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The Highland Council
No. 5 2020/2021

Minutes of Meeting of the **Highland Council** held **REMOTELY** on **Friday, 10 December 2021** at 10.35am.

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

Present:

Mr C Aitken	Mr D Louden
Mr G Adam	Mrs L MacDonald
Mr B Allan	Mr A MacInnes
Mr R Balfour	Mr D Mackay
Mrs J Barclay	Mr W MacKay
Mr A Baxter	Mr G MacKenzie
Mr R Bremner	Mrs I 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 H Carmichael	Mr D Macpherson
Mr A Christie	Mr R MacWilliam
Dr I Cockburn	Mrs B McAllister
Mrs M Cockburn	Mr J McGillivray
Ms K Currie	M N McLean
Mrs M Davidson	Mr H Morrison
Ms S Fanet	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	Ms E Roddick
Mr J Gray	Mr K Rosie
Ms P Hadley	Mr P Saggars
Mr T Heggie	Mr A Sinclair
Mr A Henderson	Mr C Smith
Ms E Knox	Ms M Smith
Mr A Jarvie	Ms J Tilt
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, Health & Social Care	Executive Chief Officer, Resources & Finance
Executive Chief Officer, Infrastructure & Environment	

Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of Mr B Boyd, Mrs D MacKay and Mrs G Campbell-Sinclair.

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

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

General – Mrs M Cockburn as a Council appointed Board Member of the Inverness, Badenoch & Strathspey Citizens Advice Bureau and Mr C MacLeod as a Director of the Skye & Lochalsh Citizens Advice Bureau (Both Non-Financial)

Item 5ii, 9, 10, 13, 17 & 18 – Mr A Christie (Financial)
 Item 12 – Mr A Christie (Non-Financial)
 Items 9, 10, 11 and 12 – Mr D Rixson (Non-Financial)
 Item 10 – Mr C Munro (Non-Financial)
 Item 13 - Mrs M Paterson (Non-Financial)
 Item 13 – Mr T Heggie and Mr K Gowans (Non-Financial)
 Item 17 – Ms L Munro (Financial)
 Item 19 – Mr K Gowans and Ms L Munro (Non-Financial)

At this point in the meeting, and in light of the previous day's technical difficulties which had led to the postponement of this meeting until today, Mr K Rosie, seconded by Mr K Gowans, **MOVED** (in relation to Item 7 on the agenda – Question Time) the suspension of Standing Order 11 in order to allow any supplementary questions to be submitted in writing as opposed to being raised verbally at the meeting. If agreed, any supplementary questions and responses would be appended to the Minutes of this Meeting thereafter.

As an **AMENDMENT**, Mr A Jarvie, seconded by Mr S Mackie, moved that there should be no suspension of Standing Order 11 and that supplementary questions and responses should be dealt with in the normal manner.

On a vote being taken, the **MOTION** received 39 votes and the **AMENDMENT** received 8 votes, with 1 abstention, and the **MOTION** was therefore **CARRIED**, the votes having been submitted as follows:-

For the Motion

Mr G Adam, Mr B Allan, Mrs J Barclay, Mr I Brown, Mrs C Caddick, Mrs I Campbell, Miss J Campbell, Mr A Christie, Dr I Cockburn, Mrs M Davidson, Mr J Finlayson, Mr M Finlayson, Mr C Fraser, Mr D Fraser, Mr L Fraser, Mr R Gale, Mr J Gray, Mr K Gowans, Mr A Graham, Mr J Gray, Mr T Heggie, Mr A Henderson, Ms E Knox, Mr B Lobban, Mr D Louden, Mr W MacKay, Mr G MacKenzie, Mrs A MacLean, Mr C MacLeod, Mr H Morrison, Mr C Munro, Ms L Munro, Mrs M Paterson, Mr A Rhind, Mr D Rixson, Mrs F Robertson, Mrs T Robertson, Mr K Rosie and Ms J Tilt.

For the Amendment

Mr R Balfour, Mr J Bruce, Mr A Jarvie, Mr D Macpherson, Mr S Mackie, Mr D MacKay, Mr J McGillivray and Mr P Saggars.

Abstention

Mr M Reiss

3. **Membership of the Council** **Ballrachd na Comhairle**

It was **NOTED** that, as a result of the By-Election for Ward 21 on 2 December, Ms S Fanet had been elected as a Member of the Council.

In this regard, Ms Fanet was welcomed to the Council and responded accordingly.

In respect of the resignation of Mr B Thompson (Ward 11), it was **NOTED** that, due to this having been received within six months of the date of the next Local Government Elections, a By-Election would not be held.

It was also **NOTED** that Ms P Hadley was to continue as a member of the Green Party on the Council but her status would not include reference to the Highland Matters Group in future.

On the basis of all of the above, membership of the Council was now as follows:-

Ind – 24/ SNP – 19/ Lib Dem – 11/ Cons – 10/ Lab – 3/ HM – 3/ Green – 1/
Sutherland Ind – 1/ Non-Aligned – 1/ Vacancy - 1

Membership of Strategic Committees now changed from 7/5/3/3 to 6/5/3/3/1 – with the final place tied between the Labour and Highland Matters Groups.

In that regard, the Council **AGREED** the following changes to membership of Strategic Committees:-

Corporate Resources Committee – Mr J Gray to continue on this Committee
Communities & Place Committee – Mr D Macpherson to come off and Ms M Smith to be added

Economy & Infrastructure Committee – Mr B Lobban to come off and Ms M Smith to be added

Health, Social Care & Wellbeing Committee – Mrs M Davidson to come off and Ms P Hadley to be added

Housing & Property Committee – Mr C MacLeod to be added

Education Committee – Mr L Fraser to come off and Mrs P Munro to be added

South Planning Applications Committee – Mr D Rixson to replace Mr B Thompson

Economy & Infrastructure Committee – Mr A Jarvie to replace Mr A Sinclair

The Council further **AGREED** the following appointments –

Vice Chair of the Housing & Property Committee – Mr M Finlayson

Vice Chair of the Corporate Resources Committee – Mr A Christie

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 28 October as contained in the Volume which had been circulated separately which were **APPROVED**.

5. **Minutes of Meetings of Committees** **Gèarr-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.

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

City of Inverness Area Committee, 18 November – Starred Item 6 – Inner Moray Firth Proposed Local Development Plan 2 – **NOTED** the issues raised by respondents to the consultation on strategic matters and Officer recommended responses as detailed in Appendix 2 of the report which had now been considered by the Economy and Infrastructure Committee, taking account of the City Committee’s view on these strategic matters.

Easter Ross Area Committee, 18 November – Starred Item 4 – Inner Moray Firth Proposed Local Development Plan 2 – **NOTED** the issues raised by respondents to the consultation on strategic matters and Officer recommended responses both as detailed at Appendix 2 of the report which had now been considered by the Economy and Infrastructure Committee.

Also **NOTED** that any *material changes would be agreed in consultation and agreement with the Chair of the relevant Committee(s) prior to publication. **(should read as non-material changes).*

Sutherland County Committee, 22 November – Starred Item 5 – Golspie Associated School Group Overview – **AGREED** to accept the following amendment as put forward at the meeting –

That, as part of ongoing self-evaluation around ASL need and resource in Sutherland and across the whole of the Highlands, and in light of Covid-19/Omicron concerns and the additional pressures being placed on schools (including staff absence), the Council will reinstate (to the value of £177k in this school year) the allocation that was in place during the first term of the school session.

Isle of Skye & Raasay Committee, 29 November – Starred Item 6 – Storr Future Development – **AGREED** that a report should be presented to a future Corporate Resources Committee meeting seeking approval of the required set-up funding to deliver the installation on the retail module at Storr.

Nairnshire Committee, 1 December - Starred Item 4 – Inner Moray Firth Proposed Local Development Plan 2 – **NOTED** the issues raised by respondents to the consultation on strategic matters and Officer recommended responses both as detailed in Appendix 2 to the report which had now been considered by the Economy and Infrastructure Committee, taking account of the Local Committee’s view on these strategic matters.

Economy and Infrastructure Committee, 2 December

Starred Item 9 – Highland Coastal Community Fund - Update and Next Actions - **AGREED** that up to 7.5% of the £3m allocation should be ring fenced for investment into the administration of the fund to ensure appropriate and adequate resourcing of the scheme.

Starred Item 16 - Car Parking Roll Out Project - **AGREED** that the rebase of the Service budget for car parking income to reflect the long-term impact on changing patterns of car parking usage on income received from car park should come to the Council in March 2022 to be considered as part of the budget setting process.

Correction to the Economy & Infrastructure Committee Minutes – Item 11 (bullet point 4) – to clarify that “the increased use of solar panels was welcomed as was the small hydro scheme being constructed on the *Rover Ness*” should read as “River”.

Minutes not included in the Volume

(i) Investment Sub Committee – 17 September – **NOTED**

Declaration of Interest – Item (ii) – Mr A Christie declared a financial interest in the following item as a Non-Executive Director of NHS Highland but, having applied the test outlined in Paragraphs 5.2 and 5.3 of the Councillors’ Code of Conduct, concluded that his interest did not preclude his involvement.

(ii) Community Planning Board – 22 September – **NOTED**

(iii) Recruitment Panel – 11 November and 25 November – **NOTED**

(iv) Recovery, Improvement and Transformation Board – 29 November – **APPROVED**

6. Appointment of Chair of the Housing & Property Committee/Membership Ballarachd Chomataidhean, msaa

The Council **AGREED** to appoint Mr L Fraser as the new Chair of the Housing & Property Committee.

7. Question Time Am Ceiste

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

(1) Public Question – Ms C Nichols

To the Chair of the Education Committee

The voluntary youth sector has a rich and diverse range of organisations that work with a variety of young people and offering services ranging from community based universal youth work to specialist issue-based support services. The Voluntary Youth Network was launched in January 2017 and has developed an effective improvement plan underpinned by professional ethics, values and principles and delivering to local, regional and National priorities.

The plan has enabled the sector to attract support from National funders and stakeholders and the sector is worth between £7 million and £10 million pounds per year to the local economy.

Would the Highland Council agree to meet with young people, youth workers and volunteers from the voluntary youth sector to agree action to improve representation of voluntary youth sector at relevant committees and decision-making forums?

The response had been circulated.

Supplementary Question –

The Voluntary Youth Sector welcomes the commitment for key officers and members to meet with young people, youth workers and volunteers from the sector to further develop engagement in the Highland Council decision making processes.

Since the budget consultation in 2014, voluntary youth clubs across the region have received no funding from the Highland Council and this has led to a lack of communication or recognition of the work taking place in these facilities.

This lack of communication has led to a perception by voluntary sector practitioners that their inclusion in strategic discussions have felt tokenistic and their concerns disregarded or ignored.

The sector welcomes the opportunities now created by the Youth Work Development Group with representatives of the VYN taking their places at the first meeting next week.

However there remains much more that can be achieved.

We hope for more meaningful engagement with the Youth Convener, HLH and THC officers and members to ensure such developments are capitalised on and real progress towards true partnership approaches are developed.

What actions can we expect to enable these commitments and lead to a more effective partnership enabling best outcomes for young people in Highland through youth work?

Supplementary Response –

I agree that actions have to be moved forward and the encouraging thing is that we are seeing positive progress even at this time- for example:

- *The current Youth work strategy was codesigned with children and young people including those on the VYN.*
- *The new arrangements for CLD governance in Highland, including the establishment of a Youth Work Development Group, sets out to improve communication and provide new opportunities for the direct participation of a wider group of stakeholders in the planning processes. The Youth Work Development Group will provide a platform for all partners to work constructively and collaboratively to improve outcomes for young people in Highland.*
- *THE VYN will have 5 representatives on the Youth Work Development group along with representatives from THC, Education Scotland and HLH, and the inaugural meeting will take place next week.*
- *The Highland Youth Convener is also a member of this group and I know, Anja would welcome any opportunity for meaningful engagement with young people and those working on their behalf and I would encourage you and others to contact her directly or through HLH who provide support to that role. I will also update her at a meeting I have with her next week.*
- *THC is committed to working with our partners and we look forward to receiving the first progress report mid 2022 detailing progress on the CLD plan including those delivering youth work.*
- *Finally, I will ensure that relevant council officers and HLH officers are updated of your keenness to touch base with them to further develop partnership working.*

Member Questions

(1) Mr A Jarvie

To the Leader of the Council

Which member of Council Staff will be tasked with answering this question on your behalf?

The response had been circulated.

(2) Mr A Jarvie

To the Leader of the Council

As Leader of the Council, following my question at a previous Council meeting, can you assure me there is no coalition agreement with the SNP Group?

The response had been circulated.

(3) Mr A Jarvie

To the Leader of the Council

As Leader of the Council, how does your personal view of a Council proposal contradict your view as Leader of the Council?

The response had been circulated.

(4) Mr A Jarvie

To the Leader of the Council

How many Highland residents (as individuals, not organisations) have emailed or made representations to you in support of the Spaces for People in the City Centre, as Leader of the Council?

The response had been circulated.

(5) Mr A Jarvie

To the Leader of the Council

How many Highland residents (as individuals, not organisations) have emailed or made representations to you in opposition to the Spaces for People in the City Centre, as Leader of the Council?

The response had been circulated.

(6) Mr A Jarvie

To the Leader of the Council

As Leader of the Council, what discussion have you had with other Council Leaders of larger cities who have either significantly scaled back or entirely removed their Spaces for People interventions?

The response had been circulated.

(7) Mr A Jarvie

To the Chair of Economy and Infrastructure

Do you remain confident that the whole budget allocation for road repairs and maintenance will be spent in this financial year?

The response had been circulated.

(8) Mr A Jarvie

To the Leader of the Council

Why do the public continue to remain in the dark about the details of how this Council spent their money on the Inverness City Arts Programme?

The response had been circulated.

(9) Mr A Jarvie

To the Leader of the Council

When will the public find out how much was paid to 'artists' to design a concrete slab?

The response had been circulated.

(10) Mr A Jarvie

To the Leader of the Council

As Leader of the Council, do you find it acceptable that an artwork which cost the public purse nearly £400,000 is not fully accessible to disabled people as was promised?

The response had been circulated.

(11) Mr A Baxter

To the Leader of the Council

With six months left of your tenure, as Leader of the Council, what is your proudest achievement you initiated, led on and pursued to completion?

The response had been circulated.

(12) Mr A Baxter

To the Leader of the Council

As Leader of the Council, can you list any examples where the Council has suffered the often touted "reputational damage" as a result of Councillors undertaking their elected role in scrutinising the Council and what the material impact was?

The response had been circulated.

(13) Mr A Baxter

To the Leader of the Council

As Leader of the Council do you believe the £360,000 spent on the Gathering Place in Inverness represents good use of public funds?

The response had been circulated.

(14) Mr A Baxter

To the Leader of the Council

When did you last visit Lochaber in your capacity as Leader of the Council, and which community groups did you meet during this visit?

The response had been circulated.

(15) Mr A Baxter

To the Leader of the Council

What is the total FTE headcount for non-education staff employed by the Highland Council as of 30th November 2021?

The response had been circulated.

(16) Mr A Baxter

To the Leader of the Council

What was the total FTE headcount for non-education staff employed by the Highland Council in each of the last 10 financial years? What was the total employment costs for those posts in each financial year?

The response had been circulated.

(17) Mr A Baxter

To the Leader of the Council

What was the Statutory Performance Indicator for the condition of roads in the Highland Council area when you took over as Leader of the Council?

The response had been circulated.

(18) Mr K Gowans

To the Leader of the Council

Further to my successful motion in December 2020 when Members agreed to support "The Highland Council undertakes to achieve "Living Wage" designation status for the Highland Council Area to provide benefit and support for lower paid

employees”, an update was provided to the Council in May. Since then, there have been no further updates on this very important initiative. What tangible evidence is there that any further progress has been made to date?

The response had been circulated.

(19) Mr R MacWilliam

To the Leader of the Council

Which Highland Council budget will meet the additional costs arising as a result of unauthorised spending beyond the agreed Inverness City Arts budget?

The response had been circulated.

(20) Mr R MacWilliam

To the Leader of the Council

When will a detailed breakdown of the ICArts programme expenditure become available for public scrutiny?

The response had been circulated.

(21) Mr R MacWilliam

To the Leader of the Council

What measures are Highland Council taking to support the community food growing strategy?

The response had been circulated.

(22) Mr R MacWilliam

To the Leader of the Council

What measures are in place to consult communities on the sale of ‘common good’ assets?

The response had been circulated.

(23) Mr A Jarvie

To the Leader of the Council

Do you have absolute assurance that HR has sufficient staffing and procedures to address the concerns highlighted by members of staff in the press regarding the culture in the Council?

The response had been circulated.

(24) Mr A Baxter**To the Leader of the Council**

Following the admission of liability by Borders Council and their subsequent failure to investigate the actions of teacher Linda McCall, what action as Leader of the Council have you taken to prevent such a cover up ever happening at Highland Council?

The response had been circulated.

(25) Mr D Macpherson**To the Chair of the Housing & Property Committee**

How many people are currently waiting patiently on the Highland Council's Housing List for an available council house or housing association house, and how does Highland Council correspond with these people to update them on their status and place in the housing queue?

The response had been circulated.

**8. Notices of Motion
Brathan Glusaid**

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

(i)The Council believes that the regionalisation of Councils has been a failed experiment and a singular unitary authority for the Highland region does not, and has not, served the people of the Highlands effectively and fairly.

The local authority is often tasked with delivering objectives that may present opposing outcomes for Highland constituents. Within housing, school estates and road infrastructure; the growth of the City of Inverness and the surrounding commuting areas calls for an expansion of current provision. However, in most of our rural areas, local representatives fight for the mere retention of such services and seek to reverse the trend of population decline.

Although the matter was raised directly at Holyrood in the context of a dedicated local authority for the City of Inverness, this Council believes that a holistic review of the local authority area is required to create representative and effective Councils for all areas of the Highland region.

Whilst some thirteen local government areas maintained their Councils, such as Clackmannan and Moray who both have smaller populations than our own, the current arrangement for the Highlands is neither equitable nor sustainable.

The Council therefore asks the Scottish Government and the Minister for Local Government to review the existing Highland Council area, with the view to returning local authorities to their most localised form possible.

Signed: Mr S Mackie Mr J McGillivray Mr A Baxter

During discussion, Members raised the following issues:-

- some Members had been elected in 2017 after standing on a clear platform of

localism with the aim of ensuring the implementation of local democracy, with the Highland Council being an effective vehicle for change and a bridge between communities and local government. However, it was the case that they now felt that this had not been the case over recent years and as such the Motion had been carefully worded in relation to desired outcomes for local democracy across the whole Highland area;

- it was suggested that the Council was in what was perceived to be an 'impossible situation' in relation to addressing depopulation, diversification of local economies and the retention of lifeline services, particularly as different parts of the Highlands had different needs and priorities;
- it was however very much the case that many areas often felt disconnected and left out of initiatives taking place elsewhere and particularly in Inverness;
- it was felt that the Motion had to be considered as being complementary to any wider review of local governance being undertaken by the Scottish Government because substantive and radical change was now needed;
- it was suggested that the regionalisation of Councils in the Highland area had been a failed experiment and there was a very strong need for Local Authorities to be truly representative of the communities that they served in the future;
- whilst not disagreeing with the principles of the Motion, an amendment would be put forward at the appropriate time in the following terms – that the Council should engage with the wider public in the Highlands, staff and Unions, and other relevant stakeholders to consider on what basis the existing Highland Council area could be adjusted to improve local democracy. To this end, a review should be conducted which covered strategic, operational and community desired outcomes. This review should also seek to establish a strategy to ensure an equitable allocation of local government funding came to Highland and take factors such as rurality, poverty, economic development etc into account. The aim would also be to promote more place-based decision making supported by necessary resources with the view to establishing the most localised form of democracy possible;
- it was suggested that a Seminar should be arranged for all Members of the Council on the subject of local democracy to allow all views to be expressed and shared;
- it should be acknowledged that the Highland Council identity as a whole was extremely important in terms of accessing opportunities across all sectors and this had to be maintained;
- in any review of local democracy within the Council, the views of staff and local people should be included;
- it was the case that strong objections had been made in respect of the proposal to move from three to two constituencies in the Highlands and it was suggested that the same objections applied to retaining only one Council as opposed to reviewing that position;
- it was considered that smaller Council would be best placed to meet the needs of their own localities and this would be beneficial for the Highlands;
- there was a lot of resentment currently in relation to centralisation and as such it was imperative the Council engaged with and listened to local communities;
- it was essential that the public were fully informed about the potential implications of any change to the current arrangements;
- it had be recognised that economies of scale were often of vital importance and this was especially the case for the Highlands;
- it was confirmed that the mover of the Motion would be content to accept the following amendment to the wording - delete "that the regionalisation of Councils has been a failed experiment and" and leave out from "Although the matter....." and insert: "The Council therefore asks the Scottish Government

and the Minister for Parliamentary Business to review the existing Highland Council area, with the view to returning to more localised authority areas, and to conduct research into how a form of municipal government, such as those present elsewhere in Europe, could work for the Highlands and Scotland in future."

- it was suggested that the Council should perhaps look at devolving more powers to Local Committees in the first instance as this could be done a lot more quickly than any wider review of local government across the Highland area; and
- it was of vital importance that all parts of the Highlands did not lose out through any future changes to the current arrangements, not least in terms of economies of scale.

Thereafter, Mr S Mackie, seconded by Mr J McGillivray, **MOVED** the terms of the Notice of Motion – subject to acceptance of the amended wording which had been put forward at the meeting as detailed above.

As an **AMENDMENT**, Mr C Munro, seconded by Mr J Finlayson, moved that the Council should engage with the wider public in the Highlands, staff and unions, and other relevant stakeholders to consider on what basis the existing Highland Council area could be adjusted to improve local democracy. To this end, a review would be conducted which covered strategic, operational and community desired outcomes. This review would also seek to establish a strategy to ensure an equitable allocation of local government came to Highland and which take factors such as rurality, poverty, economic development etc into account. The aim would also be to promote more place-based decision making supported by necessary resources with the view to establishing the most localised form of democracy possible.

On a vote being taken, the **MOTION** received 22 votes and the **AMENDMENT** received 26 votes, with no abstentions, and the **AMENDMENT** was therefore **CARRIED**, the votes having been cast as follows:-

For the Motion

Mr B Allan, Mr R Bremner, Mr I I Brown, Mr J Bruce, Dr I Cockburn, Ms S Fanet, Mr C Fraser, Mr L Fraser, Mr A Graham, Mr A Jarvie, Ms E Knox, Mr D Loudon, Mr A MacInnes, Mr D MacKay, Mr G MacKenzie, Mrs I MacKenzie, Mr S Mackie, Mr J McGillivray, Mr M Reiss, Mrs F Robertson, Mr K Rosie and Mr P Sagers.

For the Amendment

Mr G Adam, Mr C Aitken, Mrs J Barclay, Mrs I Campbell, Miss J Campbell, Mrs H Carmichael, Mr A Christie, Mrs M Davidson, Mr J Finlayson, Mr M Finlayson, Mr D Fraser, Mr J Gordon, Mr J Gray, Mr T Heggie, Mr A Henderson, Mr B Lobban, Mr A MacKinnon, Mrs A MacLean, Mr C MacLeod, Mr D Macpherson, Mr C Munro, Ms L Munro, Mrs M Paterson, Mr D Rixson, Mrs T Robertson and Ms J Tilt.

Decision

The Council **AGREED** to engage with the wider public in the Highlands, staff and unions, and other relevant stakeholders to consider on what basis the existing Highland Council area could be adjusted to improve local democracy. To this end, a review would be conducted which covered strategic, operational and community desired outcomes. This review would also seek to establish a strategy to ensure an equitable allocation of local government funding came to Highland and which would take factors such as rurality, poverty, economic development etc. into account. The aim would also be to promote more place-based decision making supported by

necessary resources with the view to establishing the most localised form of democracy possible.

(ii) Older People's Champion

Council recognises and values the contributions that older people play in our society.

We are therefore seeking Council support for Age Scotland and the Scottish Older People's Assembly's (SOPA) campaign for every local authority in Scotland to establish the role of Older People's Champion and to appoint three Councillors to the position across Highlands.

An Older People's Champion is a Councillor who acts as a link between the Council and older people in the local area. Age Scotland and SOPA also want to see a network of Older People's Champions from across Scotland, who will be a voice for older people at local and national level, work together on shared challenges and collectively influence for change. It would be beneficial if our area were represented.

With a growing older population, it is vital that local decision-making meets the needs of older people and that Councillors have a better understanding of these. Local authorities, health and social care partnerships and the Third Sector are responsible for providing and supporting so many services upon which older people rely – such as public transport, social care provision, housing, planning, and communities. As many local authority budgets are under pressure, older people need someone specifically tasked with representing and supporting their interests and finding out what they need from local decisionmakers. There is no budgetary implication attached to this role.

We believe the impact of COVID-19 on Scotland's older people has only strengthened the need for an Older People's Champion here.

We hope that Highland Council can support this campaign and will establish the role of an Older People's Champion for our Council. If Council agrees this motion, we propose that three Councillors are nominated after the next May 2022 Council Election as our Older Peoples Champions for the whole of Highlands.

Signed: Mrs I MacKenzie Mr D Fraser Mrs I Campbell Mrs C Caddick

During discussion, the mover of the Motion agreed to accept the following amended wording in respect of the final sentence – that a report be taken to the February 2022 meeting of the Health, Social Care & Wellbeing Committee where the number of appointments would be considered together with the role and remit and how the Older Peoples Champion(s) would engage across Highland Council services and also with partners in NHS Highland and the HTSi.

Decision

The Council **AGREED** the terms of the Notice of Motion – subject to the following amendment - that a report be taken to the February 2022 meeting of the Health, Social Care & Wellbeing Committee where the number of appointments would be considered together with the role and remit and how the Older Peoples Champion (s) would engage across Highland Council services and also with partners in NHS Highland and the HTSi.

(iii) The Highland Council area is now a net exporter of electricity to the national grid. In addition, all our energy is green hydro or wind generated. Due to the historic method of calculating transmission charges, households and business customers in the north pay some of the highest rates for electricity. Based on the standard tariffs and average daily use, this costs each household an extra £60/year compared with the central belt of Scotland.

Although Ofgem are undertaking a review of transmission charges they are not expecting to make any immediate changes.

We therefore ask that the Council write to Ofgem asking 1) that transmission charges for the north of Scotland are immediately brought into line with the south of Scotland 2) Future charges are lowered further to reflect that the Highlands are a net exporter of green energy.

We also ask that we seek support from the Scottish Government and that they also lobby for fair tariffs for the Highlands.

Signed: Mr D Fraser Mrs T Robertson Mr J Gray Mrs M Davidson

During detailed discussion, it was suggested that, in addition to what was proposed within the Motion, contact should be made with OFGEM to make the transformational change that would help to lift the Highlands out of fuel poverty and recognise the key role the Highlands played in delivering renewable energy.

In this regard, issues to be discussed would include fair access to the distribution grid to enable everyone to de-carbonise and save money from Solar PV and Solar Thermal installation, developing green technology and hydrogen storage systems in the Highlands, lowering energy prices by reviewing capital payback periods and enabling community investment in generation and to ensuring that users of prepayment meters were always on the lowest tariff level.

It was also suggested that a short-life Working Group should be established to focus on all aspects of this complex issue and that this should include discussion with MPs and MSPs wherever and whenever required.

Decision

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

It was also **AGREED** that detailed discussions should be held with OFGEM to make the transformational change to help lift the Highlands out of fuel poverty and recognise the key role that the Highlands played in delivering renewable energy. The items to be discussed should include fair access to the distribution grid to enable everyone to de-carbonise and save money from Solar PV and Solar Thermal installation, developing green technology and hydrogen storage systems in the Highlands, lowering energy prices by reviewing capital payback periods and enabling community investment in generation and ensuring that users of prepayment meters were always on the lowest tariff level.

(iv) This Council acknowledges the importance the existing pavement network has in encouraging the modal shift of people towards active travel as the key infrastructure both throughout our towns and villages and in linking homes with dedicated active travel infrastructure.

At the forthcoming budget, Council agrees to do all it can to increase the budget for maintaining pavement surfaces and kerbing to encourage more walking, wheeling and cycling. Thus, being consistent with the Council's declaration of a climate emergency.

