

## The Highland Council

Minutes of Meeting of the **Economy and Infrastructure Committee** held in the Council Chamber, Council Headquarters, Glenurquhart Road, Inverness on Thursday, 6 February 2020 at 11.45 am.

### **Present:**

|                  |                                   |
|------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Mr R Balfour     | Mr B Lobban (Substitute)          |
| Mr A Baxter      | Mr D Louden                       |
| Mr B Boyd        | Mr A MacInnes                     |
| Mrs C Caddick    | Mr W MacKay (by video conference) |
| Mrs H Carmichael | Mr D MacLeod                      |
| Mr J Gordon      | Mr D Rixson                       |
| Mr K Gowans      | Mrs T Robertson                   |
| Mr J Gray        | Mr A Sinclair                     |

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

|                                 |                          |
|---------------------------------|--------------------------|
| Mr R Gale (by video conference) | Mr D Macpherson          |
| Mr A Jarvie                     | Mrs M Paterson (am only) |

### **In attendance:**

Mr M MacLeod, Executive Chief Officer Environment and Infrastructure  
Ms K Lackie, Executive Chief Officer Performance and Governance  
Ms A Clark, Acting Head of Policy, Chief Executive's Service  
Mr C Howell, Head of Infrastructure, Development and Infrastructure Service  
Mr A Maguire, Head of Development and Regeneration, Development and Infrastructure Service  
Ms T Urry, Head of Roads and Transport, Community Services  
Ms N Wallace, Acting Head of Planning and Environment, Development and Infrastructure Service  
Mr A McCann, Economy and Regeneration Manager, Development and Infrastructure Service  
Mr M Johnstone, Area Property Surveyor, Development and Infrastructure Service  
Miss J MacLennan, Principal Administrator, Chief Executive's Office  
Ms F MacBain, Committee Administrator, Chief Executive's Office  
Mr A MacInnes, Administrative Assistant, Chief Executive's Office

### **Also in attendance:**

Mr P Faciendar, Caithness & North Sutherland Regeneration Partnership Programme Manager  
Mr I Ross, Executive Board Chair, Caithness & North Sutherland Regeneration Partnership

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

**Mrs T Robertson in the Chair**

## Business

### 1. Apologies for Absence Leisgeulan

Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of Mr A Henderson, Mr P Saggars and Ms M Smith.

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

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

Item 4 – Mr K Gowans (non-financial)

Item 6 – Mr A Sinclair (non-financial)

Item 10 – Mr J Gray (non-financial)

Item 12 – Mr D Rixson and Mrs T Robertson (both non-financial)

### 3. Good News Naidheachdan Matha

There had been tabled a list of good news and outstanding achievements, which was **NOTED** by the Committee.

At this juncture the Vice Chair expressed the Committee's thanks to Mr S Black, former Director of Development and Infrastructure and Executive Chief Officer Transformation and Economy and Mr K MacInnes, Principal Economy Officer for their contribution to the Service and the Council. Reference was made to their outstanding work, particularly in promoting the Highlands and helping to generate a vibrant local economy. The Committee extended their best wishes to both for the future.

### 4. Role and Remit - Economy and Infrastructure Committee Dreuchd agus Raon-ùghdarras – Comataidh na h-Eaconamaidh agus a' Bhun-structair

**Declaration of Interest - Mr K Gowans declared a non-financial interest in this item 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 his interest did not preclude him from taking part in the discussion.**

There had been circulated Report No. ECI/1/20 by the Executive Chief Officer Performance and Governance.

During discussion, the following issues were considered:-

- concern was expressed that confidential pink papers had been pigeon-holed instead of posted and, because they were not emailed, Members from outside Inverness sometimes did not receive them. This would be taken up with the convenor, with a solution for emailing confidential papers sought, pointing out that other organisations could email confidential information;

- with reference to the intention to devolve operational decision-making to Area Committees as much as possible, a faster pace of progress on this was urged and it was intended a report would be submitted to the next meeting of the Committee. The distinction was made between strategic and operational decisions;
- an announcement on plans to deal with the devolvement of Crown Estate assets was awaited from the Council's Administration;
- the importance of developing a Culture Strategy was emphasised. Reference was made to the need for it to be Highland-wide and not Inverness-centric and to the economic importance of culture and heritage. In response to comments that only Eden Court and High Life Highland were mentioned in the report, when many other organisations were involved in cultural activities, it was pointed out that the Council had particular interest in those two organisations, either owning them or some of their assets. Reference was made to the establishment of a Highland Cultural Strategy Board which it was believed had met once to hold a workshop for stakeholders and more information on this group was sought, including its Chair and any budget;
- reference was made to the wide remit of the Committee with suggested key priorities being climate change, Brexit, including harbours and fishing issues, faster paced progress with the City Region Deal, housing, having realistic budgets, the management of capital projects including school builds and the importance of attracting inward investment. The Service Plan would be presented to the Committee in May which would cover many of these priorities and that climate change was referenced in all reports;
- also, in relation to the scope of the Committee, the need to strengthen cost-benefit analysis of possible projects was suggested, as was the usefulness of giving Members appropriate access to data and financial monitoring information;
- confirmation was sought, and received, that roads would be given a high priority by the Committee and concern was expressed that the devolution of the roads budgets to Area Committees had not yet been undertaken. A report on this would be provided to the next meeting of the Committee and the complexity of the roads situation was summarised. It was pointed out that the Highland Council had recently been placed 25<sup>th</sup> out of 32 local authorities in the annual road condition survey;
- it was suggested the use of the word 'consider' in a report recommendation was ambiguous and not clear what the Committee was being asked to do; and
- it was pointed out that Sub Committees and Working Group memberships were worked out according to a formula to reflect the political composition of the Council. Any concerns about this would be addressed outwith the meeting.

