr M Finlayson, Mr C Fraser, Mr L Fraser, Mr R Gale, Mr J Gordon, Mr K Gowans, Mr A Graham, Mr J Gray, Mr T Heggie, Mr A Henderson, Ms E Knox, Mr D Louden, Mr A MacInnes, Mr G Mackenzie, Mr A Mackinnon, Mrs A MacLean, Mr R MacWilliam, Mrs B McAllister, Mr H Morrison, Mrs L Munro, Mr C Munro, Mrs M Paterson, Mr M Reiss, Mr D Rixson, Mrs F Robertson, Mrs T Robertson, Mr K Rosie, Mr G Ross, Ms N Sinclair, Mr B Thompson and Mrs C Wilson.

For the Amendment

Mr A Baxter, Mr A Jarvie, Mrs L MacDonald, Mr D Mackay, Mr S Mackie, Mr D MacLeod, Mr C MacLeod, Mr D Macpherson, Mr J McGillivray, Mrs P Munro, Mr P Sagers, Mr C Smith and Mrs M Smith.

In a third vote, Mr A Henderson, seconded by Mr R Bremner, **MOVED** the recommendations as detailed in the report.

As an **AMENDMENT**, Mr A Baxter, seconded by Mr P Saggars, moved – in relation to Standing Order 32 - to delete Paragraph 4 and insert the following - “A Member may without prior notice put a question to the Leader of the Council, relevant Chair of a Committee or Chair of any Panel, Board or Working Group as appropriate, regarding any business included in the Volume of Minutes for that meeting and any Minutes on the Council agenda for approval. Any questions will be answered verbally by the person to whom the question is put. Questions and answers will be minuted. The Council will allocate 30 minutes for this QuestionTime”.

On a vote being taken, the **MOTION** received 46 votes and the **AMENDMENT** received 13 votes and the **MOTION** was therefore **CARRIED**, the votes having been cast as follows:-

For the Motion

Mr G Adam, Mr B Allan, Mrs J Barclay, Mr B Boyd, Mr R Bremner, Mr I Brown, Ms I Campbell, Miss J Campbell, Mrs H Carmichael, Mr A Christie, Mrs M Cockburn, Dr I Cockburn, Ms K Currie, Mrs M Davidson, Mr J Finlayson, Mr M Finlayson, Mr C Fraser, Mr L Fraser, Mr R Gale, Mr J Gordon, Mr K Gowans, Mr A Graham, Mr J Gray, Mr T Heggie, Mr Allan Henderson, Ms E Knox, Mr D Louden, Mr A MacInnes, Mr G Mackenzie, Mr A Mackinnon, Mrs A MacLean, Mr R MacWilliam, Mrs B McAllister, Mr H Morrison, Ms L Munro, Mr C Munro, Mrs M Paterson, Mr M Reiss, Mr D Rixson, Mrs F Robertson, Mrs T Robertson, Mr K Rosie, Mr G Ross, Ms N Sinclair, Mr B Thompson and Mrs C Wilson.

For the Amendment

Mr A Baxter, Mr A Jarvie, Mrs L MacDonald, Mr D Mackay, Mr S Mackie, Mr C MacLeod, Mr D MacLeod, Mr D Macpherson, Mr J McGillivray, Mrs P Munro, Mr P Saggars, Mr C Smith and Mrs M Smith.

In a fourth vote, Mr A Henderson, seconded by Mr R Bremner, **MOVED** the recommendations as detailed in the report.

As an **AMENDMENT**, Mr A Baxter, seconded by Mr P Saggars, moved the terms of a new Standing Order to read as follows - “Questions to the Leader of the Council at Area Committee - Members of the appropriate Area Committee may submit questions to the Leader of the Council to be answered at the Committee. The answer will be circulated to the other Members of the Committee. Any such question must be sent to the Head of Corporate Governance and received not later than 14 days prior to the meeting of the Area Committee concerned and no later than 5pm on the final day. In calculating the 14 days notice, the day of the meeting will be excluded. At the meeting, the Member who submitted the written question, having received a written answer, may ask orally one brief supplementary question, directly bearing on the subject matter of the original question, which shall be answered by the Leader of the Council. No discussion shall be allowed on any question, principal or supplementary. Where Members are informed that a reply to a supplementary question will follow, then this will be circulated to all Members and published with the minutes of the meeting”.