Signed: Mr A Jarvie Mr D Macpherson

During discussion, and whilst accepting the principles of the Motion, it was suggested that it was perhaps setting a dangerous precedent to agree constraints in relation to the budget process through Notices of Motion on the Council agenda. In this regard, fully informed discussion through the appropriate Strategic Committee in the first instance was considered to be the correct way to take such matters forward.

It was however very much the case that this was a serious issue which had to be addressed, not least on the grounds of safety, and future discussions should also take account of the situation across all parts of the Highland area.

Decision

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

9. Medium Term Financial Plan – Capital Strategy and Capital Programme to 2036/37 Planadh Ionmhasail Meadhan-ùine

Declarations of Interest –

Mr D Rixson declared a non-financial interest in this item as the Council representative on the Isle of Rum Community Trust but, having applied the test outlined in Paragraphs 5.2 and 5.3 of the Councillors' Code of Conduct, concluded that his interest did not preclude his involvement in the discussion.

Mr A Christie declared a financial interest as a Non-Executive Director of NHS Highland but, having applied the test, concluded that his interest did not preclude his involvement.

There had been circulated Report No. HC/33/21 dated 26 November 2021 by the Executive Chief Officer Resources and Finance which it was indicated would follow.

There had also been circulated Additional Recommendation to the report which confirmed that the Council remained committed to addressing roads condition issues in a sustainable way and ensuring sufficient resources were available to address the situation. The roads budget needed to focus on revenue solutions as well as capital. As part of finalising the Budget for 22/23, a full financial review with the aim of increasing revenue roads spending levels would therefore be presented to the Council as part of the budget process and this would take forward the points mentioned in Section 16.10 of the report.

During discussion, Members raised the following issues:-

- there was a need to thank the Officers for the comprehensive report which had been produced;
- there was some concern in relation to the proposed roads funding which was £26m for the first year, tapering to £8m in future years, which was felt to be insufficient. As such, it was suggested that £26m required to be embedded in the budget on an annual basis to prevent the road network deteriorating further and

to achieve this further consideration of revenue funding and the financial decisions being taken by the Council would be required;

- in contrast, the challenging capital position facing the Council was highlighted and the importance of considering projects in line with the issues associated with climate change was emphasised;
- the lack of plans for new sports facilities, other than in the east of Inverness, was a concern for many and in this regard attention was drawn to the list of capital projects for schools, many of which would include sports facilities to be used by the school and local community;
- there was disappointment that a replacement swimming pool had not been included in the plans for the new school campus at Tain;
- there was also concern that some major projects, such as the Corran Ferry and Strome Ferry Bypass, appeared to have been removed from the Capital P. However, in this regard, it was clarified that they had been put into a separate category of high-cost projects with strategic importance for which funding was being sought elsewhere and business plans drawn up;
- it was suggested that additional revenue funding was required to boost the roads budget and could cover issues such as drainage, verge maintenance, pothole repair and road operatives. Recurrent savings had to be identified in this respect as it was unsustainable to continue using reserves. In this regard, it was noted that the budget statement in February 2022 would have further detail;
- the emphasis on income generation and commercialisation in the report was welcomed and it would be vital to work with communities in that regard;
- on the basis that the Council already had the highest level of Local Authority debt in Scotland, and the likelihood of inflation rising in the coming years, caution was urged in relation to further borrowing, noting the high loan charges already being faced. In this respect, an impact assessment of loan charges was suggested;
- it was felt that the Housing and Property Committee should consider increasing the rent levels for affordable housing in areas where the private sector had significantly higher rents;
- the 'front loading' of the Capital Programme was of concern for future years and it was queried as to whether the quoted time period of 15 years for the Programme was in fact too long in terms of commitment;
- there was concern in relation to proposals to reduce the long term capital budget in relation to roads, the insufficiency of the long term capital budget generally and high level of debt and the removal of three large projects from the programme into a separate category (the Corran Ferry, the Strome Ferry Bypass and the Longman Energy from Waste Plant);
- the case for a higher settlement should be made to the Scottish Government as the current allocation formula was unfair on remote and rural areas. It was also pointed out that in relation to the Scottish Government's road funding allocation, multiple factors were taken into consideration, not only road length;
- the transparency of the budget was welcomed but it was also recognised that an impossible situation existed whereby £190m was required but only £50m was available at a time when costs were rising. Income generation would therefore be vital in balancing the budget in coming years and further support should be sought from both the UK and Scottish Governments in that regard;
- there was a need to draw attention to the work of the Redesign Board and the Corporate Resources Sub Committee and all Members were encouraged to attend and engage with these meetings whenever possible;
- all Members had to work together (and with partners) to identify additional funding solutions and monitor capital spend to ensure that best value returns on investment across the Highlands were optimised in the future;

- the work that had been ongoing for many years, including with partners, on some of the larger projects (such as the Corran Ferry and Stromeferry Bypass) was highlighted; and
- the high number of constituent concerns which had been expressed in relation to poor road maintenance across the Highland area had to be acknowledged and addressed.

Thereafter, Mr A Christie, seconded by Dr I Cockburn, **MOVED** both the recommendations as detailed in the report and the additional recommendation which had been submitted..

As an **AMENDMENT**, Mr A Jarvie, seconded by Mr P Saggars, moved to reject the proposed Capital Plan due to its declining spend on road repairs and insufficient local infrastructure, such as the Corran Ferry, Stromeferry By-pass and other projects which would benefit the rural parts of the Highlands, and to reconvene for a Special Council Meeting to focus solely on this important item.

On a vote being taken, the **MOTION** received 46 votes and the **AMENDMENT** received 6 votes, with 1 abstention, and the **MOTION** was therefore **CARRIED**, the votes having been cast as follows:-

For the Motion

Mr G Adam, Mr C Aitken, Mr B Allan, Mr R Balfour, Mrs J Barclay, 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, Ms S Fanet, Mr J Finlayson, Mr M Finlayson, Mr C Fraser, Mr D 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 B Lobban, Mr D Louden, Mr A MacInnes, Mr G MacKenzie, Ms A MacLean, Mr C MacLeod, Mr D Macpherson, Mr H Morrison, Mr C Munro, Mrs L Munro, Mrs M Paterson, Mr D Rixson, Mrs F Robertson, Mrs T Robertson, Mr K Rosie, Ms J Tilt.

For the Amendment.

Mr J Bruce, Mr A Jarvie, Mr D Mackay, Mr S Mackie, Mr J McGillivray and Mr P Saggars.

Abstention

Mr M Reiss.

Decision

The Council:-

- (i) **APPROVED** the strategic approach to capital investment as outlined in the report;
- (ii) **APPROVED** the 15-year capital investment programme to the value of £658.132m as detailed in Appendix 2 of the report;
- (iii) **NOTED** that this was in addition to the current approved programme of projects which totalled £281.762m, giving a combined programme value of £938,894m;
- (iv) **NOTED** the projects that currently sat outside the affordability envelope as set out in Appendix 5 and endorsed the ambition to seek ways in which these could be taken forward via alternative funding sources, including the development of a Capital Asset Partnering Plan;
- (v) **AGREED** an allocation of £0.450m from the Transformation Fund to commission external finance and asset advisors as well as enhance core staffing to augment the existing finance and Treasury work with the aim of maximising funds

management, identifying income generating opportunities, driving through asset rationalisation and chasing funds and grants to support the Council's strategic capital plan ambitions;

- (vi) **NOTED** that a report would come to the next meeting of the full Council which would set out enhanced governance arrangements for the Capital Programme, including the role of Council and its Strategic Committees and this would be reflected in the annual review of the Scheme of Delegation which would be brought to the same meeting; and
- (vii) **NOTED** that the Council remained committed to addressing roads condition issues in a sustainable way and ensuring sufficient resources were available to address the situation. The roads budget needed to focus on revenue solutions as well as capital. As part of finalising the Budget for 22/23, a full financial review with the aim of increasing revenue roads spending levels would be presented to the Council as part of the budget process and this would take forward the points mentioned in Section 16.10 of the report.

10. Future Highlands Strategic Partnership Priority 4: Place – Place Based Planning and Investment in Communities

Ro-innleachd Com-pàirteachas na Gàidhealtachd san Àm ri Teachd Cuspair 4: Planadh Stèidhichte air Àite agus Tasgadh ann an Coimhearsnachdan

Declarations of Interest –

Mr D Rixson declared non-financial interest in this item as the Council Representative on the Isle of Rum Community Trust and the Lochaber Environmental Group and as the Secretary of the Mallaig Heritage Trust but, having applied the test, concluded that his interests did not preclude his involvement in the discussion.

Mr C Munro declared a non-financial interest as a Council appointed Director of the Skye & Lochalsh Council of Voluntary Organisations but, having applied the test, concluded that his interest did not preclude his involvement.

Mr A Christie declared a financial interest as a Non-Executive Director of NHS Highland but, having applied the test, concluded that his interest did not preclude his involvement.

There had been circulated Report No. HC/34/21 dated 26 November 2021 by the Chief Executive.

During discussion, Members raised the following issues:-

- it was essential to note the links with both the Health & Prosperity Strategy and the Medium-Term Financial report and also the collaborative working with and within communities whereby evaluation, monitoring and learning from examples of best practice were being undertaken;
- it was envisaged that Resourcing Plans would be rolled out in the following year and this was welcomed;
- it was important to emphasise and highlight the line between economic prosperity and place-based initiatives and the continued involvement of Community Planning Partners was essential in this regard;
- thanks were conveyed to the Scottish Government for the continuing funding in respect of place-based investment and also for Officers (and Mr P Mascarenhas in particular) for the work which had been undertaken to date;
- it was the case that there could be marked differences between Community Planning Partnerships across the Highlands and Local Member involvement

in particular and it was hoped that improvements could be made where necessary;

- the support for hydrogen within the report was welcomed and in relation to connectivity it was hoped that the City Region Deal funding for the R100 could be fully allocated;
- there was concern that there had been very little mention of other organisations, such as Highlands & Enterprise, NHS Highland and High Life Highland, in the report and it was hoped that this would change in terms of future partnership/collaborative work and reports;
- a number of the issues which had been contained in the report were already happening in the Lochaber area, such as allocation of place-based investment, support for community groups, development of green space and help for young carers, but there was a need to embed formal structures and this should include natural and cultural heritage;
- it was essential to maintain the progress already made in respect of Community Planning Partnership levelling up across Highland areas and also important to recognise that it was often the third sector organisations who had led the Council in terms of the action needed within communities during the early stages of the pandemic;
- it was vital to maintain the levels of response/engagement which had been shown by third sector organisations and communities during the early stages of the pandemic in particular but the structures to enable this to happen were not currently in place and this needed to be progressed;
- there was a need for a focus on the relationship between Community Planning Partnerships and Local Committees in future, including the development of formal co-ordination and reporting arrangements;
- there had to be a strong focus on the creation of a future culture of interdependency across the area within an established Highland framework in order to be able to attract inward investment at all levels; and
- it was important to recognise the strong links between this report and the previous item on medium-term financial planning.

Decision

The Council:-

- (i) **NOTED** progress made to develop the fourth strand of 'Future Highlands' which was 'place' and **AGREED** the Strategy for SPP4 at Appendix 1 of the report;
- (ii) **AGREED** the approach to SPP4, including the Place Based Framework, as set out in Appendix 1 of the report;
- (iii) **NOTED** that this meant it would underpin the approach to Council service delivery, service planning and area reviews in the future;
- (iv) **AGREED** that Officers should seek Community Planning Partners' adoption of the Place Based Vision, Values and eight step process as set out in Appendix 1 of the report to transform how different organisations worked together for communities;
- (v) **NOTED** that this approach with Partners would build on the discussions with Members in the Member Seminar in May 2021 on supporting community ownership and the Member Seminar in August 2021 on improving community planning;
- (vi) **NOTED** the Partnership approach being adopted to lead on economic recovery, connectivity and visitor management and the actions and next steps outlined; and
- (vii) **NOTED** that further updates on all five Strategic Partnership Priorities would be brought to future Council meetings.

11. COP26 and Net Zero Update Gluasad air Gnàth-shìde às dèidh COP 26

Declaration of Interests – Mr D Rixson declared non-financial interests in this item as the Council Representative on both the Lochaber Environmental Group and the Lochaber Housing Association but, having applied the test outlined in Paragraphs 5.2 and 5.3 of the Councillors’ Code of Conduct, concluded that his interests did not preclude his involvement.

There had been circulated Report No. HC/35/21 dated 22 November 2021 by the Executive Chief Officer Performance and Governance.

During discussion, Members raised the following issues:-

- in relation to the action currently being undertaken by the Council which focused on ‘reduce, reuse and recycle’, this now had to also include ‘react’;
- the Council already had ambitious targets in place but it was essential now to ensure that Action Plans were developed and adapted where necessary and that all opportunities were recognised and pursued in future;
- new technology was already in place and waiting to be trialled, including hydrogen production and decarbonisation of the heavy fleet, and it would be essential to also focus on replacement heating schemes across the Highland area;
- thanks should be conveyed to the Officers concerned for the production of this report;
- it was most definitely the case that Local Government would be seen as the ‘implementers’ in future and this role could not be overstated;
- it would be imperative to align current local action with national targets as what was happening in the Highlands would be of vital importance to both Scotland and the wider UK;
- the setting of ‘milestones’ within a clear Action Plan and the adoption of a project management approach would be key to future successes;
- there was a vital need for increased communication and engagement with communities, and especially young people, across a range of issues;
- a further meeting of the Climate Change Working Group would be held in January and it was anticipated that a report would be submitted to the full Council thereafter;
- onshore wind investment had the potential for significant change in terms of revenue and capital gains so it was imperative that all opportunities in that respect were pursued;
- it was inevitable that prices would rise sharply as reserves from oil and gas fields were depleted so there had to be a redoubling of efforts to avoid the worst consequences of fuel poverty and this would include supporting the switch to hydrogen as quickly as possible and the phasing out of carbon based fuels from Council housing;
- a managed transition, with adequate resources, would be key and there had to be a strong focus on learning from the best examples within other countries;
- in terms of nature based solutions, there was a need to take account of the Scottish Government’s Pollinator Strategy;
- planning guidance in relation to aquaculture had to be enhanced and/or strengthened whenever and wherever possible;
- Local Authorities now had the opportunity to take advantage of the current low interest rate position in terms of accessing funding for retrospective work

required on older properties and also in terms of ensuring that future house building encompassed all aspects of new requirements from the outset, such as the inclusion of solar panels;

- in relation to the current statutory obligation on Local Authorities to reach net zero, assurances were sought that the current Administration would not seek reductions or efficiencies in staff numbers as part of reaching that target;
- it had to be recognised that there would be significant initial costs in terms of managing a joint transition;
- in terms of climate messaging, there was a need to achieve a more balanced Highland landscape in respect of woodland;
- it would be crucial to engage with young people on climate change issues, including through teaching in schools where possible;
- there was concern about older people who often found the potential scale of the changes needed very confusing and as such it would be vital to be clear about what exactly was needed and the associated timescales;
- joint working with communities and other organisations/partners would be crucial in terms of future action to be taken;
- it was suggested that the main considerations should centre on what would happen if action was not taken now;
- in terms of carbon capture, there had to be a strong and detailed focus on restoring/rewilding the seabed with seagrass;
- it would be imperative to listen to the solutions as well as the problems and to aim for 'zero' as opposed to 'net zero'; and
- in response to the issue which had been raised in relation to staff numbers, it was highlighted that the Administration continued to preserve jobs and avoid compulsory redundancies across the Council.

Decision

The Council:-

- (i) **NOTED** the outcomes arising from COP26;
- (ii) **AGREED** the recommended approach to the development of a net zero strategy and action plan, including clear targets and performance indicators, as set out in section 6 and Appendix 2 of the report;
- (iii) **AGREED** that the Climate Change Action Plan would be brought back to Council for approval;
- (iv) **AGREED** that a programme management approach would be taken to delivering the Action Plan with the high-level programme overseen by Council and the detail of individual thematic workstreams reported to the Climate Change Working Group and approved at the relevant strategic committees and Boards, as set out in Appendix 2 of the report;
- (v) **NOTED** the intention to develop a structured and pro-active communications strategy and plan to support the Council's Climate Action activity and roll out carbon literacy training and a series of seminars for staff and Members in 2022;
- (vi) **AGREED** the Transformation Fund should continue to be used to ensure resources in the Climate Change team were sufficient to provide the strategic leadership required as well as to support delivery against the identified themes; and
- (vii) **AGREED** that additional external funding was also required in order to fully deliver the Council's duties and endorse Cosla's statement for additional funding to tackle the climate emergency.

12. Discretionary Fuel Support Fund

There had been circulated Report No. HC/36/21 dated 25 November 2021 by the Executive Chief Officer Resources and Finance.

Declarations of Interest –

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

During discussion, Members raised the following issues:-

- the potential implications of the expected rise in energy prices (including forecasts that gas bills in particular could be expected to double in the Spring) were truly shocking and the Council had to do all that it could to help mitigate the worst effects of this situation wherever and whenever possible;
- thanks should be conveyed to the Officers in the outstanding Benefits Team within the Council for the work which continued to be undertaken in this regard;
- the Council had to address issues in relation to retrofitting and insulation within its houses as a priority and there was also an urgent need to commence lobbying activity with both the UK and Scottish Governments as this situation would also apply to private homes;
- it was important to acknowledge the funding of £1m for the Highland area which had come from the Scottish Government already and to welcome the £2m from Council reserves which would be used to tackle these issues in such extraordinary circumstances;
- the expected removal of the cap on energy prices in the Spring would only make this situation even worse and this was extremely worrying;
- a strong focus on alternative ways to power Council buildings in future, including a study of energy efficiency and how energy was currently used, was imperative and had to now be prioritised;
- it was known already that there were problems associated with the National Grid and they would have to be addressed in a relatively short time if any improvements were to be put in place;
- the harsh reality was that many people across the Highlands were already having to make decisions on whether they could 'heat or eat' and it had to be recognised that this was having a severe impact on young children within these households which had been exacerbated by the pandemic;
- it should be noted that those who were currently in receipt of the Winter Fuel Allowance could make a decision to pass this on to their local Citizens' Advice Bureau so that it could be transferred to those in most need;
- the terms of the report which had been presented was an excellent example of joint working between organisations and as such was warmly welcomed;
- it had been proved that the worry caused by increased debt and fuel poverty had a resultant and detrimental effect on both physical and mental health;
- it was anticipated that Council, NHS Highland and Third Sector services would be impacted in the coming months as a result of the consequences of this situation;
- it was imperative that no-one in need was 'left behind' as a result of fuel poverty as it was considered to be a basic right that everyone was able to

- have enough heat for their home;
- everyone had a responsibility to encourage those who needed help to come forward to access the appropriate services; and
- in view of the levels of energy produced in Scotland, it was completely unacceptable and shocking that any resident should find themselves facing the current levels of fuel poverty.

Decision

The Council **NOTED**:-

- (i) that the Scottish Government had made available £25m flexible funding to local authorities for the purposes of providing support for residents in respect of winter 2021/22. The Council's allocation from the Scottish Government was confirmed at £1.019m. Further information about the Scottish Government's Winter Support Fund was provided in Section 7 of the report;
- (ii) local authorities were being guided to adopt intersectional and wellbeing approaches when deciding how to support residents this winter. This included helping to alleviate overlapping disadvantage and to support marginalised groups, those experiencing homelessness – including those with no recourse to public funds, assistance with housing costs and other essential items;
- (iii) local authorities should consider cash-first approaches but had discretion to consider other appropriate methods of provision. A cash-first approach meant making payments of money to eligible residents by bank transfer and other means;
- (iv) the Scottish Government's guidance included that local authorities may want to consider providing financial assistance to households at risk of self-disconnecting due to financial hardship, ie when a household stopped using gas/electricity/energy entirely due to affordability. This may apply where a household paid in advance for energy – such as pre-payment meter users and those reliant on physical fuel deliveries, eg oil and LPG users. Consideration should also be given to households who were at risk of self-rationing their energy due to financial hardship, ie limiting energy use to less than was required to meet their needs in an effort to save money or prevent unmanageable debt. This may apply regardless of fuel type or payment method; and
- (v) it was anticipated that £0.020m would be required from this fund for the provision of housing for those with no recourse to public funds.

And, **AGREED**:

- (i) to make a one-off non-repayable payment of £180 per household to all Highland residents in receipt of means-tested council tax reduction as at 30 November 2021. At the time of writing this report, 16,440 council taxpayers were receiving council tax reduction and while there would be some movement in the number of households that would be eligible as at 30 November 2021, it was not anticipated to be significant;
- (ii) that a budget of £2.960m be provided for this purpose comprising £0.999m from the Winter Support Fund, with the required balance being drawn from the Council's reserves;
- (iii) for payments to be made to those eligible for a discretionary fuel support payment by March 2022; and
- (iv) that £0.020m be allocated from the £1.019m Winter Support Fund in anticipation of the costs associated with housing those with no recourse to public funds.

Additional Items

'Scotland Loves Local' Awards - at this point in the meeting, the congratulations of the Council were conveyed to Nairn BID, Nairn Community & Arts Centre, Green Hive and Nairn Bowling Club who had been awarded first place in the Climate Town Category of the first 'Scotland Loves Local' Awards for the work which had been undertaken in relation to driving down CO2 emissions.

Executive Chief Officer, Communities & Place – it was noted that Mrs Carron McDiarmid was shortly to leave the Council and in this regard the grateful thanks of all Members were conveyed to her in respect of the contribution that she had made to the work of the Council over many years.

13. **Redesign Board – Property Asset Rationalisation Cuibhreannachadh So-mhaoin Seilbhe**

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 their involvement in the discussion – Mrs M Paterson (Director of both the Puffin Pool and the Highland Football Academy), Mr T Heggie (Director of High Life Highland) and Mr K Gowans (on the basis that a close family member was employed by High Life Highland).

Mr A Christie declared a financial interest as a Non-Executive Director of NHS Highland but, having applied the test, concluded that his interest did not preclude his involvement.

There had been circulated Report No. HC/37/21 dated 9 November 2021 by the Executive Chief Officer Property and Housing.

In this regard, there had also been circulated Minutes of Meeting of the Redesign Board held on 8 November 2021 which were **APPROVED**.

During discussion, Members raised the following issues:-

- it should be noted that this report represented the next stage of the property asset rationalisation process which would see the Council move forward with a slimmer property portfolio. As such, Appendix 1 was a starting point but it was assumed that all Council buildings would be under consideration, including the Headquarters building, and that there would be full property reviews before final proposals were presented to the full Council for approval;
- it was the case that there were already too many buildings in Council ownership and this had to change, not least in line with the anticipated new ways of working in future following the pandemic;
- it was felt that there had been no consideration within the report of place based impacts and this would be crucial in terms of identifying suitable buildings for closure. In particular, the benefits of closing the Tain Service Point and the Tain Social Work Office were questionable in relation to operational efficiencies;
- further detail was needed on the seven new Manager posts which had been created to oversee this process/manage savings, specifically in terms of how this would be taken forward;
- in respect of the Dingwall buildings which had been listed in the report, it was suggested that future proposals in this respect should be considered on a holistic basis as opposed to single issues;

- the fact that Council buildings were now being catalogued and aligned to the 'net zero' target was welcomed but it was reiterated that the Headquarters building needed to be added to the current list as it was one of the most energy intense buildings on the Council estate and represented the opportunity for significant revenue to be achieved through sale/development of the site;
- the proposal to close the High Life Highland building on Ardross Street and relocate staff to the Town House was questioned, not least because it appeared to be in contrast to other proposals in respect of the Town House;
- there was concern as to the relocation of the significant number of staff in Dingwall and as such there was a need for a detailed plan to be in place prior to any action being taken in this regard;
- it had to be clarified that there were no proposals for any change to be made to the civic area of the Town House;
- confirmation was needed that there would be a Service Point in Tain as it was an extremely important and much valued part of the Service Point network across the Highlands;
- Thurso Burgh Chambers had now been confirmed as a Common Good building so it was expected that it would now be treated in the same way as the Inverness Town House;
- there was concern in relation to the staffing proposals for the Town House, particularly in view of its importance to the City Centre; and
- for a number of reasons, including the potential for redevelopment of the site and the associated savings and also the fact that it was one of the largest and most energy intensive buildings, the Council Headquarters Building should be added to the list in scope for review along with the other offices which had been identified within Appendix 1 of the report.

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

As an **AMENDMENT**, Mr A Jarvie, seconded by Mr P Saggars, moved that, in addition to the recommendations, the Council Headquarters Building should be added to the list set out in Appendix 1 of the report.

On a vote being taken, the **MOTION** received 45 votes and the **AMENDMENT** received 6 votes, with no abstentions, and the **MOTION** was therefore **CARRIED**, the votes having been cast as follows:-

For the Motion

Mr G Adam, Mr C Aitken, Mr B Allan, Mr R Balfour, Mrs J Barclay, Mr R Bremner, Mr I Brown, Mrs I Campbell, Miss J Campbell, Mrs H Carmichael, Mr A Christie, Dr I Cockburn, Mrs M Cockburn, Mrs M Davidson, Ms S Fanet, Mr J Finlayson, Mr M Finlayson, Mr C Fraser, Mr D 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 B Lobban, Mr D Louden, Mr A MacInnes, Mr G MacKenzie, Mr A MacKinnon, Mrs A MacLean, Mr C Macleod, Mr D Macpherson, Mr C Munro, Ms L Munro, Mrs M Paterson, Mr M Reiss, Mr D Rixson, Mrs F Robertson, Mrs T Robertson, Mr K Rosie and Ms J Tilt.

For the Amendment

Mr J Bruce, Mr A Jarvie, Mr D MacKay, Mr S Mackie, Mr J McGillivray and Mr P Saggars.

Decision

The Council **APPROVED**:-

- (i) the list of offices in scope for review and potential rationalisation as set out in Appendix 1 of the report; and
- (ii) the strategic approach to the review and rationalisation of the Council's Office Portfolio as set out in the report.

14. Highland Council Local Government Elections – 5 May 2022
Taghadh Chomhairle na Gàidhealtachd 2022

There had been circulated Report No. HC/38/21 dated 21 November 2021 by the Chief Executive/Returning Officer.

Decision

The Council **AGREED**:-

- (i) the resources required by the Returning Officer to run the Local Government Election 2022 for Highland Council;
- (ii) to budget for the Local Government Elections in 2027 on an annual recurring basis and to hold this in earmarked reserves as had been the case in previous years; and
- (iii) that the Returning Officer should continue to be entitled to make amendments to polling places of the Council approved Polling Scheme of 2019 outside the compulsory review period.

15. Review of UK Parliamentary Constituencies: Initial Proposals
Co-chomhairle mu Ath-sgrùdadh air Crìochan Roinnean-taghaidh Pàrlamaideach na RA

There had been circulated Report No. HC/39/21 dated 9 November 2021 by the Executive Chief Officer Performance and Governance.

Decision

The Council **AGREED** to delegate the submission of a response to the Executive Chief Officer, Performance & Governance, in the following terms:-

The Highland Council rejects the proposals and seeks special status in line with the Scottish Islands in order to reflect the unique geography and demography of the Highlands.

Specifically, to make reference to the following issues raised at the meeting -

- the Highland area was the same size as Belgium;
- Skye and Raasay in particular should be treated the same as other Scottish Islands;
- the Ardnamurchan Peninsula should stay within the Highland area (not Argyll);
- there was no relationship between the majority of the Badenoch & Strathspey area and Elgin;
- there was similarly no relationship between the Culloden & Ardersier Ward and Elgin; and
- there should be no change to the Wester Ross area/boundary.

16. Scottish Government Education Reform Consultation – Highland Council Response
Co-chomhairle – Ath-sgrùdadh air Ùghdarras Theisteanasan na h-Alba agus Foghlam Alba

There had been circulated Report No. HC/40/21 dated 30 November 2021 by the Executive Chief Officer Education and Learning.

During discussion, and in agreeing to homologate the response as detailed in the report, it was however highlighted that this one of the most important issues to face the Council, not least in terms of the delivery of local empowerment, and it was vital to get it correct for the long term.

As such, there was a need for future consultation to be undertaken on a much more widespread basis, involving as much representation as possible and including further input from Elected Members, Head Teachers and Teaching Unions in particular.

Decision

The Council:-

- (i) **NOTED** the approach taken to incorporate stakeholder input into the Council's response; and
- (ii) **AGREED** to homologate the Council's submission at Appendix 1 of the report.

17. Chief Social Work Officer Report: 2020/21
Aithisg Àrd-Oifigear Obrach Sòisealta

Declarations of Interest – Mr A Christie declared a financial interest in this item as a Non-Executive Director of NHS Highland but, having applied the test outlined in Paragraphs 5.2 and 5.3 of the Councillors' Code of Conduct, concluded that his interest did not preclude his involvement.