The Committee **NOTED** the report and **AGREED** to investigate whether the Highland Cultural Strategy Board was still functional.

## 5. **Appointments to Sub Committees, Working Groups** **Cur an Dreuchd gu Fo-Chomataidhean, Buidhnean-obrach**

The Committee **APPROVED** the membership of the following Sub-Committees, Working Groups:-

i. Strome ferry Working Group (**9 Members**)

At the Strome ferry Working Group meeting on 13 December 2019 it was recommended that, to ensure consistency, the membership of the Working Group continue unchanged as the Council moved forward with its new Committee Structure.

\* Membership – Mr A Henderson, Mr H Morrison, Ms T Robertson, Mr A Mackinnon, Mr M Reiss, Ms I Campbell, Dr I Cockburn, Mr A MacInnes, Mr D MacLeod

ii. Education Transport Review Sub Committee (**5 Members**)

Membership – Mr R Balfour, Mr W MacKay, Mr D Louden, Mr Boyd, Mr P Sagers

iii. Harbours Management Board – (**10 Members**)

As many matters would now be reported directly to the Committee, the Committee **AGREED** that the Board would meet twice a year but this be kept under review.

Membership – Mr J Gray, Mr A Henderson, Mr W MacKay, Mr R Balfour, Mr D Louden, Mr B Boyd, Mr A MacInnes, Mr D MacLeod, Mr A Sinclair, Mr D Rixson.

iv. Town Centre Working Group – (**12 Members**)

Membership – Mr J Gray, Mr A Henderson, Mrs H Carmichael, Mr R Balfour, Mr D Louden, Ms M Smith, Mr B Boyd, Mr K Gowans, Mr P Sagers, Mr A Sinclair, Mr D Rixson, Mrs C Caddick

It was questioned if there was still a need for this Working Group, especially as priorities had been determined at Area level and that two thirds of the membership were from the Inner Moray Firth area. In response it was confirmed that this Working Group was only likely to meet if, under the current round of funding, there was funding that needed to be reallocated.

v. Highland Economic Forum – (**1 Member**)

Membership – Chair of Economy and Infrastructure Committee

**6. Caithness & North Sutherland Regeneration Partnership - Presentation Com-pàirteachas Ath-nuadhachaidh Ghallaibh & Chataibh a Tuath – Taisbeanadh**

**Declaration of Interest - Mr A Sinclair declared a non-financial interest in this item as a Council appointed Board Member on the Caithness and North Sutherland Regeneration Partnership Advisory Board but, having applied the test outlined in Paragraphs 5.2 and 5.3 of the Councillors' Code of Conduct, concluded that his interest did not preclude him from taking part in the discussion.**

The Caithness and North Sutherland Regeneration Partnership annual update provided an opportunity to consider the challenges and opportunities facing the economy of the north as it transitioned from dependence on Dounreay. A presentation was given by Mr Peter Facienda, CNSRP Programme Manager alongside Mr Iain Ross, who was Chair of the Executive Board of the partnership.

During discussion, it was pointed out that although the Dounreay winding down process had been gradual, significant challenges that had been faced. It was hoped any economic stability now achieved would not be undermined by the loss of European funding sources and the importance of making a clear case to the UK Government to secure future investment was emphasised. Reference was also made to sector funding, with particular mention of on- and off-shore wind power, and to the importance of also investing in resources and training people for the economy and industries of the future.

The Committee **NOTED** the presentation.

## **7. Off Street Car Parking Policy Update Fios às Ùr mu Phoileasaidh Parcadh Far-Sràide**

There had been circulated Report No. ECI/2/20 by the Acting Head of Policy.