On a vote being taken, the **MOTION** received 46 votes and the **AMENDMENT** received 13 votes and the **MOTION** was therefore **CARRIED**, the votes having been cast as follows:-

For the Motion

Mr G Adam, Mr B Allan, Mrs J Barclay, Mr B Boyd, Mr R Bremner, Mr I Brown, Ms I Campbell, Miss J Campbell, Mrs H Carmichael, Mr A Christie, Dr I Cockburn, Mrs M Cockburn, Ms K Currie, Mrs M Davidson, Mr J Finlayson, Mr M Finlayson, Mr C Fraser, Mr L Fraser, Mr R Gale, Mr J Gordon, Mr K Gowans, Mr A Graham, Mr J Gray, Mr T Heggie, Mr A Henderson, Ms E Knox, Mr D Louden, Mr A MacInnes, Mr G Mackenzie, Mr A Mackinnon, Mrs A MacLean, Mr R MacWilliam, Mrs B McAllister, Mr H Morrison, Mr C Munro, Ms L Munro, Mrs M Paterson, Mr M Reiss, Mr D Rixson, Mrs F Robertson, Mrs T Robertson, Mr K Rosie, Mr G Ross, Ms N Sinclair, Mr B Thompson and Mrs C Wilson.

For the Amendment

Mr A Baxter, Mr A Jarvie, Mrs L MacDonald, Mr D Mackay, Mr S Mackie, Mr D MacLeod, Mr C MacLeod, Mr D Macpherson, Mr J McGillivray, Mrs P Munro, Mr P Saggars, Mrs M Smith and Mr C Smith.

In a fifth vote, Mr A Henderson, seconded by Mr R Bremner, **MOVED** the recommendations as detailed in the report.

As an **AMENDMENT**, Mr A Jarvie, seconded by Mr S Mackie, moved – in relation to Standing Order 7 – the following additional wording – “For the avoidance of doubt, a declaration should be made even if a Member does not participate in the particular item the declaration of interest pertains to.”

On a vote being taken, the **MOTION** received 47 votes and the **AMENDMENT** received 10 votes, with 1 abstention, and the **MOTION** was therefore **CARRIED**, the votes having been cast as follows:-

For the Motion

Mr B Boyd, Mrs M Cockburn, Mr R Gale, Mr C Fraser, Ms E Knox, Mrs A MacLean, Mr H Morrison, Mr K Gowans, Mr G Ross, Mr A Graham, Mr M Reiss, Mr D Rixson, Mrs F Robertson, Mr J Gordon, Ms N Sinclair, Mr J Gray, Mr G Adam, Mr G Mackenzie, Dr I Cockburn, Mr A Christie, Mrs T Robertson, Mr I Brown, Mr T Heggie, Mr R Bremner, Mr L Fraser, Mr K Rosie, Mrs H Carmichael, Mr J McGillivray, Mr A Mackinnon, Mr M Finlayson, Mr A Henderson, Ms I Campbell, Mr D Louden, Mr C Munro, Mr B Allan, Mrs B McAllister, Miss J Campbell, Mr J Finlayson, Mr B Thompson, Mr A MacInnes, Mrs M Davidson, Ms L Munro, Mrs J Barclay, Mrs L MacDonald, Mrs M Paterson, Mr R MacWilliam and Mrs C Wilson.

For the Amendment

Mr A Jarvie, Mr D MacLeod, Mr P Saggars, Mr C Smith, Mr C MacLeod, Mrs M Smith, Mr D Mackay, Mr D Macpherson, Mr A Baxter and Mr S Mackie.

Abstention

Mrs P Munro

In a sixth vote, Mr A Henderson, seconded by Mr R Bremner, **MOVED** the recommendations as detailed in the report.