Ms L Munro (as an employee of Carr Gomm Self Directed Support) also declared a financial interest but, having applied the test, concluded that her interest did not preclude her involvement.

There had been circulated Report No. HC/41/21 dated 9 November 2021 by the Executive Chief Officer Health and Social Care.

During discussion, Members raised the following issues:-

- thanks should be conveyed to the Officers concerned for the report and the level of work undertaken to date;
- it had to be stated that Covid-19 had affected everyone in different ways across the Highlands and most especially those persons who were considered to be vulnerable;
- in terms of future challenges, including from the ongoing pandemic, there had to be a focus on delivering care in conjunction with local communities through locally based services which could be accessed by locally based families as and when needed;
- in respect of Residential Services, it had been stated within the report that 'whilst there was national guidance relating to adult residential settings, little focus was given on child settings' but it was queried as to whether this was accurate as it did appear that there was guidance online in this regard which

had been regularly updated. In this respect, further information was also sought on what specific issues had arisen in the Highland area in relation to child settings which required more guidance;

- with specific reference to Out of Care Placements, there was some disappointment at the emphasis on the financial position in particular as it was felt that the focus should be on the improvements and changes felt/experienced by young people themselves as this had been the key aim when the issue had been discussed/debated by the Council previously;
- it was important to reflect on all the victims of the Covid-19 pandemic and their families across the area;
- in terms of self-directed support/loss of respite care, it was hoped that the report which was to be submitted to the February meeting of the Health, Social Care & Wellbeing Committee would provide a focus on proposals which could restore respite for young carers in some way;
- with specific reference to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, it was felt that integrating this and embedding the principles within other child protection measures could provide a reduction in adverse childhood experiences and have a chance of then reducing adverse adult experiences;
- thanks should be conveyed to the Care at Home staff across the Highlands for the work which had been undertaken during the pandemic in particular;
- it was hoped that the increase in the foster care approach could be sustained;
- a lot of work had been undertaken within local communities during the pandemic and it was suggested that the outcomes from such work should be taken forward as a priority in conjunction with wider community groups wherever possible, including the establishment of a Youth Worker Development Group which could benefit young carers in particular;
- further information was needed on whether there could be increased liaison with Housing Officers and Police Scotland in regard to early intervention in neighbour disputes which often currently led to people having to leave their homes;
- there was a need to work more closely generally with Third Sector Groups in the future, including in terms of addressing increasing mental health/wellbeing issues across the area; and
- the increase in domestic violence during the Covid-19 pandemic was extremely concerning, especially when young children were often involved, and there was a need for further information on what types of help and support were available in this regard.

Decision

The Council **NOTED** the issues raised in the Officer Report and the implications for Social Work and Social Care services within Highland Council and NHS Highland as detailed in the report.

18. Highland Armed Forces Community Covenant Update Aithisg Bhliadhna – Com-pàirteachas Cùmhnant nam Feachdan Armaichte

Declaration of Interest - Mr A Christie declared a financial interest in this item as a Non-Executive Director of NHS Highland but, having applied the test outlined in Paragraphs 5.2 and 5.3 of the Councillors Code of Conduct, concluded that his interest did not preclude his involvement.

There had been circulated Report No. HC/42/21 dated 12 November 2021 by the Executive Chief Officer Communities and Place.

During discussion, Members raised the following issues:-

- thanks should be conveyed to the Officers responsible for this extremely comprehensive, wide ranging and forward looking report;
- specific work undertaken in relation to both housing and education was also warmly welcomed;
- the excellent work which had resulted in the Council being awarded Gold Status in respect of the Defence Employer Recognition Scheme reflected the thoroughly professional submission which had been made by Officers and was a huge achievement;
- it was felt that it would be appropriate for the Convener to write to the 5 Officers who had been involved in this work to specifically convey the thanks of all Members of the Council; and
- it was disappointing that the Poppy Scotland Office in Strothers Lane in Inverness had now been closed as the staff had been a point of contact not just for Poppy Scotland but for all service charities and as such the thanks of the Council was conveyed to them in this respect.

Decision

The Council **NOTED**:-

- (i) the considerable progress made with partners across a range of activities which supported the Armed Forces Community Covenant;
- (ii) the creation of a specific Council Armed Forces Reservist Policy;
- (iii) the Council's achievement in being awarded the Defence Employer Recognition Scheme Gold Award;
- (iv) the introduction of external funding to help Community Planning Partnerships to strengthen their relationship with their Armed Forces communities; and
- (v) the introduction of the Armed Forces Bill which would establish the Covenant requirements in statute.

It was also **AGREED** that the Convener should send a letter of congratulations to the 5 Officers involved – Ms D Ferguson, Ms L Kinnear, Ms J Henderson, Mr J McCreath and Ms J Lenihan - for the outstanding work which had been undertaken on this matter.

19. High Life Highland High Life na Gàidhealtachd

Mr K Gowans declared a non-financial interest in this item on the basis that a close family member was employed by High Life Highland but, having applied the test in Paragraphs 5.2 and 5.3 of the Councillors' Code of Conduct, concluded that his interest did not preclude his involvement.

Ms L Munro declared a non-financial interest as a Director of High Life Highland but, having applied the test, concluded that her interest did not preclude her involvement.

Following the resignation of Mr B Thompson, the following nominations were put forward at the meeting in respect of the appointment of a new Director of High Life Highland –

Mr K Gowans
Mrs I Campbell

On a vote being taken, Mr Gowans received 12 votes and Mrs Campbell received 33 votes – with 1 abstention - the votes having been cast as follows:-

Votes for Mr Gowans

Mr B Allan, Mr R Bremner, Mr I Brown, Dr I Cockburn, Ms S Fanet, Mr C Fraser, Mr K Gowans, Ms E Knox, Mr D Louden, Mr A MacInnes, Mr G MacKenzie and Mr K Rosie.

Votes for Mrs Campbell

Mr G Adam, Mr C Aitken, Mr R Balfour, Mrs J Barclay, Mr J Bruce, Mrs C Caddick, Mrs I Campbell, Miss J Campbell, Mrs H Carmichael, Mr A Christie, Mrs M Davidson, Mr J Finlayson, Mr M Finlayson, Mr D Fraser, Mr L Fraser, Mr A Graham, Mr J Gray, Mr T Heggie, Mr A Henderson, Mr B Lobban, Mrs I MacKenzie, Mr A MacKinnon, Mrs A MacLean, Mr D Macpherson, Mrs B McAllister, Mr C Munro, Ms L Munro, Mrs M Paterson, Mr D Rixson, Mrs F Robertson, Mrs T Robertson, Mr P Saggors and Ms J Tilt.

Abstention

Mr A Jarvie

Decision

The Council **AGREED** the appointment of Mrs I Campbell as a Director of High Life Highland.

**20. Timetable of Meetings 2022
Clàr-ama Choinneamhan 2022**

The Council **AGREED** as follows:-

Sutherland County Committee – meeting to be changed from 21 February to 28 February 2022

Housing & Property Committee – additional meeting to be held on 20 January 2022

South Planning Applications Committee – meeting to be changed from 3 May to 28 April 2022

Gaelic Committee – meeting to be changed from 21 February to 2 March 2022

Badenoch & Strathspey Area Committee – additional meeting to be held on 21 December 2021.

**21. Deeds Executed
Sgrìobhainnean Lagha a Bhuilicheadh**

It was **NOTED** that a list of deeds and other documents executed on behalf of the Council since the meeting held on 28 October 2021 was available on the Council's Website.

The meeting ended at 5.15pm.

The Highland Council

Minutes of Meeting of the **Housing and Property Committee** held remotely on Thursday 20 January 2022 at 10.30am.

Present:

Mrs J Barclay	Mr A Graham
Mr R Bremner (left at 10.57am)	Mr A Jarvie
Miss J Campbell	Mrs B McAllister
Mr M Finlayson	Mr D Mackay
Mr C Fraser	Mrs A MacLean
Mr L Fraser	Ms J Tilt

Non-Members also present:

Mrs H Carmichael	Mr K Gowans
Mr A Christie	Mr A Henderson
Ms S Fanet	Mr D Louden
Mr J Finlayson	

Officials in Attendance:

Mr M Rodgers, Executive Chief Officer Housing and Property
 Ms E Denovan, Executive Chief Officer Resources and Finance
 Mr D Goldie, Head of Housing and Building Maintenance, Housing and Property
 Mr B Cameron, Housing Policy and Investment Manager, Housing and Property
 Mrs L Dunn, Principal Administrator, Performance and Governance
 Ms A Macrae, Committee Administrator, Performance and Governance
 Ms O Bayon, Committee Administrator, Performance and Governance

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

Mr L Fraser in the Chair

BUSINESS

1. Apologies for Absence Leisgeulan

Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of Mr B Allan, Mrs G Campbell-Sinclair, Mr C Macleod, Mrs F Robertson, Ms E Roddick and Mr P Siggers.

2. Declarations of Interest Foillseachaidhean Com-pàirt

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

Declarations of Interest: Mr L Fraser declared an interest relating to all items on the agenda on the grounds he undertook work for the Housing Service in Nairn. Having declared an interest and in accordance with paragraph 5.6 of the revised Code of Conduct, Mr Fraser left for the remainder of the online meeting and was not present for any of the discussion or determination of Item 3 below.

The meeting was adjourned at 10.35am and reconvened at 10.45am.

The Vice Chair, Mr M Finlayson, took the Chair for the remainder of the meeting.

**3. Housing Revenue Account Estimates 2022/23
Tuairmsean Teachd-a-steach HRA 2022/23**

There had been circulated Report No HP/01/22 by the Executive Chief Officer Housing and Property.

During discussion, the following main points were raised:-

- concern at the impact of rising energy costs and inflation on tenant incomes and ability to pay their rent and the need to ensure tenants were provided with the details of the relevant organisations and helplines offering advice and assistance. It was confirmed that officers would ensure that this information was provided to tenants;
- confirmation was sought and provided that the level of increase in rents for non-HRA leased property would be similar to that for Council house rents with the exception of nine older leases which made provision for annual rent increase on a different basis. Officers would have discussions with any tenants experiencing affordability issues;
- an assurance was sought and provided that the HRA Revenue Budget had been set at a level which would maintain the current level of service provision in respect of day to day repairs and would have no adverse impact on the delivery of the Council house new build programme;
- an assurance was sought that the budget for maintenance of open spaces and the environment in Council housing estates would be increased in line with the repairs and maintenance budget, concern being expressed in relation to the condition of some estates in the area. It was confirmed that clarification would be sought as to whether there was any uplift in the recharges payable by the Service to the Amenities Team and an update provided to the next meeting;
- the need to move forward at pace in terms of achieving net zero carbon before 2045 and a just transition for all Council tenants in terms of their heating systems and other issues arising;
- concern at the impact cost of living increases and the relaxation of Covid emergency powers might have on tenants in private accommodation and the additional pressure this might place on the Council's homeless services. It was confirmed that a report on the issues around preventing and alleviating homelessness was to be brought to a future meeting of the Committee;
- clarification was sought on the current provision for homeless accommodation, concern being expressed that if the level of uptake was increasing this would reduce the available stock for letting to other applicants on the Council's housing register. It was confirmed that a briefing note would be circulated to Members on the current provision for temporary accommodation and there would be an opportunity for more detailed discussions as part of the future report on homelessness to the Committee;
- concern at the impact of the proposed increase in the Council house rents combined with cost of living increases on tenants on low income and on the level of rent arrears;

- whether the low level of rent increase proposed was prudent for the Council given rising inflation, the potential impact on Council tax levels, the fact Council house rents were significantly lower than open market rents, the significant number of applicants on the Council house waiting list and the potential implications and the new build programme. It was confirmed the recommendation on rent levels had no implications for Council tax or the current new build programme. The proposal sought to achieve a balance in terms of ensuring service provision was sustainable while recognising the cost of living pressures and the Council's overarching duty to protect vulnerable tenants and those experiencing relative or absolute poverty; and
- while the Council house rents in Highland were relatively low compared to other areas in Scotland, the higher cost of living in the Highlands, particularly fuel and energy costs had to be taken into account. There had been wide consultation with tenants and the majority had supported the proposed rent increase.

Thereafter, the Committee **AGREED**:-

- i. the draft HRA Revenue Budget for 2022/23 (attached as Appendix 1 to the report);
- ii. a **1%** increase for council house rents for 2022/23;
- iii. that this percentage increase (**1%**) be applied to all residential HRA rents and service charges and to Gypsy/Traveller site pitches;
- iv. that non-HRA rents for leased property be increased as stipulated in existing contracts;
- v. that a report on the issues around preventing and alleviating homelessness be submitted to a future meeting of the Committee

The meeting was closed at 11.25am.

The Highland Council

Minutes of Meeting of the **Corporate Resources Committee** held **remotely** on Wednesday 26 January 2022 at 10.30 am.

Present:

Mr B Boyd	Mr A Henderson (substitute)
Mr R Bremner	Mr D Louden
Mrs H Carmichael	Mr G MacKenzie
Mr A Christie	Mr D Macpherson
Dr I Cockburn	Mr C Munro (substitute)
Mrs M Davidson	Mr M Reiss
Mr R Gale	Mr D Rixson
Mr J Gray	Mr P Saggars

Non-Members also present:

Ms I Campbell	Mr D Mackay
Ms S Fanet	Mrs M Paterson
Mr T Heggie	Mr K Rosie
Mr A Jarvie	

Officials in Attendance:

Mrs D Manson, Chief Executive
 Ms L Denovan, Executive Chief Officer Resources and Finance
 Mrs K Lackie, Executive Chief Officer Performance and Governance
 Mr M MacLeod, Executive Chief Officer, Infrastructure, Environment and Economy
 Mr E Foster, Head of Finance and Commercialism, Resources and Finance
 Mrs S McKandie, Head of Revenues and Customer Services, Resources and Finance
 Mr J Shepherd, Interim Head of ICT & Digital Transformation, Resources and Finance
 Ms E Barrie, Interim Head of HR, Resources and Finance
 Mr A Maguire, Head of Housing Development & Regeneration, Infrastructure, Environment and Economy
 Mrs L Dunn, Principal Administrator, Performance and Governance
 Ms A Macrae, Committee Administrator, Performance and Governance

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

Mr J Gray in the Chair

BUSINESS

1. Apologies for Absence Leisgeulan

Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of Mr A Baxter, Mr B Lobban, Mr S Mackie and Mr A Mackinnon.

2. Declarations of Interest Foillseachaidhean Com-pàirt

The Committee **NOTED**:-

Item 12: Mrs H Carmichael (Transparency Statement)

**3. Corporate Revenue and Capital Monitoring Report to 31 December 2021
Aithisg Teachd-a-steach Corporra agus Sgrùdadh Calpa gu 31 Dùbhlachd 2021**

There had been circulated Report No RES/01/22 by the Executive Chief Officer Resources and Finance.

During discussion, Members raised the following main points:-

- the significant level of external government funding received by the Council over the financial year should be recognised;
- it was suggested that while the year-end position was positive the report was presented in a negative manner. The Council was aware of some of the financial risks highlighted and had made provision in the budget for these costs and other risks required to be crystallised. The monitoring report should in essence be focusing on the financial position at the end of Quarter 3. It was clarified that the information presented in the report was based on the projections to the end of the financial year;
- the tone of the report was appropriate and it was important the caveats in terms of the financial risks were highlighted given the ongoing wider economic and financial uncertainties and the report provided assurance in this regard;
- confirmation the pay award for teaching staff had not been agreed for the current year and there was no guarantee the Scottish Government would provide additional funding if a higher than budgeted award was agreed;
- an assurance was provided that services were working collectively across the Council to ensure debt collection was pursued efficiently while maximising the benefit entitlement for members of the public;
- an assurance was provided that there would be a review of specific earmarked balances at the year end to consider if they were required for the purpose they had been set aside. If not, those balances would transfer to the general reserve. The ongoing review of earmarked reserves would form a main part of the budget paper presented to Council in February 2022;
- clarification was sought and provided that the home learning support and digital inclusion funds sitting in the earmarked reserves were to be utilised in the Children's Services Redesign and further information would be provided in the next report;
- clarification was sought and provided that the employers national insurance contributions rates were still expected to increase from 1 April 2022;
- the need for future reports to be more informative on the whole life performance of a project from inception to completion and provide information on the original budget rather than the reprofiled budgets. There was also a need to consider the longer term life of the asset beyond completion and delivery and the effect this was having on forward projections in terms borrowing;
- from the discussion, there was a need for a firm commitment to review the format of the capital monitoring report to provide Members with the necessary information to make informed decisions and to capture risks and projections going forward and to ensure there was openness and transparency in the public domain. In this regard, assurance was provided that improvements to the summary capital report would to be made for the next Committee;
- related to the above, it was suggested that the Redesign Board consider how to achieve the consistency in the narrative of financial reports across all the

- strategic committees;
- the increasing importance of reserves in meeting ongoing and future challenges such as support for rising energy costs while noting that, ideally, they should be used for one-off purposes rather than recurring budget pressures or budget gaps which might require longer term solutions; and
- confirmation was sought that the invoice for the significant payment due from NHS Highland would be issued before the year end, concern being expressed at the delay in recouping this money. It was explained that negotiations were ongoing with NHS Highland and that it would be premature to issue the invoices until a final position had been agreed. Assurance on this matter was provided through the Highland Council/NHS Highland Partnership Agreement and an update would be provided to Members as soon as this was possible.

Thereafter, the Committee:

- i. **NOTED** the financial position of the General Fund and HRA revenue and capital budgets as at 31 December 2021 and the estimated year end forecasts; and
- ii. **NOTED** the status of budgeted savings in the year.
- iii. **AGREED** that the format of future capital reports be reviewed and revised.

4. Resources and Finance Service Revenue and Performance Monitoring to 31 December 2021
Sgrùdadh Teachd-a-steach agus Coileanaidh Seirbheis nan Goireasan agus an Ionmhais gu 31 Dùbhlachd 2021

There had been circulated Report No RES/02/22 by the Executive Chief Officer Resources and Finance.

During discussion, Members raised the following main points:-

- Members thanks and appreciation be conveyed to the Welfare Support Team for their outstanding response to the unprecedented level of demand for its services and on the excellent feedback that had been received from those in receipt of services;
- the Team be commended on reducing the speed of processing of new benefit claims to its current level;
- an assurance was provided that the Team's workload was being managed due to the allocation of additional resources, mobilisation of staff from other services and the joint working with the CABx to maximise services. Demand for services continued to increase and there were real concerns about rising energy costs, particularly given the high volume of oil and coal users in the Highlands and an update was provided on the ongoing work being undertaken to provide support in relation to this issue;
- the recommendation to implement a Phase 2 Discretionary Fuel Support scheme be supported, particularly as this would capture those persons currently missing the net as highlighted in the report;
- an assurance was provided that officers would investigate all potential sources of funding in terms of covering the full cost of funerals; and
- clarification was sought and provided on the impacts to the Council associated with the collection of non-domestic rates and the BID levies.

Thereafter, the Committee:

- i. **NOTED** the Revenue position for the Quarter 3 period to 31 December 2021;
- ii. **NOTED** the statutory performance indicators, local key performance measures and where available, comparisons with Scottish averages;
- iii. **NOTED** the effectiveness of the standard and level of services provided by the Resources and Finance Directorate and alignment with the Council's commitment to Best Value and continuous improvement;
- iv. **NOTED** the update on the Procurement & Contract Management Transformation Project; and
- v. **AGREED** a Phase 2 Discretionary Fuel Support scheme be implemented to make available a one-off payment of £180 per eligible household for those on low incomes who qualified for a person-based council tax exemption as set out in council tax legislation. It was estimated that a budget of £0.280m would be needed for this purpose, to be drawn from the Council's reserves. Paragraph 9.10 of the report provided further details.

**5. Performance and Governance Service Revenue Monitoring to 31 December 2021
Sgrùdadh Teachd-a-steach Seirbheis a' Choileanaidh is an Riaghlachais gu 31 Dùbhlachd 2021**

There had been circulated Report No RES/03/22 by the Executive Chief Officer Performance and Governance.

In response to a question, the Executive Chief Officer Performance and Governance explained that High Life Highland did not report through the Performance and Governance Service and that she would have further discussion on the issue raised in relation to discounts for staff with Mr D MacPherson outwith the meeting.

The Committee **NOTED** the:

- i. revenue monitoring position for the period to 31 December 2021;
- ii. Directorate was on track to deliver all approved savings by the end of the financial year; and
- iii. Directorate's performance information.

**6. Transformation Service – Revenue and Performance Monitoring to 31 December 2021
Seirbheis Cruth-atharrachaidh – Sgrùdadh Teachd-a-steach is Coileanaidh gu 31 Dùbhlachd 2021**

There had been circulated Report No RES/04/22 by the Executive Chief Officer Communities and Place.

During discussion, Members raised the following main points:-

- an explanation was sought and provided on the measures in place to ensure that the Council's remuneration and incentives for ICT staff were competitive with other public agencies and the private sector in relation to attracting and retaining staff;
- the circulation of staff around organisations in the area was of benefit for the wider Highlands in building up a skills base. There was a focus on growing talent in the area by building on modern and graduate apprenticeships, and in relation to recruitment where there had been challenges in attracting candidates to some

- specialist posts;
- an update was provided in relation to the number of staff transferring from Wipro to the Council through TUPE; and
- staff be thanked for their excellent work in bringing the ICT Service in house and overcoming the challenges presented over what had been a difficult period due to the pandemic.

The Committee **NOTED** the:

- i. 2021/22 revenue monitoring position for the period to 31 December 2021 and latest forecasted outturn;
- ii. progress update provided in relation to budget savings delivery; and
- iii. performance information.

7. Treasury Management Rianachd Ionmhais

a. Summary of Transactions Geàrr-chunntas Ghnothaichean

There had been circulated Report No RES/**05**/22 by the Executive Chief Officer Resources and Finance.

The Committee **NOTED** the Treasury Management Summary of Transactions report for the period from 1 October to 31 December 2021.

b. Strategy Statement and Investment Statement – 2022/23 Aithris Ro-innleachd agus Aithris Tasgaidh – 2022/23

There had been circulated Report No RES/**06**/22 by the Executive Chief Officer Resources and Finance.

During discussion on both items 7a and 7b, Members raised the following main points:-

- officers be commended on their foresight in terms of the prudent borrowing undertaken in the quarter up to the end of December 2021;
- a robust approach be taken to determining asset life, specific reference being made to the climate in the Highlands and the anticipation of more extreme weather events in future due to climate change;
- observing that the current Link forecast for interest rates was higher than the anticipated level from the period since the last meeting of the Committee in November 2021;
- whether the Link forecast that electricity and gas prices would fall back to normal levels was realistic and highlighting the fact that in the USA the term ‘transitory inflationary pressures’ was no longer being used;
- the report highlighted the support the Council had received from the Scottish Government over the past year which had boosted the level of reserves at the year-end and had significantly reduced the requirement to borrow;
- the work undertaken with the Public Works Loan Board (PWLB) and the transfer of short term to longer term borrowing was welcomed;
- the significant capital investment by the Council in infrastructure was welcomed although it was noted that this was funded through increased borrowing. It was

confirmed that there was confidence the current level of investment in the approved Capital Programme was affordable however this level of investment would not be affordable over a sustained period beyond the life of the current programme;

- an explanation was sought and provided on the proposal to fund the next round of borrowing with short term loans, on achieving a balance between short and long terms loans, and in relation to the type of borrowing undertaken with the PWLB; and
- observing that the overall rhetoric from the Bank of England and Federal Reserve was that this would continue to be an era of low interest rates for some time.

Thereafter, the Committee **APPROVED** the Strategy Statement and Investment Statement for 2022/23 and the Prudential Indicators as detailed in Appendix 1 of the report.

8. **Modern/Graduate Apprenticeship & Intern Programme** **Prògram Preantas Ùr-nodha/Ceumnach & Inntearnach**

There had been circulated Report No RES/**07**/22 dated by the Executive Chief Officer Resources and Finance.

During discussion, Members raised the following main points:-

- this was a good news item, and a sizeable number of staff had benefitted from the Programme;
- clarification was sought that the Council was recouping monies back from the apprenticeship levy and definitive figures could be provided to Members if required;
- concern that the Council's entry salary for some of the graduate posts was not competitive with the graduate schemes of other agencies;
- the need to consider the issues around employability going forward in terms of defining green jobs, establishing seamless links with schools and making young people aware of the opportunities to remain in the Highlands on leaving school; and
- there was a real opportunity for the public, business and third sectors in Highland to collaborate on employability and grow the skills base in Highland and that a follow up report be brought forward to the Committee on this issue at the appropriate time.

Thereafter, the Committee **NOTED** the:

- i. progress with the staff who had enrolled on the Modern/Graduate Apprenticeship Schemes and training which had been completed;
- ii. current developments with MAs funded through the Economic Prosperity Fund supporting Service workforce planning needs and expansion of the MA frameworks being used; and
- iii. work taking place to support the Young Person's Guarantee and the Council's proposed participation in Apprenticeship Week in early March 2022.

**9. Minutes of Meetings
Geàrr-chunntasan Choinneamhan**

The Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the Minutes of the Non Domestic Rates Appeals Committee held on 29 November 2021;
- ii. **APPROVED** the Minutes of the Central Safety Committee held on 3 December 2021; and
- iii. **NOTED** the Minutes of the Appeals and Disputes Committee held on 21 December 2021.

The meeting was adjourned at 12.50pm and reconvened at 1.00pm.

**10. Exclusion of the Public
Às-dùnadh a' Phobail**

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

**11. Relief from Non-Domestic Rates for General Stores etc in Rural Settlements
Faochadh bho Reataichean Neo-Dhachaigheil airson Stòran Coitcheann is eile ann an Tuineachaidhean Dùthchail**

There had been circulated Report No RES/08/22 by the Executive Chief Officer Resources and Finance.

Following discussion, the Committee **AGREED** the recommendations as set out in the report.

**12. Inverness Castle Project – Construction Tender and Funding
Pròiseact Caisteal Inbhir Nis – Tairgse Togail agus Maoineachadh**

Transparency Statement: Mrs H Carmichael made a Transparency Statement in respect of this item in that she had a connection to this item by reason of her position as Provost of Inverness. However, having applied the objective test she did not consider that she had an interest to declare. This was because it was a council appointment and non-financial. She requested that this Statement be recorded in the Minutes.

There had been circulated Report No RES/09/22 by the Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure, Environment & Economy.

Following discussion, the Committee **AGREED** the recommendations as set out in the report.

The meeting was closed at 1.20pm.

The Highland Council

Minutes of Meeting of the **Economy and Infrastructure Committee** held Remotely on **Wednesday, 2 February 2022 at 10.30 am.**

Present:

Mr R Balfour	Mr A Jarvie
Mr B Boyd	Mr D Louden
Mr I Brown	Mr A MacInnes
Mrs C Caddick	Mr W Mackay
Mrs H Carmichael	Mr C Munro
Mr K Gowans	Mr D Rixson
Mr J Gray	Mrs T Robertson
Mr A Henderson	Ms M Smith

Non-Members also present:

Mr G Adam	Mr D Macpherson
Mr R Bremner	Mr R MacWilliam
Mr M Finlayson	Mr H Morrison
Mr B Lobban	

Officials in Attendance:

Mr M MacLeod, Executive Chief Officer - Infrastructure & Environment
Mr C Howell, Head of Infrastructure
Mr A Maguire, Head of Development and Regeneration
Mr S Dalgarno, Development Plans Manager
Mr D Cowie, Principal Planner
Mr D Chisholm, Planner
Mr D Summers, Principal Transport Officer
Miss J MacLennan, Principal Administrator, Corporate Governance
Ms F MacBain, Committee Administrator, Corporate Governance
Mrs Olalla Bayon-Vazquez, Committee Administrator, Corporate Governance

Also in attendance:

Ms J Allday, Strategic Business Development Manager, Port of Cromarty Firth
Mr J Taylor, TAS 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**

There were no apologies for absence.