During discussion, the following issues were considered:-

- officers were thanked for their detailed work and the effort that had gone into the report, including consideration of the needs of individual car parks;
- reference was made to opposition from some Members that had been reported in the Press and it was clarified that the process for implementing the policy was detailed in the report, including a process for solving issues that might arise during consultation, the policy having been agreed in late 2019;
- attention was drawn to the positive aspects of the project, including the aim to work in close collaboration with local partners and communities, the comprehensive local engagement plan, and the intention to share surplus income locally;
- it was suggested an economic impact assessment was required to appraise some individual parking sites, with reference to localities with out-of-town supermarkets with free parking which might reduce custom to town centre facilities;
- reference was made to the anticipated willingness of tourists to pay parking charges and to the possibility of providing discounts for local residents, either in the form of annual parking permits, or offering specific periods of parking, for example the first hour, free of charge;
- concern was expressed that a local opt out option was not detailed in the report, with specific reference to the Area Committees in Ross Shire, each of which might have differing views, and it was clarified this would be considered locally through the agreed process detailed in the report;
- the surplus income generated would be helpful for local road maintenance; and
- although additional charges were not ideal, and it was possible the new policy might encourage irresponsible parking, the proposal was welcomed

overall, although it was important that efforts were made to avoid causing detrimental impact to local businesses. This would be covered as part of the engagement process set out in the report.

The Committee **NOTED** the progress made towards implementation of the off-street car parking policy agreed at EDI Committee in October 2019.

## 8. Minutes Geàrr-chunntas

The Committee **NOTED** the Minutes of the Planning Applications Committees (PAC) for:-

- i. North PAC – 8 October 2019;
- ii. South PAC – 29 October 2019;
- iii. North PAC – 26 November 2019;
- iv. South PAC – 4 December, 2019;

and, **APPROVED**:-

- v. Tourism Working Group of 28 November 2019;
- vi. Harbours Management Board of 13 November 2019 subject to, in relation to Item 6 (Corran Ferry Consultation), clarification that the funding for infrastructure would be from the Highland Council and not the Scottish Government.

In addition, in relation to Item 5 (Service Income Review), concern was also expressed at the delay, with commercial Harbour customers, in implementing the Council policy agreed in March 2019 regarding a surcharge for invoices and the implementation of late penalty fees and interest charges for invoices not paid in 30 days. There would have been financial implications as a result and the Committee **AGREED** clarification be provided at the next ECI Committee of the current position; and

- vii. Stromeferry Working Group of 13 December 2019.

## 9. Exclusion of the Public Às-dùnadh a' Phobaill

The Committee **APPROVED** is asked to resolve that, under Section 50A(4) of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973, the public be excluded from the meeting for the following items on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Part 1 of Schedule 7A of the Act, the relevant paragraphs being shown.

## 10. Land and Property Fearann agus Cuid-seilbhe

### Paragraphs 6 and 9

**Declaration of Interest** - Mr J Gray declared a non-financial interest in part of this item as a member of Crown Church and left the room during discussion of that particular matter.

There had been circulated to Members only Report No. ECI/3/20 by the Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure and Environment.

Following discussion, the Chair, seconded by Mr B Lobban, **MOVED** the approval of the recommendations contained in the report.

As an **AMENDMENT**, in regard to the proposals for the Library Support Unit, Mr K Gowans, seconded by Mr D Louden, moved that a decision be deferred to enable a full options appraisal to be undertaken and reported back to the ECI Committee.

On a vote being taken, the **MOTION** received 10 votes and the **AMENDMENT** received 5 votes, with 1 abstention, and the **MOTION** was therefore **CARRIED**, the votes having been cast as follows:-

**For the Motion:**

Mr R Balfour, Mrs H Carmichael, Mrs C Caddick, Mr J Gordon, Mr J Gray, Mr B Lobban, Mr D MacLeod, Mr D Rixson, Mrs T Robertson and Mr A Sinclair,

**For the Amendment:**

Mr A Baxter, Mr B Boyd, Mr K Gowans, Mr D Louden and Mr A MacInnes.

**Abstention**

Mr W Mackay

**Decision**

The Committee **APPROVED** the recommendations contained within the report.

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

**Paragraphs 6 and 9**

There had been circulated to Members only Report No. ECI/4/20 by the Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure and Environment.

The Committee **NOTED** the monitoring statements for General Fund and Property Account transactions as approved by the Head of Development & Regeneration under delegated authority as well the Budgeted Sales for 2019/20 and beyond.

**As Mrs Robertson had declared a non-financial interest in the following item, Mr Gray assumed the role of Chair.**

**12. Housing Development Initiatives  
Iomairtean Leasachaidh Taigheadais**

**Paragraphs 6 and 9**

**Declarations of Interest:**

**Mrs T Robertson declared a non-financial interest in this item as a Director of Highland Housing Alliance but decided to leave the room.**

**Mr D Rixson, as a Board Member of Lochaber Housing Association, declared a non-financial interest in respect of this item 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 to Members only Report No. ECI/5/20 by the Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure and Environment.

The Committee **APPROVED** the recommendations contained within the report.

The meeting ended at 2.45 pm.