As an **AMENDMENT**, Mr A Jarvie, seconded by Mr S Mackie, moved – in relation to Standing Order 12 – the following alternative wording to what was being proposed -

“The signatories on the Notice of Motion will be entitled to speak for up to 5 minutes, all other Members wishing to speak on the Motion will be limited to a maximum of 3 minutes”.

On a vote being taken, the **MOTION** received 47 votes and the **AMENDMENT** received 10 votes and the **MOTION** was therefore **CARRIED**, the votes having been cast as follows:-

For the Motion

Mr G Adam, Mr B Allan, Mrs J Barclay, Mr B Boyd, Mr R Bremner, Mr I Brown, Ms I Campbell, Miss J Campbell, Mrs H Carmichael, Mr A Christie, Mrs M Cockburn, Dr I Cockburn, Mrs M Davidson, Mr J Finlayson, Mr M Finlayson, Mr C Fraser, Mr L Fraser, Mr R Gale, Mr J Gordon, Mr K Gowans, Mr A Graham, Mr J Gray, Mr T Heggie, Mr A Henderson, Ms E Knox, Mr D Louden, Mrs L MacDonald, Mr A MacInnes, Mr G Mackenzie, Mr A Mackinnon, Mrs A MacLean, Mr R MacWilliam, Mrs B McAllister, Mr J McGillivray, Mr H Morrison, Mr C Munro, Ms L Munro, Mrs P Munro, Mrs M Paterson, Mr M Reiss, Mr D Rixson, Mrs F Robertson, Mrs T Robertson, Mr K Rosie, Mr G Ross, Ms N Sinclair and Mr B Thompson.

For the Amendment

Mr A Baxter, Mr A Jarvie, Mr D Mackay, Mr S Mackie, Mr D MacLeod, Mr C MacLeod, Mr D Macpherson, Mr P Saggars, Mrs M Smith and Mr C Smith.

In a seventh vote, Mr A Henderson, seconded by Mr R Bremner, **MOVED** the recommendations as detailed in the report.

As an **AMENDMENT**, Mr A Jarvie, seconded by Mr S Mackie, moved – in relation to Standing Order 20 – the following alternative wording to what was being proposed – “During discussion, a Member may raise a point of order or, with the sanction of the Convener/Chair, provide an explanation. A Member who is addressing the meeting when a point of order is raised will resume their seat until the question of order has been decided by the Convener/Chair.”

On a vote being taken, the **MOTION** received 47 votes and the **AMENDMENT** received 10 votes and the **MOTION** was therefore **CARRIED**, the votes having been cast as follows:-

For the Motion

Mr G Adam, Mr B Allan, Mrs J Barclay, Mr B Boyd, Mr R Bremner, Mr I Brown, Ms I Campbell, Mrs J Campbell, Mrs H Carmichael, Mr A Christie, Mrs M Cockburn, Dr I Cockburn, Ms K Currie, Mrs M Davidson, Mr M Finlayson, Mr J Finlayson, Mr L Fraser, Mr R Gale, Mr J Gordon, Mr K Gowans, Mr A Graham, Mr J Gray, Mr T Heggie, Mr A Henderson, Ms E Knox, Mr D Louden, Mrs L MacDonald, Mr A MacInnes, Mr G Mackenzie, Mr A Mackinnon, Mrs A MacLean, Mrs B McAllister, Mr J McGillivray, Mr H Morrison, Mrs P Munro, Mr C Munro, Ms L Munro, Mrs M Paterson, Mr M Reiss, Mr D Rixson, Mrs F Robertson, Mrs T Robertson, Mr K Rosie, Mr G Ross, Ms N Sinclair, Mr B Thompson and Mrs C Wilson.

For the Amendment

Mr A Baxter, Mr A Jarvie, Mr D Mackay, Mr S Mackie, Mr D MacLeod, Mr C MacLeod, Mr D Macpherson, Mr P Saggars, Mrs M Smith and Mr C Smith.

In an eighth vote, Mr A Henderson, seconded by Mr R Bremner, **MOVED** the recommendations as detailed in the report.