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

The Committee **NOTED** the following:-

Item 5 – Mr C Munro (Transparency Statement)
Item 10 – Mrs T Robertson (Declaration of Interest)

3. **Good News** **Naidheachdan Matha**

The Chair informed Members of a list of good news and outstanding achievements on the following topics:-

- Capital Schemes, with a brief presentation of the work being carried out at Caol-Lochyside, Lochaber;
- the Association of Public Sector Excellence Annual Awards, with reference the conversion of 75% of the Council's lighting stock to LED, with the majority having part night dimming;
- the Council's Housing and Development team had received the top prize in the Housing and Regeneration Category at the Scottish Regeneration Forum awards in December 2021 for housing in Fort Augustus; and
- Nature Restoration Fund - the Council would be awarding over £200,000 worth of grant money to a range of projects across the Highlands.

The Committee **NOTED** the Good News.

4. **Presentation – Opportunity Cromarty Firth** **Taisbeanadh – Cothrom Linne Chromba**

A presentation was undertaken by Joanne Allday, Strategic Business Development Manager, Port of Cromarty Firth, and Lead for the Opportunity Cromarty Firth Consortium.

Key issues covered during the presentation included the Highlands being at the centre of the shift to a net zero economy, and the size and scale of the opportunities for the Highlands. Two of the seven Scottish Government's Climate Action Towns were in Highland (Alness and Invergordon), providing a chance to link the commercial offshore wind and green hydrogen opportunities with grass roots, community based climate action. Cromarty Firth and the Highlands had been recognised by developers and the Scottish Government as the most logical location for a strategic offshore wind hub for Scotland, and there were other opportunities across Highland. Other issues covered included possible construction timetables, the national planning network, North of Scotland hydrogen plans, the Powerhouse initiative, the wider benefits of Opportunity Cromarty Firth, and the Green Freeport competition.

During discussion, Members raised the following issues:-

- the presentation was welcomed and should be distributed to the Committee;
- although acknowledged as a complex issue, information was sought on the means to effectively transition away from carbon. The importance of collaboration was emphasised;
- the opportunities for the immediate area and the wider region were welcomed;
- the production of green energy in Highland could attract high energy users to the region, to benefit from using the energy near its point of production;

- information was sought on the approximate number of jobs that might be facilitated, and attention was drawn to a report being commissioned by Skills Development Scotland to address the workforce needs of the area. The report was nearing completion and would be shared with Members in due course. It was important the development was not constrained by workforce challenges and consideration was required to tailoring training and education to the industry's needs. Other infrastructure and resources would also be required, for example housing; and
- it was important to aspire to zero carbon, not just net zero.

The Committee **NOTED** the presentation and **AGREED** the presentation be circulated to Members.

5. School Transport Transformation Project (Review of School Transport) PP 1-155 Pròiseact Cruth-atharrachaidh Còmh-dhail Sgoile (Ath-sgrùdadh air Còmh-dhail Sgoile)

Transparency Statement: Mr C Munro made a Transparency Statement in respect of this item in that he had a connection by reason of having children in receipt of daily school transport to their local school. However, having applied the objective test he did not consider that he had an interest to declare. This was because the recommendation was only to note the report and any discussion would be of such a general nature. He had requested that this Statement be recorded in the Minutes.

There had been circulated Report No. ECI/1/22 dated 13 January 2022 by Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure, Environment & Economy.

A presentation was provided by John Taylor of The TAS Partnership, providing information and an update on their review of the Council's school transport policy and practice. Broad areas covered included legislation, good / best practice, comparisons to other authorities, processes, procurement, operational standards and budget issues.

During discussion, the following issues were raised:

- information was sought on whether there was a limit on the distance pupils could be expected to cycle to school, similar to the restrictions on walking distances for different age groups, but this was not specified in legislation;
- with reference to the predicted spend of £18.5m on school transport, it was suggested the level of staffing in the Council's team of two to three staff was low, however it was clarified that there was a team of seven;
- the discrepancy in cost per pupil of £331 in Highland and £211 in Angus was queried but the reason for this was not known;
- in relation to free bus travel for under-22s, the Council was urged to ensure maximum uptake of the National Young Person's Pass as soon as possible;
- support was voiced for entitling children to travel to school by contracting in a service from an operator in situations where there was no bus service available;
- it was hoped the Council would accept the recommendations in the report, with various key issues from it being highlighted;
- children should also be encouraged to cycle to school and it would be interesting to find out how other Local Authorities did this;
- it was explained, in response to several questions, that school and public transport was the number one transformation project being worked on by the Service;
- concern was expressed at the prospect of returning to a reliance on a small number of contract operators;

- the recommendations in the report would be considered individually and progress reported back to Members; and
- an area of the report lacking detail was in relation to the transportation of children with additional support needs, and it was suggested there was a disconnect between transport and education services in relation to transport and chaperone requirements.

The Committee **NOTED** the full summary report from The TAS Partnership, attached as an Appendix to the report, and **AGREED** the provision of school transport for ASN pupils required further consideration, including the links between Transport and Education Services.

6. Revenue Monitoring Quarter 3 to 31 December 2021 Sgrùdadh Teachd-a-steach Cairteal 3 gu 31 Dùbhlachd 2021

There had been circulated Report No. ECI/2/22 dated 21 January 2022 by Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure, Environment & Economy.

During discussion, the following issues were raised:-

- in response to concern about potential underspends on roads projects, it was explained that many of these were accounting issues or delays between work undertaken and invoices paid, all of which would be resolved in the year end budget figures. Some of the road projects referred to involved capital expenditure, rather than revenue;
- assurance had been provided that paperwork issues for European grants would be resolved by the end of the financial year;
- information was sought, and provided, on the reported saving of £245k in relation to the review of school transport for Gaelic medium education, against a budget of £480k. Detailed figures could be further discussed offline;
- it was important to use positive language in the report when presenting successes; and
- Mr B Boyd would meet with the Executive Chief Officer to discuss the intricacies of the Council's budget process, specifically the internal trading processes.

The Committee **NOTED**:-

- i. the more detailed reporting of gross income and gross expenditure to improve scrutiny of net budgets as set out in the Appendices to the report;
- ii. the revenue monitoring position for the period to 31 December 2021;
- iii. net spend at the end of Quarter 3, totaled £22.696m;
- iv. based on the best available information to date, a service budget gap of £1.738m was forecasted to end of 2021/22;
- v. many areas of the Service rely on income to pay for services, and this continued to be affected in 2021/22 because of Covid-19 impacts. A loss of income and Covid-19 related costs was the key driver of the Service's budget gap;
- vi. the budget gap might change positively or negatively depending on applying expenditure and recruitment controls, aligning services to meet budget savings agreed and income recovery in 2021/22;
- vii. further adjustments would be made in future quarterly reporting to reflect the updated apportionment of costs and savings across the new structure;

and **AGREED**:-

- viii. to use positive language in the report, especially for areas of success.

7. Draft National Planning Framework 4 Dreachd Frèam Dealbhaidh Nàiseanta 4

There had been circulated Report No. ECI/3/2022 dated 14 January 2022 by the Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure, Environment & Economy.

The Chair made a brief statement indicating that the report fell short of her expectations. The submission worked up by officers and agreed for submission had an ambitious vision for Highland, but this draft omitted much of what was in that report. The need for improved infrastructure and reducing reliance on tourism were not evident. If Highland was to repopulate, the Council needed services to encourage people to come here and diverse job opportunities to allow them to stay. She urged Members to make time for the workshop on 25 February 2022 to ensure the Highlands moved forward and became more than a tourist destination.

In presenting the report, it was explained that the draft National Planning Framework 4A (NPF4) was a long-term plan that would guide spatial development, set out national planning policies, designate national developments and highlight regional spatial priorities. It set out the Scottish Government's proposed approach to how planning and development would help to achieve a net zero, sustainable Scotland by 2045. NPF4 would be more up to date than Highland's current Development Plans and it would typically take precedence ahead of the Council adopting new Local Development Plans. The deadline for responses to the draft NPF4 was 31 March 2022, with the Scottish Government aiming for Parliamentary approval of finalised NPF4 in summer 2022.

During discussion, the following issues were raised:-

- the workshop for Members on 25 February 2022 would allow detailed comments to be made and for queries to be addressed;
- support was voiced for developing more than one Pumped Hydro Storage scheme, and the benefits of the schemes to grid balancing were outlined;
- community participation was an essential part of wealth creation initiatives;
- attention was drawn to the importance of the policies detailed in section 5.8, Sustainable Places,
- Policy 31: Rural Places, included reference to the Hinterland and it was pointed out by Mr Loudon that one Hinterland policy covering the whole of the Highlands was not appropriate;
- it was important that Place Making policies involved wide-ranging issues such as housing density and the creation of a pleasant ambience through the use of green space etc; and
- the final NPF4 should contain concise, robust summaries of the main points of each section.

The Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the Draft National Planning Framework 4;
- ii. **AGREED** that the headline issues identified in Section 5 of the report be subject of Council comment to Scottish Government and **APPROVED** the headline comments on those issues as set out in Section 5, to be worked up for submission;
- iii. **NOTED** that other issues and comments might be included in the Council's final response to the consultation;
- iv. **NOTED** that a Member Workshop was to be held on 25 February 2022 to further inform the Council's response to Draft NPF4 and agree that the headline issues

and comments in (ii) should form the basis for that discussion; and

- v. **NOTED** that the submission would be finalised by the ECO Infrastructure, Environment and Economy, which might include further consultation with the Chair of the Environment and Infrastructure Committee ahead of the pre-election purdah period.

8. Covid-19 Business Grants Tabhartasan Gnothachais Covid-19

There had been circulated Report No. ECI/4/2022 dated 13 January 2022 by the Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure, Environment & Economy.

Members expressed their gratitude to officers for the efficient handling of Business Grants and their quick and flexible approach to questions and queries from both Members and the public. The team involved were knowledgeable and experienced and their helpful attitude was to be commended.

The Committee **NOTED** the current work underway to deliver a number of Covid-19 business grants to Highland businesses.

9. Planning Performance Framework Report 2020/21 Aithisg Frèam Dèanadais Dealbhaidh 2020/21

There had been circulated Report No. ECI/5/2022 dated 17 January 2022 by the Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure, Environment & Economy.

Members welcomed the efforts of the team, under difficult circumstances, which had seen a number of positive changes to the RAG ratings.

The Committee **NOTED** the findings of the 2020/21 Planning Performance Framework Report from the Scottish Government.

10. Onshore Wind Policy Statement Refresh 2021 Ùrachadh Aithris Poileasaidh Gaoithe Air Tìr 2021

Declaration of Interest: Mrs T Robertson declared an interest in this item as she had windfarm shares with Energy4all and, in accordance with paragraph 5.6 of the revised Code of Conduct, left the online meeting for this item.

The Vice Chair, Mr J Gray, took the Chair for this item.

There had been circulated Report No. ECI/6/2022 dated 20 January 2022 by the Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure, Environment & Economy.

During discussion, the following issues were raised:-

- disappointment was expressed that Members had not had the opportunity to contribute to the consultation response prior to its submission;
- there was frustration at the attitude of some windfarm developers who, having been granted planning permission, reapplied for an increase in the height of the masts. Furthermore, the number of windfarms being granted planning permission on appeal to the Scottish Government had now risen exponentially and this flew in the face of local democracy. These practises were being replicated in other local authority areas;

- developers were now also liaising with other Community Councils in the vicinity and this was pitting these Community Councils against the host Community Council;
- shared ownership was one way to avoid conflict with communities and this needed to be emphasised. In fact, it was suggested, communities should have a statutory right to participate to shared ownership of windfarms in their area, 10% of the development being suggested as a minimum stake. It was suggested that the Committee should consider a report on how it might best be able to help communities achieve shared ownership of windfarm developments;
- on the Forestry and Land Scotland Estate, a stake of up to 49.9% should be continued to reflect this was publicly owned land;
- local authorities should assist communities to access funding secured on turbines through the Public Works Loan Board (PWLB) as borrowing for economic development and community empowerment was a legitimate use of PWLD funding;
- it was important to use this technology to tackle high energy bills and fuel poverty;
- energy produced locally should be used locally where possible to reduce transmission losses and the cost to the customer;
- turbines should not be capacity constrained as, at times of low demand, pumped storage hydro schemes could move water uphill to make use of the wind power available;
- as onshore and offshore wind expanded, power generated should be used to power electrolyzers and to produce green hydrogen;
- communities deserved more from windfarm developers. Initially expectations were that communities would receive £10,000 per megawatt but this was driven down to £5,000 with moves to reduce this even further and this reduced community benefit needed to be highlighted;
- turning to the consultation document, the following amendments were also suggested:-
 - a response to Question 5 (What more can be done to ensure that financial mechanisms are available to support development at differing scales?) should be made in the Council was to encourage shared ownership.
 - in regard to Question 14 (From your own experience what can wind farm developments offer in terms of protecting and enhancing the natural environment, in particular through the planting of trees to compensate for those lost during windfarm development and through peatland restoration?), compensatory tree planting, protected by fencing, should be done wherever possible.
 - rather than not commenting on Question 15, (Can you provide best practice examples of encouraging biodiversity protection and enhancement, including connectivity between natural areas in wind farm sites?), it would be useful to draw attention to examples of good practises elsewhere on biodiversity.
 - in regard to Question 23, (Do you have any views on the impact of wind farms on tourism?) reference was made to the serious congestion which arose on the A82 when wind turbines were being transported 3-4 years ago and where bridges had also been damaged.
- in a similar approach that was being proposed for community groups, the Council could also provide communities interested in shared ownership with some practical advice;
- onshore windfarms could bring environmental and financial benefits to an area but it was disappointing that recent circumstances suggested that local democracy was being bypassed. Local Members were best placed to have the knowledge of issues and the area; and
- the Members Workshop on 25 February would provide another opportunity for comments.

The Committee **HOMOLOGATED** the response contained in Appendix 1 of the report subject to Members supplementary comments also being fed back to the Scottish Government.

11. Minutes Geàrr-chunntas

There had been circulated Minutes of Meetings as follows:-

- i. North Planning Applications Committee held on 19 October 2021, and 7 December 2021- **NOTED**;
- ii. South Planning Applications Committee held on 2 November 2021- **NOTED**; and
- iii. City Region Deal Monitoring Group held on 20 January 2022 - **APPROVED**.

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

The Council **AGREED** to resolve that, under Section 50A(4) of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973, the public be excluded from the meeting for the following item on the grounds that it involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 9 of Part 1 of Schedule 7A of the Act.

13. Wick Airport PSO Uallach Seirbheis Phoblach Port-adhair Inbhir Ùige

The Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure, Environment & Economy gave a verbal update on the Wick Airport.

Following discussion, the Committee **AGREED** that the Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure, Environment & Economy progress the tender award process.

14. Property Transactions Monitoring Report Aithisg Sgrùdaidh Ghnothachasan Seilbhe

There had been circulated to Members only Report No. ECI/7/2022 dated 10 January 2022 by the Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure, Environment & Economy.

The Committee **NOTED** the monitoring statements for General Fund and Property Account transactions as approved by the Head of Economic Development and Regeneration under delegated authority as well the Budgeted Sales for 2021/2022 and beyond.

15. Housing Development Initiatives Iomairtean Leasachaidh Taigheadais

There had been circulated to Members only Report No. ECI/8/2022 dated 18 January 2022 by the Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure, Environment & Economy.

The Committee **APPROVED** the recommendations as detailed in the report.

ADDITIONAL URGENT CONFIDENTIAL ITEM

At this point in the meeting, and in line with Standing Order 8, it was advised that the Chair had agreed that the following should be considered as an urgent item of business respect of transport issue which was time critical to meet statutory deadlines:-

16. Public and School Transport – Skye Tenders

The Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure, Environment & Economy provided a verbal update on the public and school bus tenders for Skye.

Following discussion, the Committee **AGREED** to award the contract.

The meeting ended at 2.40 pm.

The Highland Council

Minutes of Meeting of the **Housing and Property Committee** held remotely on Thursday 3 February 2021 at 10.30am.

Present:

Miss J Barclay	Mrs B McAllister
Mr R Bremner	Mr D Mackay
Miss J Campbell	Mrs A MacLean
Mr M Finlayson	Mr C MacLeod
Mr L Fraser	Mrs F Robertson
Mr A Graham	Ms J Tilt
Mr A Jarvie	

Non-Members also present:

Mr A Christie	Ms S Fanet
Mrs M Cockburn	Mr J Finlayson
Mrs M Davidson	Mr K Gowans

Officials in Attendance:

Mr M Rodgers, Executive Chief Officer Housing and Property
 Mr D Goldie, Head of Housing and Building Maintenance, Housing and Property
 Mr F MacDonald, Head of Property and Facilities Management, Housing and Property
 Mr B Cameron, Housing Policy and Investment Manager, Housing and Property
 Mr R Campbell, Estates Strategy Manager, Housing and Property
 Mrs L Dunn, Principal Administrator, Performance and Governance
 Ms A Macrae, Committee Administrator, Performance and Governance
 Ms O Bayon, Committee Administrator, Performance and Governance

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

Mr L Fraser in the Chair

BUSINESS

1. Apologies for Absence Leisgeulan

Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of Mr B Allan, Mrs G Campbell-Sinclair, Mr C Fraser, Ms E Roddick and Mr P Saggars.

2. Declarations of Interest Foillseachaidhean Com-pàirt

The Committee **NOTED** the following Transparency Statement:-

Item 6: Mr L Fraser (Transparency Statement)

3. Good News Naidheachdan Matha

The Committee **NOTED** the following good news:

- reference was made to the positive uptake of the Council's new scheme to buy homes directly from owners to increase its housing stock. It was stressed that the offer to purchase was not automatically accepted, the Council would only consider purchasing properties which met certain criteria and for which there was a local demand; and
- appreciation was expressed for the new housing developments in Nairn (31 houses) and Maryburgh (16 houses). In particular, reference was made to the high build standard and that the developments also comprised of accessible housing for wheelchair liveable use. The Council and the developer was commended for their work and the positive impact of the new housing on the local community was emphasised.

4. Housing Revenue Account (HRA) and Non-HRA Budget Monitoring Statement to 31 December 2021
Aithris Sgrùdaidh Buidseat Cunntas Teachd-a-steach Taigheadais agus Neo-thaigheadais gu 31 an Dubhlachd

There had been circulated Report No HP/02/22 by the Executive Chief Officer Housing and Property.

During discussion, Members raised the following issues:-

- the plans to support tenant participation by returning to face to face meetings and associated timeline while ensuring this was done safely. In response, it was confirmed that Members would be provided with a briefing paper on the review across a range of Housing Services as Covid-19 restrictions were relaxed;
- an update was provided on taking cases to court and the advice and funding received from the Scottish Government to support tenants in arrears as a result of the pandemic. Officers would continue to engage with tenants in terms of court action being a last resort;
- confirmation was sought and provided that a briefing paper would be provided to Members on the breakdown of the homelessness budgets by Area;
- the approach being taken to garages across the Areas with a view to sharing good practice and improving the corporate approach. It was confirmed that a briefing paper would be provided to Members on this matter;
- an assurance was provided that progress was being made in clearing the backlog in day to day repairs and there were no significant issues with staffing and contractor availability. There were supply side issues which was affecting the timescales for some repairs and this was being kept under review;
- problems had been experienced by the public and Members in accessing the Council's Service Centre and having repairs and other concerns logged and where the corporate responsibility for this rested. It was confirmed this issue would be raised with Communities and Place and an update provided to the next meeting. In the meantime, Members should make officers aware of any specific challenges or ongoing concerns;
- the process for residents to identify their priorities for their estates, for example through rate your estate walkabouts, and for those to be fed into and prioritised within the Area environmental spend budgets;
- the need for more detailed information to be provided on the projected overspends shown on the HRA and Non-HRA homelessness budgets to

allow Members to better understand the complexities around the issues and to explain to tenants the relationship with improvements undertaken through the capital programme;

- concern at the projected overspend on the maintenance of homeless accommodation and underspend on supervision and management. Members were receiving an increasing number of complaints in relation to temporary accommodation from neighbouring residents. It was confirmed that a briefing paper would be provided to Members on the supervision and management of temporary accommodation; and
- clarification was provided that there was a relatively small minority of tenants across the housing stock who would wilfully damage their property both in temporary and secure tenancy accommodation. This was a challenge for housing management and it was accepted that a more effective approach other than recharging tenants could be taken and further consideration would be given to this matter.

The Committee:-

- i **APPROVED** the budget position on the Housing Revenue Account and non-Housing Revenue Account 2021/22 for the period to 31 December 2021; and
- ii **AGREED** that briefing papers be provided to Members on:- (a) the review across a range of Housing Services as Covid-19 restrictions were relaxed; (b) a breakdown of the homelessness budgets by Area; (c) the supervision and management of temporary accommodation; and (d) the approach being taken to garages across the Areas.

5. Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Capital Monitoring Report to 31 December 2021
Aithisg Sgrùdaidh Cunntas Teachd-a-steach Taigheadais gu 31 an Dubhlachd

There had been circulated Report No HP/03/22 by the Executive Chief Officer Housing and Property.

During discussion, Members raised the following main points:-

- a more detailed narrative be provided on the slippage on the heating/energy efficiency budget, reference being made to the level of representations Members received in relation to heating efficiency within tenanted properties. It was confirmed that Members would be provided with a briefing paper containing more detailed information on energy efficiency projects;
- significant concerns at the impact on tenant fuel bills due to cost of some of the new heating systems and rising energy costs including the increase in the energy price cap. It was anticipated there would be a significant increase in fuel poverty in the Highlands going forward and an assurance was given that while a national response would be required, the Council was committed to providing support to households to mitigate the effects of fuel poverty on tenants as a priority;
- confirmation that the analysis by Changeworks comparing both the performance levels of heating systems and the impact on tenant fuel bills would be available in the near future and would be shared with the Committee and the Climate Change Working Party;

- an assurance that there was 90% compliance with the new fire safety legislation in Council houses across Highland. The majority of the non-compliant houses was due to the fact the Service had not been able to access those properties and work was ongoing as a priority in this regard. It was confirmed this information would be shared in the public domain and it was intended to give a further update at the next meeting in June 2022; and
- in addition to the Council's Service Centre, there had been problems with accessing the Council's out of hours emergency numbers, hosted by another local authority, during the recent storms. The Executive Chief Officer undertook to raise the issues regarding both the Service Centre and emergency numbers with the Executive Leadership Team.

The Committee:-

- i **APPROVED** the budget position on the Housing Revenue Account Capital Programme 2021/22 for the period to 31 December 2021;
- ii **AGREED** that a briefing paper be provided to Members providing more detailed information on energy efficiency projects; and
- iii **NOTED** that delays experienced in accessing the Council's Service Centre and emergency numbers would be raised with the Executive Leadership Team.

6. Property & Facilities Management Services Revenue Monitoring Report to 31 December 2021
Aithisg Sgrùdaid Teachd-a-steach Sheirbheisean Rianachd Cuid-seilbh & Ghoireasan gu 31 an Dubhlachd

Transparency Statement: Councillor L Fraser made a Transparency Statement in respect of this item on the agenda in that he had a connection to this item by reason of he provided minor maintenance work in the Nairn area. However, having applied the objective test he did not consider that he had an interest to declare. This is because the work only related to the Nairn area and is a minor allocation of the overall Nairn Area budget. He had requested that this Statement be recorded in the Minutes.

There had been circulated Report No HP/04/22 by the Executive Chief Officer Housing and Property.

During discussion, the following main points were raised:

- Concerns were expressed regarding the roof at Dalneigh Primary School following a recent incident of vandalism and ongoing damage from Seagulls/Oyster Catchers. In view of this, further information was sought and provided on the timeline for the permanent roof repairs to enable pupil lessons to return to the classrooms;
- The response to address the damage to the Wick Campus was commended and appreciation was expressed to all involved in the remedy of this. The outcome of the investigations of how this had occurred in a new build were welcome to ensure that catastrophic failures in future projects were avoided; and
- Further information was sought and provided on how the integrity of buildings were being assessed particularly in regard to heating systems (both old and new) and the increasing costs.

Thereafter, the Committee **NOTED**:

- i. net spend at the end of Quarter 3 totalled £50.237m;
- ii. based on the best available information to date, a service income gap of £1.129m to the end of 2021/22 was presently forecast;
- iii. almost every area of service relied on income to pay for services, and this continued to be disrupted this year because of ongoing Covid impacts;
- iv. the budget gap might change positively or negatively depending on the application of expenditure and recruitment controls, adjusting services to meet previously agreed budget savings; in-year income recovery, identifying new income and procurement opportunities, drawing down any further Government grant support and any new Covid related recovery costs; and
- v. further adjustments might be made in future quarterly reporting to reflect the updated apportionment of costs and savings across the new Service structure.

7. Property Capital Monitoring Statement and Progress Update Aithris Sgrùdaidh Calpa Cuid-seilbhe agus Cunntas às Ùr air Adhartas

There had been circulated Report No HP/05/22 by the Executive Chief Officer Housing and Property.

During discussion, the following main points were raised:

- appreciation was expressed for the presentation and the Leader of the Opposition (SNP) confirmed that the invitation to meet up with officers would be taken forward in due course;
- an update was sought and provided on Asset Rationalisation. It was indicated that Area Committees provided a forum for open and transparent discussion/decision-making of the disposal of buildings and would enable this workstream to be more readily progressed;
- concern was expressed at the increasing and highly inequitable fuel costs. There was a need to raise awareness of this inequality. Highland was one of the biggest contributors of renewable energy and there was a need to consider how this could be utilised to address fuel poverty and help local communities;
- officers were commended for the Learning Places Scotland national awards received and appreciation expressed for the modern work practices that had been adopted in regard to Merkinch Primary School. Reference was also made to the positive impact the new school building was having on education outcomes and assurance was sought, and provided, that the external lighting at the entrance to the Family Centre would be redirected;
- further information was sought and provided on progress of the Corporate Landlord Model and the timeline for the introduction of building passports. Assurance was provided that work was being undertaken to use spaces efficiently and all options were being considered to work collaboratively with other partners from the public, private and third sector. Confirmation was provided that an update on Dingwall Primary School Nursery Annex would be provided to Councillor A MacLean.

Thereafter, the Committee **NOTED** the:

- i. financial position for the 2021/22 financial year as of 31 December 2021, and the estimated year-end forecast; and
- ii. progress made with the Education and Strategic Asset Management projects in the Council's Capital Programme.

Prior to closing the meeting, the Chair expressed his appreciation to Members and officers for their work particularly during the difficult circumstances of the pandemic.

The meeting was closed at 12.35pm.

The Highland Council

Minutes of Meeting of the **Lochaber Committee** held remotely on **Monday, 7 February, 2022 at 10.30 a.m.**

Present:

Mr B Allan
Mr A Baxter
Ms S Fanet

Mr A Henderson
Mr D Rixson

Officials in Attendance:

Ms L Denovan, Executive Chief Officer, Resources and Finance
Mrs D Ferguson, Senior Ward Manager (Ross, Skye and Lochaber), Communities and Place
Ms S MacLennan, Housing Manager, Housing and Property
Mr L Macdonald, Repairs Manager, Housing and Property
Mr B Cameron, Housing Policy and Investment Manager, Housing & Property
Mr D Esson, Area Education & Learning Manager (West), Education & Learning
Mr C Howell, Head of Roads & Infrastructure, Infrastructure, Environment & Economy
Mr R Porteous, Roads Operations Manager, Infrastructure, Environment & Economy
Ms D Sutton, Amenities Manager (South), Communities and Place
Mr A Webster, Regeneration Team Leader, Infrastructure, Environment & Economy
Mr A MacInnes, Administrative Assistant, Performance and Governance Service

Also in attendance:-

Inspector N Hough, Area Inspector (Lochaber) Police Scotland

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

Mr A Baxter in the Chair

BUSINESS

1. **Apologies for Absence** **Leisgeulan**

There were no apologies for absence.

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

Item 5 – Mr A Baxter (non financial)
Item 9 – Mr D Rixson and Mr A Henderson (non financial)
Item 10 – Ms S Fanet (non financial)

3. **Police Scotland Local Committee Performance Report** **Aithisg Choileanaidh Comataidh Ionadail Poileas Alba**

There was circulated Report No LA/1/22 by the Lochaber Area Inspector.