As an **AMENDMENT**, Mr A Jarvie, seconded by Mr S Mackie, moved the terms of a proposed new Standing Order as follows – “Communications at the Request of Council/Committee - during debate of an item held in public, where an agreed motion or amendment has the effect of a Member of Officer of the Council to communicate to someone or body on the Council’s behalf, said communication will be circulated to Members within 3 working days of sending and a copy recorded in the subsequent minute of that meeting”.

On a vote being taken, the **MOTION** received 49 votes and the **AMENDMENT** received 9 votes, with 1 abstention, and the **MOTION** was therefore **CARRIED**, the votes having been cast as follows:-

For the Motion

Mr G Adam, Mr B Allan, Mrs J Barclay, Mr B Boyd, Mr R Bremner, Mr I Brown, Ms I Campbell, Miss J Campbell, Mrs H Carmichael, Mr A Christie, Mrs M Cockburn, Dr I Cockburn, Ms K Currie, Mrs M Davidson, Mr J Finlayson, Mr M Finlayson, Mr C Fraser, Mr L Fraser, Mr R Gale, Mr J Gordon, Mr K Gowans, Mr A Graham, Mr J Gray, Mr T Heggie, Mr A Henderson, Ms E Knox, Mr D Louden, Ms L MacDonald, Mr A MacInnes, Mr G Mackenzie, Mr A Mackinnon, Mrs A MacLean, Mr R MacWilliam, Mrs B McAllister, Mr J McGillivray, Mr H Morrison, Mr C Munro, Mrs P Munro, Ms L Munro, Mrs M Paterson, Mr Denis Rixson, Ms F Robertson, Mrs T Robertson, Mr K Rosie, Mr G Ross, Ms N Sinclair, Mrs M Smith, Mr B Thompson and Mrs C Wilson.

For the Amendment

Mr A Baxter, Mr A Jarvie, Mr D Mackay, Mr S Mackie, Mr D MacLeod, Mr C MacLeod, Mr D Macpherson, Mr P Sagers and Mr C Smith.

Abstention

Mr M Reiss

Decision

The Council **NOTED** the points about the general conduct of meetings as set out in Section 4 and **AGREED** the proposals around procedures and protocols, including the introduction of regular breaks and the role of Chairs, Vice Chairs and Committee Clerks in managing meetings.

The Council also **AGREED** the proposed revisions as set out in Section 5 of the report, including a correction to the wording in the report/recommendation for Standing Order 11a (Question Time – Public) whereby Questions were now to be received no later than 12 noon on the Wednesday in the week preceding the meeting.

19. Annual Review of the Scheme of Delegation Ath-sgrùdadh dhen Sgeama Riochdachaidh

Declarations of Interest

Mr T Heggie declared a non-financial interest in this item as a Director of High Life Highland and Mr K Gowans declared a non-financial interest on the basis that a family member was employed by 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 them from taking part in the discussion.

There had been circulated Report No. HC/7/21 dated 3 December 2020 by the Executive Chief Officer, Performance and Governance.

During discussion, Members raised the following issues: -

- in respect of planning issues, thanks were conveyed to the Leader of the Council, Members and Officers for the arrangement of and attendance at the Seminar which had been held in November 2020 at which a number of contributions/suggestions had been put forward which had informed the current report;
- in regard to the Seminar, and specifically the recommendations which had subsequently come forward from Officers, it was suggested that there was a need to change the recommendation for no change to the size of developments and instead reduce current development sizes from 50 to 30 houses;
- it had been agreed previously that there were be a series of small events to allow a Member led review of the Scheme of Delegation and although it was acknowledged that this had been delayed due to the pandemic, there was a need for dates to now be identified to allow this to happen over the next six months;
- in regard to the Communities & Place Committee, and specifically Paragraph 2.3.8, there was a need to correct the typographical error which referred to 'Ward Memorials' on the basis that this should read as 'War Memorials';
- in relation to the Communities & Place Committee, and specifically Paragraph 2.10 (the setting of charges for relevant services), it was queried as to whether this would include the setting of car parking charges;
- clarification was needed in respect of the detail around Council Asset Transfers and particularly the level of delegation to Officers in this regard;
- the new powers for Local Committees in respect of the Crown Estate and Common Good Funds were welcomed, as well as the proposals for working with local communities;
- it was suggested that consideration should be given to more flexibility within report formats in future where possible;
- further clarity was needed in relation to Paragraph 2.9 – Finance Services – and specifically the overseeing of the management of any Common Good Fund assets for localities;
- in terms of the suggestion which had been made for a change to the size of developments from 50 to 30, it was not felt that this was particularly necessary as it was currently the case that Local Members could call in applications (if they had an issue with those applications) and there was also a need to be aware of the current length and timings of Planning Application Committee meetings which could be significant;
- there was a need to remove reference to 'European Community Law and legislation' within the Corporate Resources section of the report;
- there was also a need to correct references which had been made in respect of the criteria for Highland Opportunity Investments Limited in order to reflect current arrangements;
- the Gaelic Committee reporting to the full Council was welcomed, not least because it would give all Members the opportunity to assess, scrutinise and influence the many aspects of Gaelic culture which affected the lives of those living and working across the Highlands;

- consideration should be given to creating smaller Planning Application Committees which were similar in size to Local Committees so that all Members could have involvement in planning issues;
- in relation to implementing the power of 2 Ward Members to call in any planning application validated from 1 January 2021 onwards, it was suggested that this should be limited to applications in their own Ward and to 14 working days after the publication of the Weekly List;
- it would be important to take account of all issues connected with any proposed changes to the current planning arrangements and this would perhaps be best dealt with through a further Seminar in the first instance;
- there was a need to thank Mr K Gowans for instigating and arranging the Seminar which had been held in November;
- it had to be acknowledged that there was sometimes a perception of a 'disconnect' in the planning process whereby local decisions were taken at a remote level and for that reason the suggestion of creating smaller Planning Application Committees was supported;
- it was proposed that Strategic Committee Chairs should work with the appropriate Executive Chief Officers to review issues which could be devolved to Local Committees;
- the assurance which had been given that a review would be undertaken to consider the possibilities for devolving planning issues was welcomed. In this regard, it was suggested that if necessary a small pilot exercise should perhaps be implemented in the first instance;
- it was felt that the implementation of localism across the Highland should include planning decisions being taken at a local level;
- if the proposal to allow 2 Ward Members to call in any planning application was approved, there would have to be clarification as to this would operate in a situation where a major development affected more than 1 Ward; and
- the proposal to change the development size from 50 to 30 houses would have the effect of raising the profile of future proposed developments which would be beneficial for local communities across the Highlands.

Decision

Members AGREED:-

- (i) the changes to the Scheme of Delegation as detailed in Appendix 1 and 2 to the report;
- (ii) that the Gaelic Committee report to the Council instead of the Economy and Infrastructure Committee;
- (iii) that amendments to post titles could be made without recourse to Council as long as the level of delegation remained unchanged;
- (iv) that a further report would come back to the Council once there was clarity around the changes required to the Scheme of Delegation as a consequence of leaving the European Union and any other changes required as a consequence of possible further changes in the Council's management structure;
- (v) amendments to the Scheme of Delegation in relation to planning matters as follows - change to development size from 50 to 30 houses, reduction of number for objections from 8 to 5 across Highland, implement power of 2 Ward Members to call in any application validated from 1 Jan 2021 onwards and limit the call-in to applications in their own Ward and to 14 working days after the publication of the Weekly List; and
- (vi) to review the impact of changes after 6 months.

It was also **AGREED** that Executive Chief Officers should work with Strategic Committee Chairs to review and report back on issues which could be devolved to Local Committees from their own areas of responsibility.

It was further **AGREED** to consider the possibilities around devolving planning issues to smaller Committees as part of the 6 monthly review of the changes to the planning arrangements as agreed under recommendation (vi) above.

**20. High Life Highland – Appointment of Independent Directors
High Life na Gaidhealtachd – Comataidh Ainmeachaidh**

Declarations of Interest

Mr B Thompson, Ms L Munro and Mr A Jarvie 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 them from taking part in the discussion.

The Council was advised that recommendations had been received from the High Life Highland Nominations Committee in relation to the appointment of Independent Directors as follows –

Mr D Finlayson
Mr D Finnigan

In this regard, short biographies for each candidate were also circulated.