During discussion, the following main points were raised:-

- it was highlighted that the Lochaber area remained a safe place to live and work and if there were specific issues these were dealt with effectively by Police Scotland. Visitor management was an issue particularly in areas such as Glen Nevis and Glen Etive and Police Scotland were encouraged to continue to make it a priority in future.
- The importance of Police reinforcing Highland Council Rangers and a visible Police presence in the Summer season was highlighted. Given the significant increase in population in the area over the Summer season, it was suggested that there should be a review of the Police staffing model for the area to ascertain whether more resources should be brought in to enhance the local Police. In response, it was advised that planning was underway for visitor management involving partner agencies. In terms of Police resources in the area, these had been recently reviewed and additional resources were now available. There was the ability to increase these resources when required and there was support from other operational units within Police Scotland.
- There was a good complement of resources available to the Police in Lochaber and details of these were provided;
- In relation to a recent fire incident at an Hotel in Mallaig, given that the incident happened early morning, there were no Police on duty locally at that time and resources had to be sent from Fort William. However, immediate assistance had been provided by locals and this highlighted the goodwill of locals to assist emergency services in rural areas.
- There was a reduction in the number of drug possessions and this was a reflection of licensed premises not operating fully during Covid restrictions.
- The number of incidents of hate crime and abuse by social media was low in Lochaber. The Police had a victim orientated approach to such incidents.

The Committee **NOTED** progress made against the objectives set within the Highland Local Policing Plan 2020-2023 Year 2, attached as Annex A to the report, for the period covering 1 April, 2021 to 31 December, 2021.

4. Area Roads Capital Programme 2022/23 Prògram Calpa Rathaidean Sgìreil 2022/23

There was circulated Report No. LA/2/22 by the Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure, Environment and Economy.

During discussion, the following main points were raised:-

- There was £40,000 set aside in the proposed programme for Kinlochhour drainage and it was suggested that this money may be better spent on Morar Hill road which had major structural problems and drainage issues. An undertaking was given to consider this.
- The first half of repairs to Grange Terrace was scheduled for March and the completion of repairs was scheduled in the 2022/23 financial year.
- It was highlighted that the level of investment in roads across Highland falls short of the budget requirements to maintain a steady state condition of the road network.
- It was advised that embankments contingency funding tended to be for landslips repairs.
- It was intended to put together a funding package for North Loch Morar (Bracara) for roads, parking and bridges.
- additional capital funding had been received for bridges and there would be a reporting process for works to be undertaken.

- It was confirmed that repairs were planned to the worst section of the B849 Lochaline westbound and further works to this road had been identified and would be undertaken when funding was available. Further information on this would be provided to Councillor Fanet.
- Priorities in the programme could change according to needs in order to address safety issues, storm damage etc. The full budget for roads maintenance for next financial year was not known as yet. There would be continued discussions with Members and Community Councils in terms of the programme.
- An update on the A861 road and progress on an application to the Strategic Timber Transport Fund was requested. It was confirmed that a bid to the Fund would be submitted this year. It was advised that circa. £1m of priority works had been identified for the A861, but more funding would be required in order to undertake these works.
- An invite was extended and accepted by the Head of Roads & Infrastructure to visit Lochaber to check the condition of roads in the area as well as a visit to Invercoe bridge.

Thereafter, the Committee **APPROVED** the proposed 2022/23 Area Roads Capital Programme for Lochaber Area.

5. **Kinlochleven Associated School Group Overview**

Foir-shealladh Buidheann Sgoiltean Co-cheangailte Cheann Loch Liobhann

Declaration of Interest - Mr A Baxter declared a non-financial interest in this item as he had children in Kinlochleven High School and Kinlochleven Primary School, but having applied the test outlined in Paragraphs 5.2 and 5.3 of the Councillors' Code of Conduct, concluded that his interest; did not preclude his involvement in discussion.

There was circulated Report No. LA/3/22 by the Executive Chief Officer Education and Learning.

In discussion, ongoing concerns over staffing resources at Kinlochleven High School were acknowledged and the current situation was very challenging which had been further impacted by a lack of local, Highland and national Supply Teachers and a sharp rise in recent Covid related staff absences. The Council continued to work with Local Authority Supply Teachers and a range of organisations including West Highland College in order to try and obtain cover to support the School. The Area Education and Learning Manager undertook to meet with Members at a Ward Business meeting to discuss the ongoing staffing challenges and solutions to these.

In particular, the need for long term solutions to staffing at the School was highlighted and it was confirmed that there would be an annual staff review of secondary and primary schools. The Head Teacher of the School was moving on to a new role and it was confirmed the post would be advertised on 8 February with a closing date of 21 February.

There was also concern that due to the difficulties at the School, parents may consider transferring their children to Lochaber High School. Therefore without long term solutions, it could be that the School would be unviable in the long term.

Further, staff absences in smaller Schools made delivering the curriculum more difficult. It was confirmed that there was an ongoing review of staffing formulae for smaller Schools. Also, different models for delivering the curriculum including blended learning were being looked at and work was ongoing with the Highland Virtual Academy to look at the courses available and also linking in with courses available at the West Highland College.

Having scrutinised the report, the Committee **NOTED** the content of the report.

**6. Housing Performance Report
Aithisg Choileanaidh Taigheadais**

There was circulated Report No LA/4/22 by the Executive Chief Officer Housing and Property which provided information on how the Housing Service performed in relation to Scottish Social Charter and other performance indicators up to 31 December, 2021.

The Committee **NOTED** the information provided on housing performance in the period 1 April 2021 to 31 December 2021.

**7. Housing Revenue Account: Garage Rents 2022/23
Cunntas Teachd-a-steach Taigheadais: Màil Gharaidsean 2022/23**

There was circulated Report No. LA/5/22 by the Executive Chief Officer Housing and Property which provided information on garage rents for Lochaber and invited the Committee to set rent levels for garage and garage sites held on the Housing Revenue Account for 2022/23.

In particular, Members were supportive of a 1% rent increase to apply to Lochaber Garages and Garage sites.

The Service was consulting with communities on the future of garages and it was noted that so far there had been positive feedback from communities on the proposals to remove garages, this being viewed as an improvement to these housing estates.

The Committee **AGREED** a 1% rent increase to apply to Lochaber Garages and Garage Sites.

**8. Lochaber HRA Capital Programme 2022/23
Prògram Calpa Cunntas Teachd-a-steach Taigheadais Loch Abar 2022/23**

There was circulated Report No. LA/6/22 by the Executive Chief Officer Housing and Property.

It was noted that the following information would be shared with Councillor B Allan:- an update on the Claggan Quadrangles environmental improvements project and whether there were any works proposed at Claggan flats within the Capital Programme.

It was noted that the proposed capital programme reflected the strategic commitment towards increased spend on heating/energy efficiency measures to assist with improving the energy efficiency of the housing stock. A future report would be submitted to the Housing and Property Committee on estimated costs to achieve compliance with energy efficiency targets. In this respect, fuel

poverty was a significant issue and was likely to get much worse with energy prices increasing and the work planned to improve energy efficiency in homes would help tackle this problem.

Thereafter, the Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the allocation of resources to Lochaber Area as set out at 5.7;
- ii. **NOTED** the guideline investment priorities as set out in sections 5.2 and 5.3 of the report;
- iii. **AGREED** the proposed one-year HRA Capital Programme for Lochaber 2022-23 as set out in Appendix 1;
- iv. **NOTED** the position relating the current year HRA Capital Programme; and
- v. **NOTED** that updates on the Housing Revenue Account Capital Programme would continue to be provided through ward briefings and at future Local Committees as requested by local Members, in addition to reporting to Housing and Property Committee.

In terms of Standing Order 9, with the consent of Members, the following item had been taken immediately after item 4 on the agenda.

**9. Place Based Investment Programme
Prògram Tasgaidh Stèidhichte air Àite**

Declaration of Interest - Mr D Rixson declared a non-financial interest in the Lochaber Housing Association and Isle of Rum Community Trust Harris Lodge applications, as a Board Member of those organisations and would take no part in the discussion or decision on those specific applications.

Declaration of Interest – Mr A Henderson declared a non financial interest in the Glenfinnan Community Hall Project as a family member was involved in the Project and would take no part in the discussion or decision on this application.

There was circulated Report No. LA/7/22 by the Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure, Environment & Economy which invited Members to consider

applications for Place Based Investment Programme funding. Lochaber Committee was allocated £154,144.

Following consideration, the Committee **AGREED** the following projects be offered a Place Based Investment Programme grant:-

Glenfinnan Community Hall - £20,900
 Caol Shopping Centre Car Park - £50,000
 Canna Community Hub – £49,244
 Fort William Pump Track - £34,000; and

AGREED the following Reserve List (listed in order of priority):-

Fort William Marina & Shoreline CIC - £11, 753.39
 Lochaber Housing Association (Mallaig Housing Development) - £10,700
 Arisaig Community Trust (Arisaig housing development) - £40,550; and

AGREED to support the Fort William Promenade (public realm) application being funded from another Area budget such as the Ward discretionary budget; and:-

The following applications were either not eligible for PBIP funding or were declined:-

Harris Lodge; An Laimhrig; Fort William Parade (public realm); Fort William Waterfront.

10. Place Based Investment Funds – Funding Application
Mainteann Tasgaidh Stèidhichte air Àite – Iarrtas Maoineachaidh

Declaration of Interest – Ms S Fanet declared a non financial interest in this item as before her appointment as a Highland Council Councillor she had submitted an application for part time work with Ewen’s Room and therefore there was a possibility of work with the Charity in future and would not take part in this item.

There was circulated Report No. LA/8/22 by the Executive Chief Officer Communities and Place which invited Members to consider an application from Place Based Investment Funds from Ewen’s Room.

In particular, it was highlighted that Ewen’s Room had been successful in one of their match funding bids and had received £9,960 from the Highland Community Mental Health Fund.

The Committee **AGREED** a grant of £15,000 to Ewen’s Room to support their Community Resilience and Wellbeing Support Services within the Fort William and Ardnamurchan ward.

11. Play Park Funding – New Allocations
Ath-sgrùdadh Pàirc Chluiche

There was circulated Report No. LA/9/22 by the Executive Chief Officer Communities and Place on proposals for the allocation of Play Park funding.

It particular, it was suggested that the remainder of the Ward 11 Covid fund of £1,432.50 be re-purposed for play provision and this was supported by the Committee.

Thereafter, the Committee **NOTED**:-

- i. the funding available and the funding already committed to invest in play parks in the Lochaber Wards; and
- ii. a further £55m is to be awarded to Scottish Councils over the lifetime of the parliament

Also **AGREED**:-

- iii. to split the allocation for the Lochaber Area 2021/22 (£37,919) equally between the two Lochaber Wards;
- iv. in Ward 21, the remaining £15,020 is added to the Ward share of the Scottish Government funding (Lochaber total; £37,919);
- v. the remainder of the Ward 21 Covid fund; £1,679, be re-purposed for play provision and the total amount made available for communities to bid in to for the repair or replacement of play equipment;
- vi. The remainder of the Ward 11 Covid fund £1,432.50 be re-purposed for play provision; and
- vii. open a funding round immediately with a closing date of mid-March.

12. Minutes Geàrr-chunntas

There was circulated Minutes of Meeting of the Lochaber Committee held on 8 November 2021 which were approved by the Council on 10 December 2021, the terms of which were **NOTED**.

Valedictory

As this was the last scheduled meeting of the Lochaber Committee before the Local Government Election, the Chairman wished all Members his best wishes for the future and thanked them for their co-operation over the last 5 years. The Chairman on behalf of Members expressed his thanks and appreciation to Officers supporting the Committee over the term of this Council for their service to the Lochaber area and this Committee.

The meeting ended at 1.00 p.m.

The Highland Council

Minutes of Meeting of the **Dingwall and Seaforth Area Committee** held remotely via Microsoft Teams on 7 February 2022 at 12 noon.

Present:

Mr A MacKinnon
Mrs A MacLean

Mr G Mackenzie
Mrs M Paterson

In attendance:

Mr M Rodgers, ECO Property and Housing
Ms D Agnew, Ward Manager (Black Isle, Dingwall and Seaforth), Communities and Place
Mr I Moncrieff, Roads Operations Manager, Infrastructure, Environment and Economy
Mr C Howell, Head of Infrastructure
Mr R MacLeod, Area Housing Manager, Property and Housing
Mr C Sharp, Repairs Manager, Property and Housing
Mr R Campbell, Estate Strategy Manager, Property and Housing
Mr A Webster, Principal Regeneration Officer
Mr A Coyle, Corporate Communications and Engagement Officer, Performance and Governance
Mrs A MacArthur, Administrative Assistant, Performance and Governance

Also in attendance:

Group Manager R Dibble, Scottish Fire and Rescue Service
Dr E Robertson, Project Manager at the Science Skills Academy, Dingwall Newton Room

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

Business

1. Apologies for Absence Leisgeulans

There were no apologies for absence.

2. Declarations of Interest Foillseachaidhean Com-pàirt

There were no declarations of interest.

3. **Scottish Fire and Rescue Service Seirbheis Smàlaidh is Teasairginn**

There had been circulated Report No DSA/001/22 dated 24 January 2022 together with the Ross and Cromarty Performance Report by the Local Group Manager for the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service.

During discussion, the following responses had been given:-

- UFAS, the Unwanted False Alarm Signals policy is triggered in stages,
 - Stage 1- normal attendance,
 - Stage 2 – 5 + incidents in 3 months
 - Stage 3 – 10+ incidents in 6 months
 - Stage 4 – 20 + incidents in 9 months.

The fire service will continue to monitor number of incidences and work with the premises to reduce the quantity of false alarms;
- the first female recruit in Dingwall joined the Crew in September following successful completion of her initial training course;
- there had been occasional pinch points with traffic congestion at the station due to the Covid-19 testing, this had been managed locally and resolved. The fire service were more than happy to continue to help during the covid outbreak;
- the home fire safety checks had been impacted due to the Covid-19 restrictions, however checks were still being carried out amongst high-risk groups;
- the new smoke detector legislation has had an impact on the supply and fitting of linked smoke detectors. The Service is still continuing to conduct visits to High Risk premises and fit detection as necessary; and
- in relation to anti-social behaviour, the fire service join in the Safer Ross Committee who meet weekly with the police. In terms of visiting schools and nurseries these had been impacted due to Covid-19 restrictions.

The Committee thanked staff for being at the forefront of keeping everyone safe.

The Committee **NOTED** the report.

4. **Dingwall Newton Room, Science Skills Academy – Presentation Seòmar Newton Inbhir Pheofharain, Acadamaidh Sgilean Saidheans – Taisbeanadh**

There was a presentation by Dr Emma Robertson, Project Manager of the Science Skills Academy at the Dingwall Newton Room.

During discussion, the following responses had been given:-

- there was to be a visit by the MSP Kate Forbes which would trigger a Press Release, unfortunately the visit had been postponed several times due to the Covid-19 restrictions. A press release in advance of the official launch is now being considered;

- a virtual tour of the premises for local people to see the work of the Skills Academy was an excellent idea and this would be investigated, pending on Covid-19 restrictions;
- happy to arrange a visit from Councillors to view the Newton Room;
- feedback for the facility had been excellent and feedback would be distributed to Members; and
- the Stem Engagement Officer would continue to work with schools to encourage all schools to visit the Skills Academy. The uptake from schools had been very good.

The Committee thanked Dr Robertson for her presentation and wished her well as the project developed.

5. Housing – Garages Taigheadas – Garaidsean

There had been circulated Report No DSA/002/22 by the Executive Chief Officer - Housing and Property dated 1 February 2022.

During discussion, the following responses had been given:-

- extensive works on the subsidence and ground works at Chestnut Road and Millbank Road was to be undertaken;
- a site meeting with Councillors would be arranged to visit the Fraser Road garages;
- repairs would be prioritised to void garage in areas where there was demand for the garages;
- the process for reporting garage repairs was the same as the process for reporting repairs to Council houses and this was through the service centre;
- specific garage sites would be brought to the Members Weekly Business Meeting for discussion; and
- once garages were demolished and marked out as parking these would be removed from the list of garages.

The Committee **AGREED** a 1% rent increase to apply to Dingwall and Seaforth garages and garage sites.

6. Housing Performance Report Aithisg Dèanadais a thaobh Taigheadais

There had been circulated Report No DSA/003/22 by the Executive Chief Officer dated 1 February 2022.

During discussion, the following responses had been given:-

- the relet times for Council houses due to Covid-19 restrictions had reduced from a 72 hour restriction on entry to 24 hours;
- there had been ongoing challenges for repairs due to people in isolation and the availability of contractors, the performance however was still very good and improving;

- the call centre had pressures due to Covid-19 restrictions and call centre staff having to isolate; and
- sub-contractors were in place for complaints in relation to damp, the contractors then reported any works required to both the tenant and the Maintenance Officer and the works relating to repairs required were undertaken.

The Committee **NOTED** the report.

7. Dingwall Common Good Fund Maoin Math Coitcheann Inbhir Pheofharain

There had been circulated Report No DSA/004/21 dated 31 January 2022 by the Interim Executive Chief Officer – Communities and Place and the Executive Chief Officer – Resources and Finance.

The Committee:

- NOTED** the Dingwall Common Good Fund Annual Report for 2020/21;
- NOTED** after scrutiny the position of Dingwall Common Good Fund as shown in the 2021/22 Quarter Three monitoring statement; and
- APPROVED** the proposed budget for 2022/23.

8. Place Based Investment Funds – Proposed Funding Allocations Maoin Tasgaidh Stèidhichte air Àite

There had been circulated Report No DSA/005/22 dated 26 January 2022 by the Executive Chief Officer – Communities and Place.

Members had talked through these allocations at length during Ward Business Meetings.

The Committee **AGREED** the proposed allocations of Place Based Investment Funds as follows:

- Muir of Ord Development Trust in collaboration with Maryburgh Amenities Company – The Clean and Green Initiative: £35,000;
- The Dingwall Community Development Company – The Clean and Green Initiative: £30,000;
- The remaining funds of £15,000 to be used to support any further applications received for Village and Town Amenities and Maintenance.

9. St Clement's School, Dingwall Sgoil Naomh Chliamhainn, Inbhir Pheofharain

There was a verbal report by the Estate Strategy Manager. A report would go to the Education Committee on the 24 February 2022 and this would start the consultation for the relocation of the school to the new site. The stakeholder meeting would then be held on 7 March 2022. Following the report to the Education Committee a press release would be issued to give reassurance on progress.

The Committee **NOTED** the report.

**10. Place Based Investment Programme
Prògram Tasgaidh Stèidhichte air Àite**

There had been circulated Report No DSA/006/22 dated 24 January 2022 by the Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure, Environment and Economy.

The Place Based Investment Programme was not the Town Centre Regeneration Fund and all areas were eligible to apply.

The Committee **AGREED** to invest £140,777 in the refurbishment of Dingwall Town Hall.

**11. Area Roads Capital Programme 2022/23
Prògram Calpa Rathaidean Sgìreil 2022/23**

There had been circulated Report No DSA/007/22 dated 11 January 2022 by the Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure, Environment and Economy.

During discussion, the following responses had been given:-

- many of the rural roads in our area have not been engineered and were little more than cart tracks that have been widened and surfaced, the heavier HGVs on our roads caused a lot of damage;
- the Seaforth Road and Distillery Bends roadworks are due to be completed this financial year;
- the disaggregation of Capital budgets within Ross and Cromarty to the individual areas would be welcomed;
- the damage to the road at the bottom of Kinnairdie Brae would be included in the Kinnairdie Brae/Craig Road works;
- the Knockfarrel road would be completed this year;
- the Heights of Dochcarty works included the surface dressing for Stoneybrae; and
- the Kinnairdie Brae works would likely be undertaken during school holidays to minimise the traffic impact and would likely involve a road closure with the necessary consultations.

The Committee **APPROVED** the proposed 2022/23 Area Roads Capital Programme for Dingwall and Seaforth Area.

**12. Minutes
Geàrr-chunntas**

There was circulated and **NOTED** Minutes of Meeting of the Dingwall and Seaforth Committee held on 9 November 2021 which were approved by the Council on 10 December 2021.

The meeting closed at 2.10 pm.

**The Highland Council
Caithness Committee**

Minutes of Meeting of the Caithness Committee held REMOTELY on Wednesday, 9 February 2022 at 10.00am.

Present:

Mr R Bremner
Mr D Mackay
Mr W Mackay
Mr S Mackie

Mr M Reiss
Mr K Rosie
Mr A Sinclair
Ms J Tilt

Officials in attendance:

Mr C Howell, Head of Infrastructure, Infrastructure, Environment and Economy
Mrs H Ross, Senior Ward Manager, Communities and Place
Mr M Sutherland, Ward Manager, Communities and Place
Ms A Donald, North Area Manager, Education and Learning
Mr S Sandecki, Head Teacher, Wick High School, Education and Learning
Mr A Webster, Principal Regeneration Officer, Infrastructure, Environment and Economy
Mr B Cameron, Housing Policy & Investment Manager, Housing and Property
Ms J Sutherland, Roads Operations Manager, Infrastructure, Environment and Economy
Mr M Greig, Project Manager, Education and Learning
Mr F Cameron, Programme Manager, Infrastructure, Environment and Economy
Ms A Macrae, Committee Administrator, Performance and Governance

Also in Attendance:

Area Commander K Macleod and Sergeant S Mezels, Police Scotland

Mr R Bremner in the Chair

1.	<p>Apologies for Absence Leisgeulan</p> <p>There were no apologies for absence.</p>
2.	<p>Declarations of Interest Foillseachaidhean Com-pàirt</p> <p>There were no declarations of interest.</p>
3.	<p>Minutes Geàrr-chunntas</p> <p>There were circulated for noting Minutes of the Caithness Committee held on 3 November 2021, which were approved by the Council on 10 December 2021, the terms of which were NOTED.</p>

4.	<p>Matters Arising – Action Tracker Gnothaichean Ag Èirigh – Tracair Ghnìomhan</p> <p>There had been circulated an Action Tracker which detailed the actions arising from previous meetings.</p> <p>On hearing from the Chair, the Committee AGREED that the format of the action tracker be reviewed and an updated version be presented to the next meeting of the Committee.</p>
5.	<p>Police – Area Performance Summary Poileas – Geàrr-chunntas air Coileanadh Sgìreil</p> <p>There had been circulated Report No CC/16/20 by the North Area Commander.</p> <p>During discussion, Members raised the following main points:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • road safety was a high priority locally and the deployment of the camera van in locations identified by the public be welcomed; • the potential for the camera van to be deployed close to Watten Primary School. It was confirmed that the Police would continue to seek to influence its deployment into some of the smaller communities; • a plea that Police Scotland’s four-wheel drive vehicle availability in Caithness be improved, particularly over the winter months. The Area Commander advised that he was seeking to have existing vehicle replaced and he continued to make the case for additional vehicles; • the potential for the opening hours of Thurso Police Station to be reviewed, observing that it was a busy station located in the town and on the North Coast 500. The Area Commander undertook to feedback to Members on this issue; • progress with the deployment of high powered cameras in the area to tackle mobile phone use whilst driving. The Area Commander confirmed he would feedback to Mr W Mackay on this issue; • concern at speeding in Thurso and the need for preventative measures to be considered. The Area Commander advised that he would liaise with his officers in regard to this issue; • in terms of preventative work, confirmation was sought and provided that the potential use of visual reality headsets as training aids in communities would be investigated; • the Chair would suggest to the Secretary of the Association of Caithness Community Councils that road safety be included on the agenda of the next meeting of the Association of Community Councils at which Police Scotland and Roads officials would be present; and • Members were aware that Police resources were stretched and there was a need for an open discussion between all parties on the issues around the attendance of police officers at and information provided to local community council meetings. The Chair confirmed he would seek to have this matter discussed at a meeting of the Association of Caithness Community Councils.

	The Committee NOTED progress made against the objectives set within the Highland and Islands Local Policing Plan 2020 – 23.
6.	<p>Wick Associated School Group Overview Foir-shealladh Buidheann Sgoiltean Co-cheangailte Sgìre Inbhir Ùige</p> <p>There had been circulated Report No CC/02/22 by the Executive Chief Officer, Education and Learning.</p> <p>During discussion, Members raised the following main points:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the need to consider measures to address the recruitment challenges being experienced in relation to teaching staff, including the potential for a partnership approach; • an update was sought and provided on recent problems experienced with the heating system at Wick High School. It was confirmed this matter would be referred to the School Estates Section for an explanation; • confirmation that repairs had been made to the external panels at Wick High School which had been damaged during the recent storms, and a structural report was awaited to ensure there was a complete fix. The Chair advised that he had received an up- to-date report on the damage and he would circulate this to Members; • concern at the capacity issues at Wick High School and the accuracy of school forecasts in planning the new school. In addition, the building was not fit for purpose for ASN and PSA delivery. It was confirmed that a meeting had been held with the Property and Facilities Team on how this issue could be taken forward. A technical report was to be completed in relation to building capacity and the additional support for learning environment. In terms of the original forecasts, the positive increase in numbers moving into the area had not been anticipated at that time; • as previously highlighted by Members, the format of the report was not fit for purpose. The report should be more reflective of the current position in relation to education in Caithness. The Chair advised that he would follow up on this matter as an action from the meeting; • concern there was no benchmarking information provided in the report in relation to the full-time equivalent hours for staffing including ASN and PSA staff, by which to assess the adequacy of provision; • there was no information provided in the report as to how the condition and suitability of the school buildings compared to the school estate across the Highlands and in terms of Members consideration of the Council's capital programme going forward; and • the Head Teacher and staff at Wick High School be commended on the high level of positive destinations and an explanation was sought on the figures shown for unemployed not seeking. <p>The Committee following scrutiny, NOTED the content of the report.</p>
7.	<p>HRA Capital Programme 2022/23 Prògram Calpa HRA 2022/23</p> <p>There had been circulated Report No CC/03/22 by the Executive Chief Officer, Housing and Property.</p>

In discussion, Members raised the following main points:-

- the positive impact the aids and adaptations budget had on tenants with a medical condition being able to remain in their own home and how to get the message out to tenants in relation to the availability of aids and adaptations. It was confirmed that the potential to include an article in the tenant newsletter would be considered;
- the level of engagement with the tenant forum in relation to identifying local priorities in the development of the Programme was excellent;
- an explanation was sought and provided that if the Council wished to achieve a higher degree of energy efficiency within its housing stock, this would require significantly more investment in future. Discussions and reports to Members would be required going forward in relation to how this was financed and the lobbying that could be undertaken with the Scottish Government and utility companies. A crucial element would be seeking feedback from tenants on their priorities in terms energy efficiency and other capital works;
- the Member led Caithness tenant survey had indicated that doors and windows were a local priority and how this could be reflected in the proposed Capital Programme for the area. It was confirmed that it was within the power of Members to assign the environmental improvements budget specifically for windows and doors;
- on the basis of previous discussions, there was a consideration that the Member led environmental improvements budget was to be increased from its current level. There was a need to evidence there had been a material change in the Programme to reflect the local priorities identified in the tenant survey. Further discussion on this issue would be held with the Housing Policy and Investment Manager at the monthly housing meeting.

The Committee:-

- i **NOTED** the allocation of resources to Caithness Area as set out at 5.7 of the report;
- ii **NOTED** the guideline investment priorities as set out in sections 5.2 and 5.3 of the report.;
- iii **AGREED** the proposed one-year HRA Capital Programme for Caithness 2022-23 as set out in **Appendix 1**;
- iv **NOTED** the position relating to the current year HRA Capital Programme; and
- v **NOTED** that updates on the HRA Capital Programme will continue to be provided through ward briefings and at future Local Committees as requested by local Members, in addition to reporting to Housing and Property Committee.

**8. Area Roads Capital Programme 2022/23
Prògram Calpa Rathaidean Sgìreil 2022/23**

There had been circulated Report No CC/04/22 by the Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure, Environment and Economy.

In discussion, Members raised the following main points:-

- the positive transformation in the relationship between Members and officers through the monthly roads meetings had led to a better understanding of the issues and challenges, investment priorities, and the complex relationship between capital and revenue spend;
- reference to the importance of the project being undertaken by the Council's Redesign Board with the remit to achieve the effective, efficient, and sustainable delivery of all engineering and roads operations and to improve the road condition across the Highlands;
- the prioritised area capital programme was welcomed on the basis of the significant improvements it would deliver to the road network in Caithness;
- reference to the importance of investing in footpaths and pavements and the potential for part of the Ward Allocation budgets to be used for this purpose;
- whether the surface dressing on the road at Rumster Forest should be undertaken ahead of the construction of the windfarm in this location. It was confirmed there would be engagement with the developer as part of the planning process to mitigate any impacts and consider opportunities to improve the road going forward;
- the potential implications in relation to the impact of any reduction in the roads spend in the Council's medium term financial plan;
- the challenges faced by Members and officers in recovering the roads position in Caithness due to historic underspends. The fact that the increased capital funding for roads had been spent in the current year and more schemes delivered than in the past with the same level of staff resources be acknowledged and Members appreciation be conveyed to the roads teams;
- confirmation was sought and provided that the Head of Infrastructure would take Members on an individual or group basis though the information provided to the Redesign Board's workshops;
- consideration of the Ward Allocation budgets be discussed at a Ward Business meeting/monthly roads meeting;
- an explanation was sought and provided on the process for dealing with the large volume of pothole reports received from the public, Members and officers and a point in regard to the need to raise the profile in the public domain as to how repairs were prioritised;
- reference to a Members seminar being held on 25 February 2022 at which there would be discussion on how community benefit associated with large windfarm developments could be secured towards the Council's strategic responsibilities for roads;
- community benefit should be built into the planning system for any major engineering project and this issue be raised at the Redesign Board. Reference was also made to the damage to the roads caused by the increasing number of heavy vehicles and the potential to secure contributions from haulage companies;
- the need to broaden the public understanding of the issues in relation to roads through improved communication and dialogue and the potential for the Head of Infrastructure and Roads Operations Manager to attend a meeting of the Association of Caithness Community Councils.

	The Committee APPROVED the proposed prioritised Area Roads Capital Programme for the Caithness Area.
9.	<p>Place Based Investment Programme Prògram Tasgaidh Stèidhichte air Àite</p> <p>There had been circulated Report No CC/05/22 by the Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure, Environment and Economy.</p> <p>During discussion, Members raised the following issues:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Members and officers be commended on working collaboratively to bring forward the proposals set out in the report; • clarification that the capital funding was ring fenced with specific conditions attached and could not be used for other purposes such as funding for roads; and • concern at the level of parking close to the bus stance which was impeding buses, and the need for double yellow lines on the road approaching the bus stance. The Area Roads Manager confirmed she would feedback to the Principal Traffic Officer the concerns raised on this matter. <p>The Committee:-</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. NOTED the appended PBIP proposals and AGREED to invest £75,000 in the Sir Georges Park, Thurso (aka The Dammies), infrastructure project, thus reversing the Caithness Committee decision on 12 August 2021 to invest £60,000 of the Council's Place Based Funds in the project; ii. AGREED to investing £89,000 in the Whitechapel Road, Wick, Public Convenience project; and iii. AGREED to investing £14,123 in the redesign of the bus stance, Riverside, Wick.
10.	<p>Reallocation of Highland Council Place Based Investment/Covid Funds Ath-shònrachadh de Thasgadh Chomhairle na Gàidhealtachd A-rèir Àite/Maoin Covid</p> <p>There had been circulated Report No CC/06/22 by the Executive Chief Officer, Communities and Place.</p> <p><i>On the motion of the Chair seconded by Mr K Rosie, the Committee AGREED to suspend standing order 35 in relation to this item.</i></p> <p>During discussion, Members raised the following main points:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • concern there had been negative press in relation to the Sir Georges Park Project and the opportunity for further engagement to help with the understanding and provide a resolution to the issues. More positively there was a real opportunity to work with sports clubs and the third sector to develop and improve the facility; and • the benefits of the proposals in terms of health and wellbeing and links with third sector organisations in the area.

	<p>The Committee AGREED:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i to reallocate the £60,000 Ward 2 Highland Council Place Based Funds previously allocated to the Sir Georges Park Project; ii to reallocate the £15,000 covid funds previously allocated to the Sir Georges Park Project; iii to allocate the £60,000 remaining Place Based Funds from Ward 2 as follows: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Create a £20,000 grant fund to develop active travel related community projects; o £30,000 to previously agreed projects highlighted in the Thurso Active Travel Plan with agreed match funding from the Active Travel Capital budget; o £10,000 to investigate the creation of a community amenities equipment scheme. iv to allocate the remaining £15,385 Ward 2 Covid Investment Funds to a grant fund to address the 4 harms of covid; v to allocate the remaining £6,246 Ward 3 Covid Investment Funds.
11,	<p>Highland Coastal Communities Fund – Assessment of Applications Maoin Choimhearsnachdan Cladaich na Gàidhealtach Measadh Iartasan</p> <p>There had been circulated Report No CC/07/22 by the Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure, Environment and Economy.</p> <p>The Committee:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. AGREED that the £98,823.71 that was ringfenced for Member-led strategic investments be made available for the projects under consideration, should they be approved; ii. APPROVED funding as follows:- <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <u>High Life Highland - Wellbeing for Resilience</u> APPROVED £49,882.85 <u>Highland Council - Wick Whitechapel Public Convenience Refurbishment</u> APPROVED £50,000.00 iii. AGREED the shortfall in funds available through the current allocation of £1,059.14 be drawn these funds from the new HCCF allocation for 2022/23.
12.	<p>Additional Urgent Item Wick Street Design - Sustrans funding</p> <p>The Chair AGREED to consider an additional urgent item on the grounds that it had been recently announced that Wick Street Design had secured Sustrans funding for the phase 3 design stage and to allow Members to be updated on this</p>

	<p>item before the pre-election period, recognising that the funding was time limited and the need for the Council to progress the scheme.</p> <p>The Project Manager confirmed that funding of £150k had been awarded by Sustrans from its 'Places for Everyone' fund. This was to allow the project to progress to the full design stages and the funding had to be utilised by March 2023. In terms of next steps, the Royal Burgh of Wick Community Council would continue to be key stakeholders in the project and work was underway to identify other key stakeholders. A part-time project manager was to be recruited locally to work with stakeholders and to ensure the project met its objectives. There would be ongoing consultation with the community, surveys, street trials, and regular communications through the website, social media and the local press. It was hoped to hold the first liaison engagement sessions in Wick at the end of the month at which the public would be brought up to date on progress and have the opportunity to ask questions. On completion of the stage 3 design the project would then proceed to a technical design stage and tenders issued. At this stage, an application for stage 5 and 6 funding would be submitted to Sustrans, the Council having to provide matchfunding for this element.</p> <p>Thereafter, the Chair welcomed the update and the potential for significant investment for the benefit for Wick as a good news story.</p> <p>The Committee NOTED the verbal update in relation to the funding secured from Sustrans from its 'Places for Everyone' fund in respect of the Wick Street Design.</p>
	The meeting ended at 1.00pm

The Highland Council

Minutes of Meeting of the **Wester Ross, Strathpeffer and Lochalsh Committee** held remotely via Microsoft Teams on 9 February 2022 at 10.30 am.

Present:

Mrs I Campbell
Dr I Cockburn

Mr A MacInnes

In attendance:

Mrs D Ferguson, Senior Ward Manager, Communities and Place

Mr R MacLeod, Housing Manager (North), Property and Housing

Ms F Cameron, Programme Manager

Mr R MacLeod, Area Housing Manager – North

Ms H Cameron, Education Officer,

Mr A Webster, Principal Regeneration Officer

Mr C Howell, Head of Infrastructure

Mr I Moncrieff, Roads Operations Manager, Infrastructure, Environment and Economy

Mr D Mackenzie, Corporate Communications and Engagement Officer, Chief Executive's Office

Mrs A MacArthur, Administrative Assistant, Performance and Governance

Also in attendance:

Group Commander A McKinley, Scottish Fire and Rescue Service

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

Business

1. Apologies for Absence Leisgeulan

Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of Mr D MacLeod.

2. Declarations of Interest Foillseachaidhean Com-pàirt

Item 4 – Mrs I Campbell (non-financial).

3. Scottish Fire and Rescue Service Seirbheis Smàlaidh is Teasairginn

There had been circulated Report No WRSL/001/22 dated 27 January 2022 together with the Wester Ross, Strathpeffer and Lochalsh Performance Report by the Local Group Commander for the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service.

During discussion, the following responses had been given:-

- the recruitment levels in Achiltibuie and Applecross were low, an indication of the figures for station availability in previous years would be helpful.

The Group Commander A MacKinley thanked the Committee for their continued support in raising the profile of recruitment in the area and the Group Manager gave appreciation to the full-time, primary employers of the retained fire station staff and the time given to attend incidents.

The Committee **NOTED** the report.

4. **Highland Coastal Communities Fund – Assessment of Applications** **Maoin Coimhearsnachdan Cladaich na Gàidhealtachd – Measadh Iarrtasan**

Declaration of Interest: Mrs I Campbell declared a non-financial interest in relation to HighLife Highland as she was a Board Member and did not take part in this item.

There had been circulated Report No WRSL/002/22 dated 19 January 2022 by the Executive Chief Officer – Infrastructure, Environment and Economy.

The Committee thanked the Programme Manager and her team for the detailed information provided and the high level of scrutiny involved in relation to the applications for the fund.

The Committee:

i. **APPROVED:**

a. Lochcarron Community Development	£18,500
b. Outdoor Access Trust	£30,000
c. An Talla Solas	£27,000
d. Welcome to Ullapool	£3,500

*

ii. **AGREED**, as the meeting was not quorate, to recommend **APPROVAL** to the Highland Council of:

- e. HighLife Highland Ullapool Youth Space £14,550

5a. **Housing Performance Report** **Aithisg Dèanadais a thaobh Taigheadais**

There had been circulated Report No WRSL/008/22 by the Executive Chief Officer dated 4 February 2022 by the Director of Community Services which provides Members with information on how the Housing Section performed in relation to the Scottish Social Housing Charter and other performance indicators during the period up to 31 December 2021.

During discussion, the following responses had been given:-

- Brian Cameron from the Climate Change Working Group managed the HRA Capital Programmes. The replacement programme for heating was targeted at the oldest heating systems first. If there was an issue with the function of a heating system, and these systems were beyond economical repair, the heating system would be looked at on that basis; and
- a breakdown of the different types of heating systems now utilised in Council houses would be brought to the ward business meeting.

The Committee **NOTED** the report.

5b. Housing – Garages Taigheadas – Garaidsean

There had been circulated Report No WRSL/003/22 by the Executive Chief Officer - Housing and Property dated 4 February 2022.

During discussion, the following responses had been given:-

- a breakdown on the garages held in the Wester Ross, Strathpeffer and Lochalsh area was to be undertaken and would be taken to the ward business meeting.

The Committee **AGREED** a 1% rent increase to apply to Wester Ross, Strathpeffer and Lochalsh garages and garage sites for 2022/2023.

6. Ross and Cromarty Educational Trust Urras Foghlaim Rois is Chromba

There had been circulated Report No WRSL/004/22 dated 28 January 2022 by the Area Care and Learning Manager.

During discussion, the following responses had been given:-

- on a query on the amount of interest received from the fund, feedback would be brought to the ward business meeting on the investments of the fund; and
- the award of applications had been delegated to officers.

The Committee **NOTED** the report.

7. Place Based Investment Programme Prògram Tasgaidh Stèidhichte air Àite – Riarachaidhean Maoineachaidh gam Moladh

There had been circulated Report No WRSL/005/22 dated 3 February 2022 by the Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure, Environment and Economy.

The Community Housing Trust, Strathpeffer Development of the Square and the Kyle and Lochalsh Trust Viking Network applications had not been eligible for the fund under the criteria.

The Committee:

- i. **AGREED** to offer a Place Based Investment Programme grant to:
 - a. Strathpeffer Residents Association (New Play Park) £50,500
 - b. Aultbea Hall £8,630.40
- ii. **AGREED** delegated authority to the Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure, Environment and Economy in consultation with the Area Committee Chair to allocate any uncommitted PBIP grant to approved PBIP beneficiaries in the first instance and then TCF Grantees thereafter

8. Place Based Investment Fund Maoin Tasgaidh Stèidhichte air Àite

There had been circulated Report No WRSL/006/22 dated 24 January 2022 by the Executive Chief Officer – Communities and Place.

The Committee:

- i) **AGREED** to allocate £12,647 from the remaining Wester Ross, Strathpeffer and Lochalsh (WRSL) Place-Based Investment Fund as follows:
 - a) £6,323 to support the provision of play equipment in the WRSL Ward in consultation with amenities staff; and
 - b) £6,323 to support the provision of public toilet facilities in the ward.
- ii) **NOTED** that next steps to progress the play provision work will include confirmation of any other funding available, identification of play priorities across the area, scale of repairs required or type of equipment to be installed based on the budget available and consideration of ongoing maintenance associated with any equipment installed. This will involve the amenities team and communities.

9. Area Roads Capital Programme Prògram Calpa Rathaidean Sgìreil 2022/23

There had been circulated Report No WRSL/007/22 dated 18 January 2022 by the Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure, Environment and Economy.

During discussion, the following responses had been given:-

- Glenelg Road would be inspected and essential remedial works to the potholes in the road would be undertaken. The Glenelg Road could be added to the list under the red line for any additional monies that would become available;
- there was currently ongoing dialogue with the Forestry and SSE led by Robin Pope, a full report on the status of this would be sent to Members following this meeting; and
- the status of the Achmore Road would also be given to Members.

The Committee:

- i. **APPROVED** the proposed 2022/23 Area Roads Capital Programme for Wester Ross Strathpeffer Lochalsh Area; and
- ii. **AGREED** to include the road at Glenelg below the red line on appendix 2 of the report and to inspect the road and undertake essential remedial work to the potholes.

**10. Minutes
Geàrr-chunntas**

The Committee **NOTED** Minutes of Meeting of the Wester Ross, Strathpeffer and Lochalsh Committee held on 4 November 2021 which were approved by the Council on 10 December 2022.

**11. Urgent Business
Comfort Scheme Application
Aithisg Dèanadais a thaobh Taigheadais**

There had been circulated Report No WRSL/009/22 by the Executive Chief Officer Communities and Place dated 8 February 2022.

The Committee **AGREED** the proposed additional temporary Comfort Scheme.

The Chair thanked the Ward Members and officers for the smooth running of the Committee. The Ward Members thanked Dr Cockburn for his work as Chair.

The meeting closed at 11.45 pm.

The Highland Council

Minutes of Meeting of the **Health, Social Care and Wellbeing Committee** held **remotely** on Thursday 10 February 2022 at 10.30am.

Present:

Mrs J Barclay
Mr B Boyd
Mrs M Cockburn
Mrs M Davidson
Mr J Finlayson
Mr D Fraser
Mr A Jarvie

Mr D Louden
Mr W Mackay
Mrs I MacKenzie
Mrs L Munro
Mrs M Paterson
Mr D Rixson
Mr K Rosie

Non Members also present:

Mrs M Davidson
Ms S Fanet
Mr A Henderson
Mrs E McAllister

Mr D Mackay
Mr D Macpherson
Mrs T Robertson

Participating Officials:

Ms F Duncan, Executive Chief Officer Health and Social Care and Chief Social Work Officer
Ms F Malcolm, Interim Head of Integration Adult Social Care, Health and Social Care
Ms D Munro, Lead Officer, Child Protection
Mr I Kyle, Head of Improvement and Performance, Health and Social Care
Ms J Park, Interim Head of Health, Health and Social Care
Mr B Porter, Head of Support Services, Health and Social Care
Mrs L Dunn, Principal Administrator, Performance and Governance
Ms F MacBain, Committee Administrator, Performance and Governance

Also in Attendance:

Mr S Steer, Director of Adult Social Care, NHS Highland
Ms A Johnstone, Interim Head of Mental Health, Learning Disabilities and Drug & Alcohol Recovery Services, NHS Highland
Ms R Connolly, Connecting Carers
Ms G Newman, Highland Children's Forum
Ms J Douglas, Care and Learning Alliance

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

Linda Munro in the Chair, except for Items 7 and 12, when Mr D Fraser was in the Chair.

**1. Apologies for Absence
Leisgeulan**

Apologies were submitted on behalf of Mrs D Mackay, Ms E Roddick and Mr C Smith.

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

Mrs L Munro – Items 7 and 12.

**3. Good News
Deagh Naidheachdan**

The Committee **NOTED** the Good News on the following topics:

- the Lead Nurse for Care Experienced Children and Young People, Helen Gilpin, had been presented with the Queen’s Nurse award;
- Financial Inclusion Project - One of the Associate Lead Nurses, Toni Barker and her health visiting improvement project team had been successful in gaining two national improvement awards through the Children’s Young People Improvement collaborative; and
- to help drive forward the Promise within Highlands, Carrie McLaughlan had been recruited to the post of Promise Programme Manager.

The Committee thanked Mrs Munro for her excellent leadership, noting that she was not standing in the forthcoming election. Officers were also thanked for their exemplary work dealing with the many challenges that had been faced during this Council’s term. The importance of future training for Committee Members was emphasised.

**4. Mental Health and Wellbeing Presentation
Taisbeanadh air Slàinte Inntinn agus Soirbheas**

A presentation was provided by Arlene Johnstone, Interim Head of Mental Health, Learning Disabilities and Drug & Alcohol Recovery Services, NHS Highland on the following topics:

- Mental Health, Learning Disabilities and Drug & Alcohol Services
- Mental health and Mental Illness
- Mental Wellbeing
- Secondary Mental Health Services
- Distress and Suicide
- Mental Health Services – what is being done

During discussion, the following issues were considered:

- the aim for early intervention and partnership working was welcomed, and the definitions of mental health and mental illness were useful;
- information was sought and provided on the referral and triage processes for mental health assessments;

- the Highland geography was especially challenging for delivering mental health services, and the use of Near Me, while not ideal, was helpful for some remote and rural areas where a timely personal interaction was not possible;
- the presentation would be emailed to Members;
- it was important to publicise the information provided in the presentation and this would be taken forward outwith the meeting;
- information was sought and provided on four key issues, as follows:
 - community contacts for drug and alcohol issues - it was suggested the manager of the Drug and Alcohol team be contacted to provide information on their services, with a possible future submission to the Committee;
 - Children's Services issues were dealt with by the CAMHs Service and was also covered later on the agenda;
 - skill shortages and upskilling progress – this was an ongoing concern, with particular issues recruiting mental health nurses and consultant psychiatrists; and
 - coordination of work with the third sector – a summary was provided of ongoing partnership work and the mental health strategy that was due to be ready in September 2022;
- cuts to universal credit, and increases to national insurance, fuel and food prices were likely to impact people's mental health and would require additional resources;
- community centres and the groups using them could be a useful route to engaging with the community on mental health issues, and tied in with the place-based approach to service delivery. More thought was required on how to reach people in remote and rural locations; and
- the problems of social media mis-use were highlighted, especially for young people.

The Committee **NOTED** the presentation and **AGREED** the ECO, Health and Social Care, would discuss with the Chair and the Interim Head of Mental Health, Learning Disabilities and Drug & Alcohol Recovery Services, NHS Highland, how best to publicise the issues raised.

5. Performance and Quality Assurance Review Sgrùdadh Coileanaidh is Barantais Chàileachd

There had been circulated Report No HCW/01/22 dated 27 January 2022 by the Executive Chief Officer Health and Social Care.

During discussion, the following issues were raised:

- the increased move towards community-based services and the positive outlook in the report were welcomed, particularly the changed language use, such as supporting families rather than discussing troubled young people;
- it was disappointing that Highland had nearly double the national average number of Looked After Children, and information was sought on the possible timescales for rectifying this. It was hoped that reducing the number of Looked After Children would free up resources to invest in early intervention measures to support families, teachers and school nurses. In response, reference was made to the work of the Resource Placement Group, which could consider complex cases and timescales for change, and which was also part of the service redesign work and the focus on family hubs and child protection;

- the ability to identify families that would benefit from early support was key, with the aim of keeping children in their families as long as it was safe for them to do so;
- the importance of kinship care was emphasised and should be encouraged;
- the challenges of modern parenting were highlighted, and how the wider community could be encouraged to help;
- it was queried whether the high turnover of social services staff was related to the high number of Looked After Children; and
- contract services with third party organisations could help to support keeping children within their families.

The Committee **NOTED** the:

- review process that had concluded and those that were ongoing;
- findings and analysis; and
- planned use of these findings to inform practice, service delivery and re-design of services.

6. Adult Social Care – Winter Update Report Barantas Cùram Sòisealta Inbheach – Aithisg Geamhraidh

There had been circulated Report No HCW/02/22 dated 14 January 2022 by the Executive Chief Officer Health and Social Care.

During discussion, the following issues were raised:

- reference was made to the work of the Carers Improvement Group and the need to provide support and recognition to unpaid carers;
- attention was drawn to the additional impact of the omicron variant on an Adult Social Care system that was already under significant pressure. The staff working at the front end were commended and the long term pressure being placed on them was acknowledged;
- prompt hospital discharge and system flow were key issues;
- innovative solutions to recruitment and retention, especially in remote and rural areas, were required, and an outline was provided of various flexible-working options and new models being considered;
- housing for key workers, and for people requiring care, especially in remote and rural areas, remained a significant challenge for which work was underway with the Housing service to try to find solutions;
- the benefits of a sheltered housing model of care home were highlighted; and
- an asset based approach, building on what was available, was important, as was encouraging young people into a career in care.

The Committee **NOTED** the:

- contents of the report; and
- continued commitment and collaborative actions to sustain service provision, whilst responding to the ongoing pandemic and associated operational pressures.

7. Revenue Budget Monitoring – Quarter 3 of 2021/22
Sgrùdadh Buidseat Teachd-a-steach – Cairteal 3 airson 2021/22

Declaration of Interest: Mrs L Munro declared an interest in this item as a Specialist SDS Advisor with Carr Gomm Community Contacts Team and left the meeting for the duration of the Item. Mr D Fraser took the Chair for this Item.

There had been circulated Report No HCW/03/22 dated 4 February 2022 by the Executive Chief Officer Health and Social Care.

During discussion, the following issues were raised:

- Mr Louden expressed concern at the £0.459k underspend in SDS and sought more detailed information and timescales outwith the meeting on SDS payments being made to young carers.. A meeting would be held to discuss this;
- additional Covid funding had impacted positively on the budget and some current underspends related to accounting issues that would be resolved in the year-end figures. Members emphasised the importance of ensuring all funding was fully and appropriately utilised;
- there had been a significant increase in the school immunisation programme; and
- a summary was provided of the situation with regard to pre-school developmental visits with these having been increased in 2015 from five to eleven and, although visit numbers had been reduced during the Covid crisis, the team was now fully mobilised again.

The Committee:

- i. **NOTED** the forecast revenue position as at Quarter 3 of the 2021/22 financial year, including the management action being taken and the risks and uncertainties set out within the report;
- ii. **NOTED** the progress update provided in relation to budget savings delivery; and
- iii. **AGREED**, in relation to Young Carers SDS, that more detailed information be provided to Mr D Louden outwith the meeting, and that a meeting be held to discuss the issues raised with the ECO, Health and Social Care, the Chair and Vice Chair, and Mr D Louden.

8. Children and Young Persons Champions Update
Fios às Ùr mu Ghaisgich Chloinne is nan Daoine Òga

There had been circulated Report No HCW/04/22 dated 14 January 2022 by the Executive Chief Officer Health and Social Care.

Mrs Paterson, Mrs Cockburn and Mrs MacKenzie were thanked for taking on the role, and ongoing support for the role was urged, with particular reference to the unprecedented rise in living costs that were facing families. The role could provide a valuable bridge between families, public services, communities and the third sector.

The Committee:

- i. **NOTED** the contents of the report; and
- ii. **AGREED** the future development planned to develop the role of the Champions.

9. Appointment of Older People's Champions Cur an Dreuchd Ghaisgich do Dhaoine nas Sine

There had been circulated Report No HCW/05/22 dated 28 January 2022 by the Executive Chief Officer Health and Social Care.

During discussion, the following issues were raised:

- the recommendation should state 'up to three' rather than three Council appointments;
- these appointments would provide an opportunity to raise awareness of the diversity of older adult community;
- it was hoped the champions would work with the Highland Senior Citizen Network, with examples provided of the benefits of their community activities;
- training would be important for the champions, and for the Committee;
- housing needs changed over time and it was important to facilitate people staying in their homes and communities as long as possible, through initiatives such as handyman services. Older people's views should be sought when designing new services or housing where possible;
- an effective interface with the third sector was vital, as was looking at intergenerational initiatives to facilitate interaction between younger and older people; and
- it was hoped the champions would take into account the importance of Gaelic, and other languages for Highland's communities.

The Committee:

- i. **NOTED** the contents of the report and **APPROVED** the proposed role and remit of a pilot establishing Older People's Champions for Highland Council; and
- ii. **RESOLVED** that up to three Councillors be appointed as champions once the forthcoming local elections had taken place.

10. Programme Update Report Aithisg às Ùr mun Phrògram

There had been circulated Report No HCW/06/22 dated 27 January 2022 by the Executive Chief Officer Health and Social Care.

During discussion, the following issues were raised:

- it was clarified that the transitions project referred to a young person transitioning into adult social care. A document detailing the complex transitions pathways was being reviewed and it was hoped that training on this would be provided to Members in due course. In relation to assessments, young people's needs and circumstances changed often and were subject to ongoing review and assessment. However, this should be tailored to the individual's circumstances and not universally undertaken;

- in relation to the community-led support project, concerns were expressed about volunteer fatigue in communities. It was important that learning from the three pilot areas was rolled out to other areas as early as possible and that a ragging system or similar for aspects of the project would be helpful to understand what stage each one was at; and
- the IT transformation project was important and should be escalated. It was suggested Near Me would be useful for delivery of multi-disciplinary services.

The Committee **NOTED** the report.

11. Integrated Children's Services Update Report Aithisg às Ùr air Seirbheisean Amalaichte Chloinne

There had been circulated Report No HCW/07/22 dated 6 January 2022 by the Executive Chief Officer Health and Social Care.

During discussion, the following issues were raised;

- it was important to continue to engage at community level to support families;
- synergy between all organisations involved in providing services was important to avoid duplication;
- information was sought and provided on the Highland Practice Model;
- concern was expressed about child poverty and discussion took place on what action could be taken, nationally and locally; and
- an update was sought and provided on the issue of child exploitation which had previously been reported to the Committee and was subject to a detailed plan of ongoing work, with proposals due to be presented to the Child Protection Committee. It was suggested that any action be publicised to discourage further activity, and assurance was provided that raising awareness was a key aspect of the work.

The Committee **NOTED** the:

- i. work undertaken by the children's services planning partnership in delivering the Highland Integrated Children's Services Plan 2021 – 2023; and
- ii. work undertaken in other partnership areas.

12. Young Carers Statements Aithrisean Luchd-cùrainm Òga

Declaration of Interest: Mrs L Munro declared an interest in this item as a Specialist SDS Advisor with Carr Gomm Community Contacts Team and left the meeting for the duration of the Item. Mr D Fraser took the Chair for this Item.

There had been circulated Report No HCW/08/22 dated 14 January 2022 by the Executive Chief Officer Health and Social Care.

During discussion, the following issues were considered:

- attention as drawn to the work of Young Carers Lochaber;

- it was vital that engagement was undertaken with Connecting Carers and Young Carer groups to ensure they received the services they required and deserved;
- it was essential the Council delivered on its promise to provide SDS to young carers;
- benchmarking and timeframes for the statements were important, as was a system to ensure all young carers were captured, even those who did not self-identify as such, something which could be especially challenging in rural areas; and
- assurance was sought and provided that this area was a high priority for the service.

The Committee **NOTED**:

- i. the content of the background information in relation to the statutory duties for The Highland Council in relation to Young Carers statements; and
- ii. the progress being made in ensuring that all Young Carers received the offer of a Young Carers Statement.

13. Minutes Geàrr-chunntas

The following Minutes were **NOTED**:-

- i. Highland Child Protection Committee held on 7 July, 24 September and 24 November 2021; and
- ii. Highland Violence Against Women Partnership Group held on 10 August 2021.

Closing Remarks

Mrs L Munro thanked partners in the third sector, the Committee, Council officers and members of the Press for their work and support during her time as Chair.

The meeting ended at 3.50pm.

**The Highland Council
Pensions Committee and Pension Board**

Minutes of Meeting of the **Pensions Committee and Pension Board** held remotely on **Monday 14 February 2022 at 10.30am.**

Present:

Pensions Committee

Mr R Gale
Mr J Gray
Mr A Jarvie
Mr B Lobban
Mr D Louden
Mr C Munro
Mr P Siggers

Pension Board

Mrs M Paterson, The Highland Council
Mr A MacLeod, Comhairle nan Eilean Siar (substitute)
Mr R Fea, Representative for other Employers
Ms L MacKay, Unison
Mr D MacSween, Unison
Mr E Macniven, GMB

Non-Member in Attendance

Mr A Henderson

Officials in attendance:

Mr E Foster, Head of Corporate Finance, Resources & Finance Service
Mr J Gibson, Joint Secretary (Trade Unions' Side)
Mr C MacCallum, Payroll & Pensions Manager, Resources & Finance Service
Ms C Stachan, Accountant, Resources & Finance Service
Ms D Sutherland, Corporate Audit Manager, Performance & Governance Service
Mrs L Dunn, Principal Administrator, Performance & Governance Service
Mr A MacInnes, Administrative Assistant, Performance & Governance Service

Also in attendance:-

Mr J Boyd, Audit Director, Grant Thornton
Mr K Ettles, AON Hewitt, Investment Principal and Actuary

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

Mr R Gale in the Chair

BUSINESS

**1. Apologies for Absence
Leisgeulan**

Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of Mr R Bremner and Mrs H Carmichael of the Pensions Committee and Mrs C Caddick of the Pension Board.