Decision

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

**21. Clerk to the Highland Licensing Board
Clèireach do Bhòrd Cheadachd na Gàidhealtachd**

The Council **AGREED** the appointment of Mr Iain Meredith as Clerk to the Licensing Board on a temporary basis until Mrs Claire MacArthur returned from maternity leave.

**22. Timetable of Meetings
Clàr-ama Choinneamhan**

The Council **AGREED** the following changes to the current Timetable of Meetings:-

Highland Council – to move from 16 to 9 December
Housing & Property Committee – to move from 8 December to 15 December
Gaelic Committee – to move from 9 December to 16 December

**23. NHS Partnership Review
Ath-sgrùdadh Com-pàirteachas NHS**

Declarations of Interest

Mr A Christie (as a Non-Executive Director of NHS Highland) and Ms L Munro (as an employee of Carr Gomm Self Directed Support) declared 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.

Mrs D MacKay declared a financial interest in this item as a member of the NHS Highland Board but, having applied the test outlined in Paragraphs 5.2 and 5.3 of the Councillors' Code of Conduct, and in terms of her dispensation, confirmed that she would take part in the discussion.

There had been circulated Report No. HC/8/21 dated 25 March 2021 by the Executive Chief Officer, Health and Social Care.

During discussion, Members raised the following issues: -

- there was a need to convey thanks to the Officers concerned, and particularly Mrs F Malcolm, for the extensive work which had been undertaken to date;
- it was noted that for the financial year 2021/22 only, it was being proposed that any overspend at the end of the year was to be shared between the partners on a 50/50 basis;
- further and more detailed information was sought and received on the situation which could arise where an action plan had been unsuccessful and an overspend was evident at the end of a financial year. In this regard, it was noted that it was being proposed that the following arrangements would apply to address that overspend – use of any underspend on another arm of the integrated budget. Where an overspend remained in respect of integrated children's services, there would be use of uncommitted earmarked reserves held by the Council for those services. Where an overspend remained in respect of integrated adult services, there would be use of any uncommitted earmarked reserves that the Council might have agreed to hold on behalf of NHS Highland for these services;
- it was noted that in the event of a dispute/unresolved matters, it was being proposed that this would be referred to mediation;
- clarification was sought and provided as to whether the budget for 2021/22 had now been agreed;
- it had to be highlighted that there had been a significant delay in this report coming forward due to the restrictions arising from Covid-19 over the past year but it was considered that this document now represented a huge improvement in the governance and financial reporting around this issue and as such was very much welcomed;
- there was a need to thank the Members who had been directly involved for the contributions which they had made as part of the process;
- it was acknowledged that the Council had been ranked as 31st in Scotland in terms of enabling people to remain in their own homes wherever possible and this had to be and would be improved;
- it was noted that regular reports would be provided to Members through the Health, Social Care and Wellbeing Committee in the coming months;
- there was concern that within the integrated budget there was still a large degree of very specific ring-fencing around each service;
- further clarification around the VAT arrangements would be helpful, along with information on how it was proposed to deal with any NHS Officer time which was seconded;
- in relation to governance, it was noted that the role/functions of the Joint Monitoring Committee were being deleted and as such it was queried as to how Members (who were not directly involved in the process) could seek and be provided with information as and when required;
- in terms of financial governance, it was being proposed that the Chief Executive of NHS Highland would be accountable to the Chief Executive of Highland Council (and vice versa) but it was suggested that perhaps such

- oversight should also have some Committee input also;
- in relation to adult social care, more detail was needed on the type of information which could be requested from NHS Highland by Members of the Council;
 - further detail was also requested on the Joint Controller Agreement which was to be put in place;
 - it was felt that it would be more appropriate for consultation responses to be submitted to the Council in the first instance for determination prior to agreement of any further amendments to the Scheme;
 - as well as reference being made to savings and efficiencies, it was important that improvement was also included within the terminology of the document;
 - it would be appreciated if an update for Members could be provided before the Summer Recess if possible; and
 - it was imperative that the monitoring and scrutiny of proposed efficiency savings was undertaken and highlighted within future reports, not least to take account of any potential effect on or implications for local communities across the Highlands.