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

There were no declarations of interest.

At this point, the Chairman advised that Mr Charlie MacCallum, Payroll & Pensions

Manager and Mr Stuart Lorimer, Assistant Payroll & Pensions Manager would be retiring soon and on behalf of the Committee/Board the Chairman gave recognition to their hard work and dedication to the Council over many years of service and in particular to the Pensions Committee/Board and the Pension Scheme. Both Charlie and Stuart were wished a long and happy retirement.

**3. Service Plan 2022/23
Plana Seirbheis 2022/23**

There was circulated Report No. PC/1/22 by the Head of Corporate Finance relating to the Pension Fund Service Plan and detailed the Fund's priorities over the next year alongside the budget and performance targets for the year ahead.

It was highlighted that due to the planned retirement of the Payroll and Pension Manager and the Assistant Payroll and Pensions Manager, appropriate interim arrangements would be put in place pending a decision on the long term structure. The review of the overall team structure would focus on all levels of staffing across the team with a focus on senior management elements. In this respect, there would be consideration as to whether Payroll and Pensions functions should remain combined or whether it would be better to separate these functions. Management was very confident that the staff currently in the team had the relevant experience and technical expertise for a smooth transition once the Senior Officers retired.

Thereafter, the Committee **APPROVED** the:-

- i. Pension Fund Service Plan 2022/23; and
- ii. Pension Fund staffing structure and budget for 2022/23, noting the intention to review these in the early part of the year.

**4. Highland Council Pension Fund Responsible Investment Policy
Poileasaidh Tasgadh Cunntachail Maoin Peinnsein Chomhairle na Gàidhealtachd**

There was circulated Report No. PC/2/22 by the Head of Corporate Finance which provided a copy of the Responsible Investment policy for the Highland Council Pension Fund for approval.

A point was made that the Committee had a duty to get the best Investment results for the Pension Fund and it seemed that an additional layer of bureaucracy was being introduced in what was proposed in the Investment Policy. It was felt the policy was setting out conditions for what managers could invest in. It was already expected that the Fund's Investment Managers would take environmental, social and governance matters into consideration in their investment decision making and achieve the best results for the Fund. Therefore, it was felt extra costs were being added to administration by having the policy in place.

It was explained that significant work had gone into developing the proposed Responsible Investment Policy and this included engagement in workshops with Pensions Committee/Board members, Officers and the Fund Adviser and there had been no dissent in terms of the aims of the Policy. This had resulted in the Policy now before the Committee and would provide a framework in which the Investment Managers would operate. It was not the case that Investment Managers were being told what to invest in, or not invest in. As the Fund Managers were active investors, this would include them holding to account the Boards of companies in which the Fund was invested and ensure they were investing in a responsible way.

Thereafter, the Committee **APPROVED** the Highland Council Pension Fund Responsible Investment Policy.

**5. Amendment to the Statement of Investment Principles
Atharrachadh do dh'Aithris nam Prionnsapalan Tasgaidh**

There was circulated Report No. PC/3/22 by the Head of Corporate Finance which sought an amendment to the Statement of Investment Principles for the Highland Council Pension Fund.

Following consideration, the Committee **APPROVED** the following amendment to Appendix 2 (Asset Allocation) of the Statement of Investment Principles:-

- the split between active and passive equities is updated to increase the allocation to active and reduce the passive allocation by 5.6%.

**6. Draft Annual Audit Plan 2021/22 (External Audit Report)
Dreachd Phlana Sgrùdaidh Bliadhnail 2021/22 (Aithisg Sgrùdaidh bhon Taobh A-muigh)**

There was circulated Report No. PC/4/22 by Grant Thornton which presented their draft annual audit plan setting out the work they plan to undertake as part of the audit of the pension fund.

The Committee **NOTED** the report.

**7. Highland Council Pension Fund Internal Audit Annual Plan 2022/23
Plana In-Sgrùdaidh Bliadhnail Maoin Peinnsein Chomhairle na Gàidhealtachd 2022/23**

There was circulated Report No. PC/5/22 by the Corporate Audit Manager which provided details of audits contained in the 2022/23 Internal Audit Plan.

The Committee **APPROVED** the 2022/23 Audit Plan.

**8. Pension Fund Contributions and Administration
Tabhartasan agus Rianachd Maoin Peinnsein**

There was circulated Report No. PC/6/22 by the Head of Corporate Finance which provided an update on matters relating to the administration of the Highland Council Pension Fund.

In particular, it was highlighted that an initial enquiry had been received from a scheme employer to discuss the possibility of merging employees from other Local Government Pension Schemes into the Highland Fund. This enquiry was at an early stage and any such move would require to be fully guaranteed by the Scottish Government and would not create a risk to the Fund.

It was advised that Employers' contribution rates were determined at the time of the triennial valuation of the Pension Fund.

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

9. Administration Strategy Statement

Aithris Ro-innleachd Rianachd

There was circulated Report No. PC/7/22 by the Head of Corporate Finance which provided an update to the Administration Strategy Statement.

It was explained that the Statement set out the responsibilities of the Pension Fund and Scheme Employers and the sanctions that were possible should there be a breakdown in information from Employers to the Fund. Currently there had been no requirement to impose sanctions. Training had been provided to Employers which had been well received and this showed that proactive efforts were being made to try and ensure that no sanctions were necessary against Employers in the Fund.

The Committee **APPROVED** the Administration Strategy Statement.

10. Risk Management Update Fios às Ùr mu Rianachd Chunnairt

There was circulated Report No. PC/8/22 by the Head of Corporate Finance which provided an update on the Fund's risk register and compliance with the Pension Fund Regulator requirements on internal controls.

In discussion, it was explained that in terms of a breakdown of risk to investment returns this was not specifically highlighted in the Risk Register, but covered as part of the risk to the overall investment strategy, primarily through the work of the Investment Sub Committee.

The Risk Register did cover risks to investments as a result of rising inflation. If inflation remained consistently high then pensions payable would be higher. This highlighted the importance to have a diversified range of investments to grow in any market conditions.

In relation to homeworking risks, some staff had returned to the office part time and there had been benefits in terms of team working and training of new staff. There were also benefits for staff working remotely and there was confidence that a hybrid approach to working would benefit the Employer and Employee.

The Committee **NOTED** the updated risk register extract and compliance with the Pension Fund Regulator requirements.

11. Investment Sub Committee: Minutes of Meeting Fo-chomataidh Tasgaidh: Geàrr-chunntas na Coinneimh

The Minutes of meeting of the Investment Sub-Committee held on 17 September 2021 and 19 November 2021 were **NOTED** and the minutes of 17 December 2021 were **APPROVED**.

Valedictory

As this was the last Pension Committee/Board meeting prior to the Local Government Election, the Chairman expressed his appreciation to the Officers in the Pension Team and the Fund's Adviser for their significant contribution to the success of the Pension Fund. The Chairman also recognised and acknowledged the work of the Committee/Board over the last term.

The meeting ended at 11.30 a.m.

The Highland Council

Minutes of Meeting of the **Black Isle Committee** held remotely via Microsoft Teams on 15 February 2022 at 10.30 am.

Present:

Mr G Adam
Mrs J Barclay
Mr C Fraser

In attendance:

Mr M Rodgers, ECO Property and Housing
Mrs D Ferguson, Senior Ward Manager, Communities and Place
Ms D Agnew, Ward Manager (Black Isle, Dingwall and Seaforth), Communities and Place
Mr C Simpson, Tourism Co-ordinator, Infrastructure, Environment and Economy
Mr C Howell, Head of Infrastructure
Mr I Moncrieff, Roads Operations Manager, Infrastructure, Environment and Economy
Mr A Webster, Principal Regeneration Officer
Mr R MacLeod, Area Housing Manager, Housing and Property
Mr C Sharp, Repairs Manager, Housing and Property
Mr A Coyle, Corporate Communications and Engagement Officer, Performance and Governance
Mrs A MacArthur, Administrative Assistant, Performance and Governance

Also in attendance:

Ricky Dibble, SFRS
Miles Stubbs, SFRS
Dr Emma Robertson, Project Manager, Science Skills Academy, Dingwall Newton Room

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

Business

An urgent item of business would be discussed at the end of the meeting.

Item 6 was taken after item 10, for ease of reference the minute has remained in numerical order.

1. Apologies for Absence Leisgeulans

There were no apologies for absence.

2. Declarations of Interest Foillseachaidhean Com-pàirt

Item 9: Mr G Adam (non-financial).

3. **Scottish Fire and Rescue Service Seirbheis Smàlaidh is Teasairginn**

There had been circulated Report No BI/001/22 dated 27 January 2022 together with the Ross and Cromarty Performance Report by the Local Group Manager for the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service.

In discussion, the following responses were given:-

- Members were asked to aid in local recruitment campaign by notifying the Local Station Manager of any third-party organisations or groups who could be contacted with a view to promoting recruitment. There were two new recruits, who had undertaken and passed their Point of entry and fitness tests and were scheduled to attend a training course in April. They will then join the Volunteer crew in Cromarty;
- SFRS has undertaken a lot of work to produce the new reporting format and this had been well received; and
- reporting of deliberate fires included wild fires, there had been no noticeable increase in deliberate fires during the covid period.

The Committee thanked the fire service for their work on the Black Isle.

The Committee **NOTED** the Report.

4. **Dingwall Newton Room, Science Skills Academy – Presentation Seòmar Newton Inbhir Pheofharain, Acadamaidh Sgilean Saidheans – Taisbeanadh**

There will be a presentation by Dr Emma Robertson, Project Manager of the Science Skills Academy at the Dingwall Newton Room.

In discussion, the following responses were given:-

- students attended one day in the Science Skills Academy in P6, P7, S1 and S2. Once all schools had attended the Science Skills Academy, additional extra-curricular activities at the Newton Rooms were a possibility. The Dingwall and Inverness rooms however were currently at full capacity so additional extra-curricular activities hosted at those Newton Rooms are less likely. The Science Skills Academy was still in the very early stages of a separate collaboration and funding with the Glasgow Science Centre and once the programme is established if a teacher requested, a school could sign up to a 6-12 week programme where a pack could be given to the school to undertake further work at the school;
- there was a salmon and aquaculture module and as part of the complementary aquaculture film two employees had been featured, one from the diagnostic side and one from the environmental monitoring side. It was intended to cover aquaculture from as many angles as possible; and
- it would be a challenge to monitor and track the impact of any single STEM programme, including the Science Skills Academy, on young people and whether there was an increase in young people choosing science as a

career. There was currently a post event valuation completed by both pupils and teachers. There would be a full external review via teachers linked to the goals of the Science Skills Academy.

The Committee **NOTED** the presentation and thanked Dr Robertson for her informative presentation.

**5. Visitor Management Strategy as applied to Chanonry Point
Ro-innleachd Rianachd Luchd-tadhail mar a tha a' buntainn ri Rubha na Cananaich**

There was an oral report on the Visitor Management Strategy as applied to Chanonry Point.

In discussion, the following responses were given:-

- agree that a Ranger is essential as it greatly benefitted the area. There was also additional information gleaned from the Rangers and used to inform a National panel, this helped to understand the circumstances in this area;
- another role undertaken was to engage with business groups throughout the Highlands. Chanonry Point was of interest on a national level and was recognised as such, tourist businesses were assisted with pushing this fact to increase business in the area; and
- the dedicated ranger would start on 6 June 2022. The funding for rangers had been topped up from a national source in 2021, this funding was unlikely to be available for 2022. There was a dedicated ranger for Chanonry Points but there were also other rangers who could be diverted to cover Chanonry Point as part of their patrols before the the dedicated ranger started and this could cover other busy times, for example Saturday afternoons.

The tourism team and their colleagues were due credit for the work they undertook.

The Committee **NOTED** the report.

**6. Area Roads Capital Programme 2022/23
Prògram Calpa Rathaidean Sgìreil 2022/23**

There had been circulated Report No BI/002/22 dated 11 January 2022 by the Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure, Environment and Economy.

In discussion, the following responses were given:-

- The capital schemes include for patching works which will be undertaken ahead of the surface dressing. Some schemes will be patched using the paver and regulating tar to fill in any small potholes. More significant potholes will require to be excavated and then reinstated.
- the ditching at Ord Hill Road would be looked at;

- there was good news in that the Capital Programme approved by Highland Council in December had identified a capital allocation for minor road repairs and junction improvements. This funding starts in the next financial year. Once proposals for the junction had been identified this funding could be used. The design for the junction was advanced and land acquisition was now being moved forward. The Roads Operations Manager was confident these works would go ahead subject to land acquisition and
- it was important for Members to identify and approve works to enable works to be delivered.

Members thanked the Roads Operations Manager for work starting at Braehead, Cromarty. The Roads Operations Manager was thanked for his perseverance as the issue that arose was not of his making.

The Committee **APPROVED** the proposed 2022/23 Area Roads Capital Programme for Black Isle Area.

7. Housing – Garages Taigheadas – Garaidsean

There had been circulated Report No BI/003/22 by the Executive Chief Officer - Housing and Property dated 8 February 2022.

In discussion, the following responses were given:-

- Members should send the Repairs Manager information on any garages requiring repairs. Repairs would be undertaken in areas where garages were in most demand as repairs could be expensive;

The Committee **AGREED** a 1% rent increase to apply to Black Isle garages and garage sites for 2022/2023.

8. Common Good Funds Maoin Maith Choitchinn

There had been circulated Report Nos BI/004/22 – BI/005/22 dated 3 and 7 February 2022 by the Interim Executive Chief Officer Communities and Place and Executive Chief Officer Resources and Finance.

a. Cromarty Common Good Fund BI/004/22

The Committee:

- NOTED** the Cromarty Common Good Fund Annual Report for 2020/21;
- NOTED**, following scrutiny, the position of Cromarty Common Good Fund as shown in the 2021/22 Quarter Three monitoring statement;
- APPROVED** the proposed budget for 2022/23.

b. Fortrose and Rosemarkie Common Good Fund BI/005/22

The Committee:

- i. **NOTED** the Fortrose and Rosemarkie Common Good Fund Annual Report for 2020/21;
- ii. **NOTED**, following scrutiny, the position of Fortrose and Rosemarkie Common Good Fund as shown in the 2021/22 Quarter Three monitoring statement;
- iii. **APPROVED** the proposed budget for 2022/23.

**9. Place Based Investment Funds – Proposed Funding Allocations
Maoin Tasgaidh Stèidhichte air Àite**

Declaration of Interest: Mr G Adam declared a non-financial interest as a Director of the Black Isle Partnership and left the room during discussion of this item.

There had been circulated Report No BI/006/22 dated 10 February 2022 by the Executive Chief Officer – Communities and Place.

- * The Committee **AGREED**, as the meeting was no longer quorate, to recommend that the Highland Council **APPROVE** the proposed allocation of Place Based Investment Funds as follows:

- i. Black Isle Partnership – Development of Local Based Plan: £30,000

**10. Place Based Investment Programme/Town Centre Fund
Prògram Tasgaidh Stèidhichte air Àite/ Maoin Meadhan a' Bhaile**

There had been circulated Report No BI/007/22 dated 8 February 2022 by the Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure, Environment and Economy.

In discussion, the following responses were given:-

- ongoing discussions on carrying over the 2021/22 award of the programme into 2022/23 had been very positive with the Scottish Government, due process had still to be undertaken with formal approval being required; and
- it was hoped that the Town Centre Fund underspend for Black Isle projects and the Place Based Investment Programme underspend would be given permission by the Scottish Government to merge.

The Committee:

- i. **AGREED** to investing £40,000 of the PBIP grant in the Cromarty Community Campsite;
- ii. **AGREED** to investing £30,000 of the PBIP grant in the Culbokie Green Shelter;
- iii. **GRANTED** delegated authority to the Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure, Environment and Economy in consultation with the Area Committee Chair to allocate any uncommitted PBIP grant to approved PBIP beneficiaries in the event that additional investment is required;

- iv. **AGREED** that the Council write to the Scottish Government to request permission to carry over the value of any uncommitted PBIP grant into 2022/23;
- v. **AGREED** to investing an additional £14,269.56 TCF grant in the refurbishment of the public toilets in Rosemarkie and Fortrose to address unforeseen eligible expenditure incurred by the Grantee; and
- vi. **AGREED** that the Council write to the Scottish Government to request permission to carry over the TCF underspend of £31,877.81 into 2022/23 and that a report be brought to the next meeting of the Black Isle Committee outlining the Scottish Government's decision and any associated recommendations if response favourable.

11. Minutes Geàrr-chunntas

There was circulated and **NOTED** Minutes of Meeting of the Black Isle Committee held on 16 November 2021 which were approved by the Council on 10 December 2021.

12. Urgent Business

* Following the Forum held on 2 February 2022 between the Highland Council's Road Safety officers and Black Isle community groups during which widespread concern about the dangers of speeding traffic was expressed, the Black Isle Area Committee **AGREED** to call on Council to:

1. Find required resources to increase the number of road safety officers from 2 to 6, so that the introduction of additional measures to make our roads safer can be undertaken as quickly as possible. It was noted that at present the 2-person team is dealing with 70 projects throughout the Highlands, and that Borders Council have a road safety team of 8.
2. In response to the Fortrose and Rosemarkie Community Council's request, a survey of traffic speed in Rosemarkie is undertaken as soon as possible, with a view to introducing traffic calming measures, including a 20 mph speed limit, as required.
3. Initiate surveys and other research involved in assessing whether a maximum 50 mph limit on the Highland Council roads on the Black Isle would enhance road safety.
4. Make representations to the Scottish Government to speed up its planned legislation to make 20 mph the default maximum speed in built up areas, emphasising support on the Black Isle for this measure to be law sooner than the proposed date of 2025.

As this was the last Area Committee the Chair thanked the Members of the Black Isle Committee and stated that it had been a privilege to chair this Committee and further wished his successor good fortune in this important work.

The Chair hoped the close work of the community groups and the Black Isle Committee would continue. He also thanked officers and the Ward Manager who had been a great support during the Members' term.

The meeting closed at 12.35 pm.

The Highland Council

Minutes of Meeting of the **Badenoch and Strathspey Area Committee** held remotely on Tuesday 15 February 2022 at 10.30 am.

Present:

Mr J Bruce
Mrs M Cockburn

Ms P Hadley
Mr B Lobban

In attendance:

Ms K Lackie, Executive Chief Officer Performance and Governance
Ms L Cowie, Ward Manager, Communities and Place
Mr C Howell, Head of Infrastructure, Infrastructure, Environment and Economy
Mr R Porteous, Roads Operations Manager, Infrastructure, Environment and Economy
Mr J Mitchell, Principal Housing Officer, Housing and Property
Ms D Sutton, Amenity Services Manager, Communities and Place
Mr A Webster, Principal Regeneration Officer, Infrastructure, Environment and Economy
Ms S Murdoch, Common Good Fund Officer, Performance and Governance
Mrs L Dunn, Principal Administrator, Performance and Governance

Also in attendance:

Ms L Coe, Rails to Grantown Project
Mr B Milne, Group Commander Scottish Fire and Rescue Service

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

Mr B Lobban in the Chair

1. **Apologies for Absence** **Leisgeulan**

There were no apologies for absence.

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

Item 12: Mr B Lobban (Transparency Statement)

3. **Rails to Grantown Project** **Pròiseact Rèilean a Bhaile nan Granndach**

There was a presentation by Ms Linda Coe giving an update on the Rails to Grantown Project. The project was seeking a Transport and Works (Scotland) TAWS order to construct and operate the railway from Broomhill to Grantown-on-Spey. Ms Coe explained that this was the first heritage railway to apply for a TAWS order and also the first road and rail application. Ms Coe then proceeded to set out details of the process that had been undertaken to date and explained the impacts and delays as a result of the pandemic. In conclusion, she advised that work was currently underway in respect of developing the full application which would comprise of over 14 key documents but this could not be submitted until Transport Scotland had submitted their application for the road alignment works.

During discussion, the following main points were raised:

- the Council was supportive of the project and although it could not offer any significant financial support it was willing to help in any other way it could. However, it was indicated that there might be potential for a modest sum of funding to be available as part of a regeneration initiative;
- the complexity of the process and the significant work that had been undertaken to date was recognised;
- further information was sought and provided in respect of the leases of land and the land purchase that would be undertaken as part of the process;
- it was disappointing to hear of the delays but the organisation was commended for their achievements so far which was felt would be inspirational to other groups; and
- the economic benefits that the project would generate to the local area was emphasised as was the need for this to be recognised by Scottish Ministers. In response to the suggestion of the Council writing to the Minister for Transport, it was indicated that this had already been done and there was a need to let due process to be followed.

Thereafter, the Committee **NOTED** the presentation.

4. **Scottish Fire and Rescue Area Committee Performance Report Aithisg Coileanaidh Comataidh Sgìreil Smàlaidh agus Teasairginn na h-Alba**

There had been circulated Report No BSAC/01/22 dated 19 January 2022 by the Local Senior Officer for Highland, Scottish Fire and Rescue Service.

During discussion, the following main points were raised:

- requests were made for social media posts in respect of recruitment to be shared with Members to enable wider promotion and also for an additional column to be added to the Station Availability table to indicate what the full staffing complement should be;
- further information was sought and provided on the rollout of smoke and heat detectors. It was also clarified that the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service had no legal powers in terms of compliance of this and instead provided an advisory role;
- it was noted that there had been a return to home visits and it was queried if this had also been extended to include businesses;
- the importance and effectiveness of youth engagement was emphasised;
- the staff recruitment challenges were acknowledged and it was queried whether a more flexible approach to address this was being adopted; and
- in terms of forestry estates, assurance was provided that there would be ongoing partnership working with a variety of landowner groups to ensure the safe use of the countryside and promotion/awareness of this.

Thereafter, the Committee **NOTED** the Area Performance Report and that future reports would be amended to include an additional column to the Station Availability table to indicate what the full staffing complement should be.

5. Notices of Motion Brathan Glusaid

The following Notice of Motion had been received by the Head of Corporate Governance –

This Area Committee condemns the cuts to Railway Station ticket offices in Aviemore and Kingussie and additionally wishes to highlight the ridiculously high fares for local train passengers. We agree to write to the Scottish Government Minister of Transport highlighting our concerns.

Signed: Mr B Lobban Ms P Hadley

During discussion, the following main points were raised:

- in view of the climate emergency, concern was expressed that barriers were being putting place that would lead to a reduction in the level of service for passengers;
- reference was made to the negative impacts that would result from the removal of functioning ticket offices, particularly when electronic ticketing machines broke down, and the distress and added financial burden this caused to passengers;
- the rail service was too expensive and in order to increase usage, train fares needed to be reduced to a more affordable level;
- concern was expressed at the accessibility issues, both in respect of disability and also in terms of reduced booking options for passengers that did not have access to purchase tickets online;
- this area had a low wage economy and in view of this there was a need to encourage and increase the use of public transport particularly for young people;
- there was a need for more investment and service improvements in railways, with manned facilities, and not a restriction in servicing hours;
- it was proposed that an amendment be added to the Motion in that the proposal should be stopped in its entirety as the new owner, the Scottish Government, would be taking over from April 2022. It was felt that a full assessment with evidence based needs for the services should be undertaken with staff and also through local consultation. It was clarified that consultation had already been undertaken. However, it was indicated that the consultation had been conducted by an operator that had lost the franchise; and
- it was proposed that the words '*and asking that any changes are halted prior to the introduction of the new operator*' should be inserted at the end of the Motion. The Chair indicated that he would write to the Minister for Transport on behalf of the Committee.

Thereafter, the Committee **AGREED** the:

- i. following Amended Motion –

This Area Committee condemns the cuts to Railway Station ticket offices in Aviemore and Kingussie and additionally wishes to highlight the ridiculously high fares for local train passengers. We agree to write to the Scottish Government Minister of Transport highlighting

- our concerns and asking that any changes are halted prior to the introduction of the new operator; and
- ii. letter to the Scottish Government Minister for Transport be issued by the Chair on behalf of the Committee.

**6. Area Roads Capital Programme 2022/23
Prògram Calpa Rathaidean Sgìreil 2022/23**

There had been circulated Report No BSAC/**02**/22 dated 25 January 2022 by the Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure, Environment and Economy. In introducing the report, it was indicated that there had been an error on Page 15 of the report where it stated '*Lochaber*' and should have stated '*Badenoch and Strathspey*'. There was also an error in Appendix 1 whereby the total was £35.44m and not £31.44m as had been stated.

During discussion, the following main points were raised:

- Members expressed their appreciation for the work that was undertaken to maintain the local roads network particularly given the very limited resources available. The need for more investment in this function was emphasised and it was hoped that this would be reflected in the next budget;
- further information was sought and provided on the timeline for a permanent solution for the surface of Ruthven bridge, Kingussie. It was also confirmed that the road would require to be closed for a period of time but that disruption would be kept to a minimum;
- although negative feedback on the condition of the roads was consistently received, feedback on the work of the Council in respect of the fast response to road and tree clearances had been overwhelmingly positive;
- confirmation was provided that the cost of storm damage was lower than winter maintenance. It was also clarified that the milder winter resulted in less costly repairs and enabled more of the budget to be invested in cyclical repairs;
- it was clarified that surface dressing was an important element of preventative maintenance and extended the life of the road by 10 years;
- there was a need to seek more landowner support and collaboration with road repairs/maintenance; and
- reference was made to damaged pavements, particularly from tree roots, and further information was sought and provided on how this would be addressed.

Thereafter, the Committee **APPROVED** the proposed 2022/23 Area Roads Capital Programme for Badenoch & Strathspey.

**7. Badenoch & Strathspey Ward Place Based Investment Funds – Proposed Funding Allocations
Maoinean Tasgaidh Stèidhichte Air Àite Uàrd Bhàideanach & Shrath Spè – Riarachaidhean Maoineachaidh gam Moladh**

There had been circulated Report No BSAC/**03**/22 dated 1 February 2022 by the Interim Executive Chief Officer Communities and Place.

During discussion, the following main points were raised:

- reference was made to how local communities had been unable to progress their ideas and bring projects to fruition due to a lack of seed funding. However, this funding would enable projects to be progressed and this was welcomed;
- it was clarified that it was proposed that the sum to be awarded to Kinraig & Vicinity Community Council was £9,312; and
- reference was made to the importance of the funding to support feasibility studies and the benefits this provided to enabling communities to have confidence to take projects forward.

Thereafter, the Committee:

- i. **AGREED** to the reallocation and retention of funds as follows:
 - a. Housing Needs Feasibility Study – reallocate the remaining balance of £9,500 via the Community Challenge fund which would increase the funding available for allocation to £64,500;
 - b. Housing for Businesses Project Scoping Project – build upon feasibility studies and business case already developed and targeting the remaining funds of £1,700 in support of concluding the joint work started with the Cairngorm Business Partnership;
 - c. Independent Audit of Empty Commercial Units and Proposals for Potential Solutions - utilising the funding of £10,000 to investigate potential support to local business based on the findings of the audit; and
 - d. The total funding pot for community regeneration projects of £64,500 comprised £50,000 allocated at Area Committee on 9 November 2021, £9,500 reallocated from the housing needs project and £5,000 remaining of the total Place Based Investment Funds;
- ii. following a call for applications to support community regeneration, **AGREED** the proposed allocations of Place Based Investment Funds of £64,500 as follows:
 - a. Aviemore Community Enterprise, Myrtlefield Redevelopment Feasibility Study - £14,500;
 - b. Grantown Initiative in partnership with the Highland Council, Dulaig Playing Area and Pitch Project - £10,000;
 - c. Kingussie & Vicinity Community Council, Glebe Ponds Restoration Feasibility Study - £9,779;
 - d. Badenoch Heritage, Storylands Session - £1,950;
 - e. Kinraig & Vicinity Community Council, Kinraig Community Toilet and Parking Feasibility Study - £9,312;
 - f. Aviemore & Glenmore Community Trust, Dalfaber Land Community Park Feasibility Study - £10,000; and
 - g. Contingency provision for Play and Project Development - £8,959.