Thereafter, Mr A Henderson, seconded by Mr J Gray, **MOVED** the recommendations as detailed in the report.

As an **AMENDMENT**, Mr A Jarvie, seconded by Mr D MacKay, moved deletion of recommendation (ii) within the report and that instead the consultation responses should come back to the full Council for final determination prior to agreement of any further amendments to the Scheme.

On a vote being taken, the **MOTION** received 41 votes and the **AMENDMENT** received 6 votes and the **MOTION** was therefore **CARRIED**, the votes having been cast as follows:-

For the Motion

Mr G Adam, Mr B Allan, Mrs J Barclay, Mr B Boyd, Mr R Bremner, Mr I Brown, Miss J Campbell, Ms I Campbell, Mr A Christie, Mrs M Cockburn, Dr I Cockburn, Ms K Currie, Mrs M Davidson, Mr M Finlayson, Mr J Finlayson, Mr L Fraser, Mr C Fraser, Mr J Gordon, Mr K Gowans, Mr A Graham, Mr J Gray, Mr T Heggie, Mr A Henderson, Ms E Knox, Mr D Louden, Mr A MacInnes, Mr G Mackenzie, Mrs A MacLean, Mr C MacLeod, Mrs B McAllister, Mr H Morrison, Mr C Munro, Ms L Munro, Mr M Reiss, Mr D Rixson, Ms F Robertson, Mrs T Robertson, Mr K Rosie, Mr G Ross, Ms N Sinclair and Mr B Thompson.

For the Amendment

Mr A Jarvie, Mr D Mackay, Mr D MacLeod, Mr D MacPherson, Mr P Saggars and Mr C Smith.

Decision

The Council **AGREED**:-

- (i) in principle, the terms of the revised Integration Scheme at Appendices 1 and 2 of the report;
- (ii) to delegate responsibility for further amendments in relation to the Integration Scheme, after the conclusion of the period of consultation in the event that such amendments were not considered to be material, to the Chief Executives of both the Council and NHS Highland in consultation with the Council Convener

and Leader of the Administration, the Chair of the Health, Social Care & Wellbeing Committee, the Leader of the Opposition and the NHS Highland Chair and Vice Chair; and

(iii) in principle, for consultation on the revised Integration Scheme.

24. Park Primary School Fire

There had been circulated Joint Report No. HC/9/21 dated 13 March 2021 by the Executive Chief Officer, Education & Learning and the Executive Chief Officer, Property & Housing.

Decision

Members **NOTED**:-

- (i) the events of and damage to the school building arising from the most recent fire at Park Primary, Invergordon;
- (ii) the actions taken by the Council to support the local community through the two fire events including the prioritisation of educational provision for all children and young people including ELC, those at Park Primary and the young people currently within Invergordon Academy;
- (iii) the timeline and next steps in relation to securing a long-term solution for Park Primary and that a report with recommendations would come back to the Council in June 2021; and
- (iv) the briefing paper sent to the Deputy First Minister which outlined the options following the second fire at Park Primary School and the request from the Leader of the Council for support in such challenging circumstances.

25. 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 7 January 2021 was available on the Council's Website.

26. 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 during discussion of the following item on the grounds that it involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraphs 6 and 9 of Part 1 of Schedule 7A of the Act.

27. School Transport Contracts Cùmhnantan Còmhdhail Sgoile

Declaration of Interest

Mr R Gale declared a non-financial interest in this item as a Trustee of the Go Golspie Development Trust but, having applied the test outlined in Paragraphs 5.2 and 5.3 of the Councillors' Code of Conduct, confirmed that he would leave the meeting during discussion of the item.

There had been circulated to Members only Report No. HC/10/21 dated 25 February 2021 by the Executive Chief Officer, Infrastructure and Environment.

Decision

Following discussion, the Council **AGREED** the recommendations as detailed in the report.

The meeting (having adjourned at 5.35pm on 25 March to resume at 9.00am on 26 March) ended at 12.30pm.