8. Place Based Investment Programme (PBIP) Prògram Tasgaidh Stèidhichte air Àite

There had been circulated Report No BSAC/04/22 dated 3 February 2022 by the Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure, Environment and Economy.

During discussion, the following main points were raised:

- these projects would be transformational for local communities;
- those projects that were not recommended for approval (Newtonmore Play Park, Burnfield Garden and Newtonmore Village Hall) would be eligible to reapply for future funding. It was requested that support mechanisms be put in place to help communities to understand the work that had yet to be done to enable the projects to be progressed for future funding support; and
- appreciation was expressed for all the work that had been undertaken in respect of assessing the applications. It was welcomed that this would be recurring funding which could help communities to have flexibility with a phased approach to projects.

Thereafter, the Committee:

- i. **NOTED** the applications submitted and **AGREED** the projects to be offered a Place Based Investment Programme grant and the value of funds to be offered as follows;
 - a. Kingussie Shinty Club - £50,000;
 - b. Kingussie K6 Memorial Project - £20,706.40;
 - c. Burnfield Public Convenience Project - £23,900;
 - d. Woodland Wheels Pump Track Floodlights - £10,000;
 - e. Dulaig Play Park - £15,000;
- ii. **AGREED** authority be delegated to the Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure, Environment and Economy, in consultation with the Area Committee Chair, to allocate any uncommitted PBIP grant to approved PBIP beneficiaries in the event that additional investment was required.

9. Playpark Provision Solar Phàircean-cluiche

There had been circulated Report No BSAC/05/22 dated 8 February 2022 by the Interim Executive Chief Officer Communities & Place.

The Committee:

- i. **NOTED** the funding available and the funding already committed to invest in play parks in the Badenoch and Strathspey Area;
- ii. **NOTED** a further £55m was to be awarded to Scottish Councils over the lifetime of the parliament;
- iii. **AGREED** that the Scottish Government funding be used to replace key items of play equipment with any remaining balance to be carried forward for spend in 2022/23;
- iv. **AGREED** the remainder of the Ward 20 Covid fund, £21,463, be repurposed as required for essential repairs to play equipment and delegated to the Amenities Manager for allocation in consultation with local Members; and
- v. **AGREED** to homologate the repurposing and spend of £7,084.50 of Covid Ward Funds in support of replacement of an item of equipment at Campbell Crescent, Kingussie.

**10. Housing Revenue Account: Garage Rents 2022/23
Cunntas Teachd-a-steach Taigheadais: Màil Gharaidsean 2020/21**

There had been circulated Report No BSAC/06/22 dated 27 January 2022 by the Executive Chief Officer Housing and Property.

During discussion, the Chair proposed a rent increase of 1% for council house tenants and 1.5% for non-council house tenants and this was supported.

The Committee **AGREED** a rent increase of 1% for council house tenants and 1.5% for non-council house tenants be applied to Badenoch and Strathspey Garages.

**11. Housing Performance Report – 1 April 2021 to 31 December 2021
Aithisg Coileanaidh Taigheadais – 1 An Giblean 2021 gu 31 An Dubhlachd 2021**

There had been circulated Report No BSAC/07/22 dated 27 January 2022 by the Executive Chief Officer Housing and Property.

During discussion, reference was made to the considerably improved performance in respect of repairs and further explanation was sought and provided to the reason for the substantially reduced rent arrears.

The Committee **NOTED** the information provided on housing performance for the period 1 April 2021 to 31 December 2021.

**12. Grantown Common Good Asset Register
Co-chomhairle Clàr So-mhaoin Math Coitcheann Bhaile nan Grandach**

Transparency Statement: Mr B Lobban made a Transparency Statement in respect of this item in that he had a connection to this item as an advisor to the Board of Grantown Museum. However, having applied the objective test he did not consider that he had an interest to declare. He requested that this Statement be recorded in the Minutes.

There had been circulated Joint Report No BSAC/08/22 dated 18 January 2022 by the Interim Executive Chief Officer Communities and Place and Executive Chief Officer Resources and Finance.

During discussion, reference was made to the potential for a shared income stream for the Common Good Fund and the Council if car parking charges were implemented. There was a need to promote awareness that the Register was not closed and to encourage questions to which responses would be provided.

The Committee:

- i. **NOTED** the contents of the Asset Register in the format for publication as set out in Appendix 1 to the report;
- ii. **NOTED** the content of the document titled “Grantown on Spey Common Good property consultation representations and responses” (Appendix 2);
- iii. **AGREED** to the publication of the Common Good Asset register for Grantown on Spey and the representations and responses document on the Council website;

- * iv. **AGREED to recommend** to the Council the reclassification of the property included in the Asset Register and the reactivation of Grantown on Spey Common Good Fund; and
- * v. **AGREED to recommend** to the Council that, due to the financial position of the fund, Grantown on Spey Common Good property would continue to be maintained by Highland Council for the foreseeable future.

13. Kingussie Common Good Fund – consultation on proposal to dispose, by Community Asset Transfer lease, of Market Stance Playing Field to Kingussie Camanachd Club

Maoin Math Coitcheann Cheann a' Ghiùthsaidh – co-chomhairle mu mholadh faighinn cuidhteas, le aonta-màil Glusad So-mhaoin Coimhearsnachd, de Raon-cluiche Stansa na Margaid gu Club Camanachd Cheann a' Ghiùthsaidh

There had been circulated Joint Report No BSAC/09/22 dated 17 January 2022 by the Executive Chief Officer Communities and Place and Executive Chief Officer Resources and Finance.

The Committee:

- i. **NOTED** the outcome of the consultation process undertaken as detailed in paragraph 4 of the report;
- ii. **AGREED** the proposal to dispose, by Community Asset Transfer lease, of Market Stance Playing Field, Ruthven Road, Kingussie to Kingussie Camanachd Club; and
- iii. **NOTED** that, if agreed, it would be necessary to seek Sheriff Court consent in respect of the disposal.

**14. Minutes
Geàrr-chunntas**

There had been circulated and **NOTED** Minutes of Meeting of the Badenoch and Strathspey Area Committee held on 9 November 2021 which were approved by the Council on 10 December 2021.

Prior to closing the meeting, the Chair expressed his appreciation for the help and support provided to Members from staff and external partners.

The meeting concluded at 12.25pm.

The Highland Council

Minutes of Meeting of the **Audit and Scrutiny Committee** held in the Council Chamber, Council Headquarters, Glenurquhart Road, Inverness on Wednesday 16 February 2022 at 10.30am.

Present:

Mr G Adam
Mr R Balfour
Mr B Boyd
Dr I Cockburn
Mrs M Davidson

Mr G MacKenzie
Mr D Macpherson
Mrs M Paterson
Mr P Saggars

Non Members in attendance:

Mr A Jarvie
Mr B Lobban

Mr D Mackay

Officials in Attendance:

Ms D Manson, Chief Executive
Ms K Lackie, Acting Depute Chief Executive and Executive Chief Officer, Performance & Governance
Ms E Johnston, Corporate Audit & Performance Manager, Performance & Governance Service
Miss D Sutherland, Corporate Audit Manager, Performance & Governance Service
Mr S Fraser, Head of Corporate Governance, Performance and Governance
Mr S Carr, Corporate Performance Manager, Performance & Governance Service
Mr J Campbell, Senior Auditor, Performance & Governance Service
Mr P Hankinson, Senior Auditor, Performance & Governance Service
Mr J Shepherd, Head of ICT and Digital Transformation
Mr B Porter, Head of Support Services, Education and Learning
Mrs L Dunn, Principal Committee Administrator, Performance & Governance
Mr A MacInnes, Administrative Assistant, Performance & Governance

Also in attendance:

Mr J Boyd, Audit Director, Grant Thornton
Ms C Connor, Manager, Grant Thornton

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

Mr G MacKenzie in the Chair

1. Apologies for Absence Leisgeulan

Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of Mrs J Barclay, Mr R Bremner, Mr S Mackie and Mrs A MacLean.

2. Declarations of Interest Foillseachaidhean Com-pàirt

There were no declarations of interest.

3. External Audit Plan Strategy 2021/22 Aithisgean Sgrùdaidh bhon Taobh A-muigh

There had been circulated Report No. AS/1/22 by the Council's External Auditors (Grant Thornton).

During a summary of the report, the purpose and scope of the audit was explained and it was the intention that it would be finalised over the course of the next month with the report submitted to Audit Scotland by 31 March 2022. A risk based approach had been adopted and the concept of materiality adopted.

During discussion, Members considered the following issues:-

- an evaluation was needed of Common Good assets was suggested. Some Community Councils were concerned that land, in particular, was undervalued, especially near tourist hot spots where it might be being used for camping. In response the External Auditors explained that, when using a valuation expert, a range of assumptions were taken into account including its current use;
- there was concern expressed at the quality of investment of Trusts, with some Trusts generating low yields despite having high levels of capital. This particularly applied to Education Trusts and officers had been charged with how revenue returns could be improved. This was more an operational matter and it was explained that often there were purpose and restrictions included in Trust Deeds;
- it was questioned if , particularly in relation to the Inverness Common Good fund, that art works, and their value, were not all truly accounted for. The External Auditors explained that such art works were valued on their insurance valuation which had last been carried out about 5 years previously but he assured Members that, as part of their procedures, valuation of art works were taken into account;
- an opinion was expressed that the legal controls of the Inverness Common Good fund were now rather tenuous. The Member's view was would appear that controls had disappeared and monies were being dispersed by just a few individuals. The fund had originally been set up to assist old people and those in need and, in the current economic climate, there were local people who required such assistance and where such monies could be used to great effect in making a significant difference to the lives of these people. However, it was explained that the custodians and application of the Common Good Fund was a question for Council management and Members; and
- the Chairman, on behalf of the Committee, expressed his appreciation to Grant Thornton for their commitment and partnership working as they entered the last year of their contract with the Council.

Thereafter, the Committee **NOTED** the terms of the report.

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

There had been circulated Report No. AS/2/22 dated 1 February 2022 by the Corporate Audit Manager which summarised the final reports issued since the date of the last meeting, together with details of work in progress and other information relevant to the operation of the Internal Audit Section.

Performance & Governance - Governance of Arms-Length External Organisations and Partnerships (Substantial Assurance)

During discussion, Members considered the following issues:-

- it was questioned how much Covid funding had been provided to High life Highland (HLH) and Eden Court. A great deal of close working had taken place over the last 2 years and this would inform how these organisations recovered, particularly Eden Court with the appointment of a new Chief Executive;
- the Council could not continue to fund these organisations at the level it had over the last two years and they need to become more financially independent and refocus. It was confirmed that close cooperation had taken place over the last two years and a review of written financial agreements would take place. Eden Court was considering a redevelopment opportunity which would enable it to refocus on revenue generation; and
- referring specifically to Eden Court, one of its Board Members as pointed out that its last Chief Executive had led the company out of the Covid pandemic in a better financial position than it had entered the pandemic. It had an ambitious capital programme which would make it less dependent on funding in the long term. It was also in the stages of creating a production company musical which would tour rural areas and rehearsals to date had been impressive. Six months from her commencement date the new Chief Executive had committed to develop a new Business Plan and review the Service Agreement.

Transformation - Cyber Security (Reasonable Assurance)

During discussion, Members raised the following issues:-

- following the outcome of recent cases involving the Royal Mail and the post office system provided by Fujitsu, assurances were sought that the Council, who previously had Fujitsu as their IT provider, would not encounter any legacy issues from this connection. Members were assured that since that contract expired 5 years ago a lot of the technology had been replaced and there was no indication such a problem would arise;
- cyber security was now more of an issue and training was needed for both current Elected Members and the ones elected to the new Council. It was important to alert Members to the risks that existed;
- appreciation was expressed for the improved communication. However, with the number of actions proposed it would be ideal if a timeline was prepared showing what was going to be done and when;
- it was disappointing that the uptake of a training session for staff had been low. It was important all users were aware of risks and what to look out for and it was hoped a more proactive engagement could be achieved so staff were able to identify potential breaches;
- it was vital training was benchmarked;
- it would be useful to look at industry practise elsewhere and for the Council to be able to benchmark its performance against similar organisations; and
- appreciation was expressed for the performance of the IT Service over the last 2 years.

Thereafter, the Committee **NOTED** the current work of the Internal Audit Section outlined at section 5 of the report and progress against the 2021/22 audit plan in section 6.

5. Review of Corporate Risks Ath-Sgrùdaidh air Cunnartan Corporra

There had been circulated Report No. AS/3/22 dated 28 January 2022 by the Corporate Audit and Performance Manager.

During discussion, Members raised the following issues:-

- it was queried how targets were set, and success measured, in particular to the CR5 (Effective Governance in Local Decision Making) and CR8 (Demographic Change). It was argued there had been little meaningful shift towards local decision making despite political support for empowering Local Committees. Furthermore, it was disappointing there was no reference as to how demographic change impacted on local communities. In many rural areas this was an issue and was one which was only being accelerating and it was suggested CR8 needed to be broken down further;
- in refence to the suggestion that there had been little shift to Local Committees, it was contended that they were now considering very important issues, including those involving much expenditure, much more so than 5 years ago;
- urgent action was needed on CR11 (Residual Waste Project) as there was only 3 years left for the Council to comply with the Waste (Scotland) Regulations 2012 landfill ban. This project would be one of the Council's largest capital investments for some time;
- in regard to CR17 (Open Water Safety) it was queried if the Council had a policy on this yet. This would followed up by the by Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure, Environment & Economy and Policy Manager;
- the manner in which Coastal Funding was allocated was questioned with certain areas favoured over others. This posed a risk to local democracy and effective localism;
- it was good to see that the Council was moving towards 3 year budgeting;
- the Executive Leadership Team (ELT) met quarterly to consider the Corporate Risk Register but it was suggested that this was not frequent enough. In response, Members were assured that this referred to the formal review of the Register but officers reviewed it considerably more often. Risks were also escalated to the ELT at any point when deemed necessary.

The Committee **NOTED** the Corporate Risk Register provided at Appendix 1 and consider the risk profile at Appendix 2 of the report.

6. Regulation of Investigatory Powers (Scotland) Act (RIPSA) Achd Riaghladh Chumhachdan Sgrùdaidh (Alba) (RIPSA)

There had been circulated Report No. AS/4/22 by the Head of Corporate Governance.

The Committee **NOTED** the Council continues to be a modest user of the powers within the Regulation of Investigatory Powers (Scotland) Act and that a further report will be forthcoming to the September 2022 meeting.

Valedictory

As this was the last Audit and Scrutiny Committee before the Council election, thanks were expressed to the Chair and Vice Chair for their tone, rigour and fairness to the Committee. The Chair also expressed his appreciation to the Members of the Committee for their scrutiny and curiosity in examining issues, some of which had been particularly difficult. Tribute was also paid to the staff for their preparation of reports but, in particular, the support given to Members.

The meeting ended at 11.40 a.m.

The Highland Council

Minutes of meeting of the **Tourism Committee** held in the **Council Chamber, Inverness**, on **Wednesday, 16 February 2022** at **2pm**.

Present:

Mr G Adam
Mr J Bruce
Dr I Cockburn
Mr J Gordon
Mr A Henderson
Mr B Lobban

Mr A MacInnes
Mr D Macpherson
Mrs M Paterson
Mr D Rixson (VC)
Ms M Smith

Non-Members also Present:

Mrs S Fanet (VC)

Officials in Attendance:

Mr M MacLeod, Executive Chief Officer, Infrastructure, Environment and Economy
Ms K Lackie, Executive Chief Officer, Performance and Governance
Mr S Fraser, Head of Legal Services
Mr C Simpson, Principal Officer – Europe, Tourism & Film, Development and Resources
Mr S Manning, Principal Traffic Officer, Roads and Transport
Ms W Girard Pruden, Project Co-ordinator, Development and Resources
Mrs L Dunn, Principal Administrator, Performance and Governance
Ms F MacBain, Committee Administrator, Performance and Governance
Mr A MacInnes, Administrative Assistant, Performance and Governance

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

Mr Gordon Adam in the Chair

1. Apologies for Absence Leisgeulan

Apologies were submitted for Mr C Fraser, Mr B Bremner, Mr J Gordon, Mr S Mackie and Mr H Morrison.

2. Declarations of Interest Foillseachaidhean Com-pàirt

The following Transparency Statements were made at the meeting and requested to be recorded in the Minutes:

Mr G Adam declared a connection to the items on the agenda as a director of a glamping enterprise and a part-owner of a short term letting property. Having applied the objective test he did not consider that he had an interest to declare because the agenda items considered Tourism policy in general and could not be reasonably interpreted as benefiting his specific interests.

Mr D Rixson declared a connection to the items on the agenda as Secretary of the Mallaig Heritage Centre, which was not a Council appointment. Having applied the objective test, he did not consider he had an interest to declare because although the Heritage Centre welcomed visitors the connection was non-financial and remote.

Ms M Smith declared a connection to the items on the agenda as the owner of Thistle Excursions which offered trips principally to cruise ship passengers. However, having applied the objective test she did not consider she had an interest to declare because the agenda items consider wider tourism policy and issues in general and could not be reasonably interpreted as potentially bringing benefit to her specific interests.

3. Location Action Plans for Visitor Management Planaichean-gnìomha Àiteachan airson Stiùireadh Luchd-tadhail

There had been circulated TC/01/22 dated 2 February 2022 by the Executive Chief Officer - Infrastructure, Environment and Economy.

During discussion, the following issues were considered:

- the successful work of the seasonal rangers was commended;
- improvements in waste management in Lochaber in 2021 were welcomed, but parking remained an issue of concern, with particular reference to the Fort-William to Mallaig road. Future consideration might have to be given to compulsory land purchases to assist with visitor management and to ensure restrictions were not being imposed to solely benefit landowners;
- the need to educate the public to care for the countryside was highlighted and links to campaigns by NatureScot and VisitScotland would be shared with the Committee. The rangers had been instrumental in encouraging improved behaviour;
- after the forthcoming Council election, consideration should be given to putting out a call for sites that required improvement, and to start tackling problematic areas;
- with reference to recent publicity seeking a leaseholder for a caravan park, information was sought and provided on whether this was something the Council could consider. It was possible the Council's business gateway service could have a role in this type of situation;
- attention was drawn to the improvements achieved by the Council, especially via the ranger service, to help visitors and locals. The action plans would be built on and the infrastructure protected and increased. It was noted that much of the work had been undertaken with partners and communities;
- it was disappointing that public toilets had been vandalised, affecting local residents and visitors;
- it was hoped the improved services in relation to waste management in 2021 would be continued;
- more accurate numbers on motorhome users would be helpful, but they were challenging to count. It was unlikely numbers would fall in 2022; and
- it was requested that the next phase could include consultation with Loch Carron Community Council and the Loch Carron Development Company on plans for the Applecross and Loch Carron area.

The Committee:

- i. **APPROVED** the final draft of three of the four Location Action Plans;
- ii. **AGREED** that these areas were to be priorities for action and any activities that needed an immediate solution; and
- iii. **AGREED** that further Location Actions Plans were produced for other 'hotspot' areas identified in the Strategic Tourism Development Plan;
- iv. **AGREED** to include Loch Carron Community Council and the Loch Carron Development Company in the next phase of the consultation in relation to the Applecross and Loch Carron area; and
- v. **AGREED** to circulate to the Committee links for NatureScot and VisitScotland's publicity efforts in relation to promoting appropriate visitor behaviour in the countryside.

4. **Visitor Management Plan 2021** **Plana Stiùireadh Luchd-tadhail airson 2021**

There had been circulated TC/02/22 dated 2 February 2022 by the Executive Chief Officer - Infrastructure, Environment and Economy.

Assurance was sought and provided that the project to install a new motorhome facility at the Latheron Car Park, Ullapool was progressing according to plan.

The Committee **NOTED** the information provided by each Service on progress in delivering the 2021 Visitor Management Plan actions and associated budget spend as detailed in Appendix 1 to the report.

5. **Tourism Infrastructure** **Bun-structar Turasachd**

There had been circulated TC/03/22 dated 31 January 2022 by the Executive Chief Officer - Infrastructure, Environment and Economy.

During discussion, the following issues were considered:

- in relation to design grant bids, some external organisations were providing information on bids they would like to make, and discussions were ongoing about internal projects on topics such as public conveniences and parking;
- in addition to significant projects in popular areas, it was important to consider smaller projects which could benefit less well known areas, and consideration should be given to using ward discretionary budgets for these;
- gratitude was expressed to the many small groups and organisations which had assisted with infrastructure projects in the local areas;
- the three major issues requiring improved infrastructure were parking, motorhomes and public toilets, as well as the inclusion of electric vehicle charging points, and consideration should be given to charging visitors for the use of facilities. A report on charging for electric vehicle charging had recently been considered by the Economy & Infrastructure Committee; and
- the importance of including active travel and non-car orientated solutions was emphasised.

The Committee **NOTED**:

- i. the current position with the Highland Rural Tourism Infrastructure Fund supported projects;
- ii. the results of the bids to the 4th funding round of Rural Tourism Infrastructure Fund that were announced in January 2022;
- iii. that a Strategic Tourism Infrastructure Development Plan as included as an appendix to this report was submitted to VisitScotland in early February 2022; and
- iv. the future process proposed to allow delivery of a number of the actions detailed in the Strategic Tourism Infrastructure Development Plan.

The meeting ended at 2.55pm, and the Chair thanked the Committee and officers for their work during this Council's term.

The Highland Council

Minutes of Meeting of the **City of Inverness Area Committee** held **remotely** on **Thursday, 17 February 2022** at 10.00 am.

Present:

Mr C Aitken	Mr K Gowans
Mr R Balfour	Mr A Graham
Mr B Boyd	Mr J Gray
Mr I Brown	Mr A Jarvie
Mrs C Caddick	Ms E Knox
Miss J Campbell	Mr D Macpherson
Mrs H Carmichael	Mr R MacWilliam
Mr A Christie	Mrs B McAllister
Mrs M Davidson	Mrs T Robertson

Officials in Attendance:

Ms D Manson, Chief Executive
 Mr M MacLeod, Executive Chief Officer – Infrastructure, Economy & Environment
 Mr A Gunn, Interim Executive Chief Officer- Communities and Place
 Mr C Howell, Head of Infrastructure
 Mr E Foster, Head of Corporate Fin & Commercialism
 Ms T Urry, Head of Roads & Transport
 Mr A Maguire, Head of Development & Regeneration
 Ms A Clark, Head of Policy & Reform
 Mr C Baxter, Planner, Planning & Environment
 Mr D Haas, Inverness City Area Manager
 Mr L MacDonald, Repairs Manager
 Ms J Vivers, Housing Manager
 Ms F McNally, ICATN Programme Manager
 Mr J Kelman, Principal Project Manager
 Mr M MacDonald, Corporate Improvement Project Manager
 Ms D Sutton, Amenity Services Manager, Communities and Place
 Mr J Taylor, Roads Operation Manager, Roads & Transport
 Mr S Manning, Principal Traffic Officer, Roads & Transport
 Mr G Munro, Policy & Assurance Officer
 Mr A Webster, Principal Regeneration Officer
 Mr G Smith, Principal Engineer 2
 Mr S Grant, Senior Engineer
 Miss K Andrews, Climate Change Coordinator
 Miss J MacLennan, Principal Administrator
 Mrs O Bayon, Committee Officer

Also in attendance:

Ms J Hill, Chief Inspector, Area Commander (Inverness Area Command)

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

Mrs H Carmichael in the Chair

Prior to the commencement of the formal business, the Provost was pleased to inform the Committee of the following:-

- Davina Mary MacInnes Gillies had been awarded the Medal of the Order of the British Empire for services to Marie Curie Cancer Care and the community in Inverness and Ross-shire.
- The Council had received the Employer Recognition Scheme Gold Award for outstanding support to the Armed Forces community. Representing the highest badge of honour, Employer Recognition Scheme Gold Awards are awarded to organisations that employ and support those who have served, veterans and their families. Councillor Balfour, Highland Council's Armed Forces and Veterans' Champion, received the Council's Gold Award for the Defence Employers' Recognition Scheme at a reception held in Edinburgh Castle. Councillor Balfour and all partners involved through the Highland Armed Forces Community Covenant Partnership and the Military Liaison Group were thanked. The award received also reflected the work that had been done in recent years and was a well-deserved recognition.
- The Highland Council recently launched a competition, in partnership with Science Skills Academy, to name the new hydroelectric generator which was being built on the River Ness. The standard of entries had been impressive with over 100 poster and naming submissions received. The competition was won by Grace Mackenzie, a Primary 7 pupil at Milton of Leys Primary School who had suggested Hydro Ness. The prize was a 3D model of the scheme and Grace and her class would receive a complimentary class from High Life Highland at Inverness Leisure Centre where they could see the site benefit from the green energy supply.

The Committee **NOTED** these achievements.

Business

1. Apologies for Absence Leisgeulan

An apology for absence were intimated on behalf of Mr D Fraser.

2. Declarations of Interest Foillseachaidhean Com-pàirt

The Committee **NOTED-**

Declarations of Interest

Item 8: Mrs C Caddick, Mrs M Davidson, Mr K Gowans, Mr J Gray, Mrs I Mackenzie.

Transparency Statements:

Item 8: Miss J Campbell, Mrs I Mackenzie, Mrs B McAllister

Item 13c: Mrs H Carmichael

3. Police – Area Performance Report Poileas – Geàrr-aithisg Coileanadh Sgìreil

There had been circulated Report No. CIA/1/22 dated 3 February 2022 by Chief Inspector Judy Hill, Area Commander.

During discussion, the following main points were raised:-

- Ms J Hill, Chief Inspector Area Commander was welcomed to her first meeting of the City of Inverness Area Committee;
- Members commended the report which they felt was most helpful;
- thanks were expressed to local Police Officers in managing crime in the City of Inverness Area and supporting communities to feel safe. Good collaboration and communication between the Council, citizens, communities and the Police force was praised;
- in response to a query, it was confirmed that the report would be made public on the Highland Council website and could be shared with local community councils;
- it was requested that the Police reattend community council meetings as these started to recommence after COVID-19, so communities could engage directly with the Officers;
- whilst acknowledging that County Lines was an increasing issue, Members expressed their support to the Police for their efforts in tackling this so far, especially as vulnerable children were being exploited;
- reference was made to the Year to Date (YTD) crime figures in comparison to the 5 and 3 year average crime figures where it appeared that serious assault and rape were going to be higher. In this regard it was confirmed that the next Police report would publish full year figures up to the end of March 2022;
- it was a common complaint that motorists were not complying with residential 20mph speed restrictions. In this regard, it was queried if the Police could take a more proactive approach against this issue;
- Operation Respect was praised as a good initiative in tackling anti-social behaviour and violence in Inverness;
- local citizens had raised concern over lengthy delays in trying to communicate with the Police 101 Service. It was acknowledged that COVID had impacted on the availability of Officers and services. In this regard the Scottish Government were reviewing and addressing Police resource issues. It was also further queried if there was an alternative local Police telephone number that citizens could use to report local issues;
- it was questioned if there were further joined up working opportunities for the Council and the Police to work effectively together across services such as Council traffic officers and Police traffic officers;
- Local Police Roadshows were welcomed and the need to advertise these events well in advance was emphasised;
- it was suggested that local community hubs be considered which could provide a central location point for citizens to access multiple services;
- updated Member contact numbers would be published after the upcoming election process for citizens to contact them directly if required;
- thanks were conveyed to the Police for their vehicle anti-social behaviour work undertaken at Retail Parks within Inverness, however it was felt that ongoing focus on this issue was imperative;
- it was requested that the Police have an increased high visibility presence at Milton of Leys primary school in response to reports of speeding;
- further information was requested regarding the Driver Engagement North driving simulator initiative. It was confirmed that the Area Commander would

feed this request back to the Road Policing team and provide a list of dates and venues for the upcoming schedule;

- with regard to the increase in missing persons, it was queried if the Police could identify any interventions or programmes that the Council could assist them with in tackling this rise; and
- regular liaison between the Police Area Commander and the Inverness City Manager has proven successful. In this regard this channel of communication would continue and Members were encouraged to take local issues to the Inverness City Manager to be taken forward.

Thereafter, the Committee **NOTED** the progress made against the objectives set within the Highland Local Policing Plan 2020-2023 Year 2, attached as Annex A to the report, for the period covering 1 April 2021 to 31 December 2021.

4. Notices of Motion Brathan Gluasaid

The Committee **NOTED** the following Notice of Motion had been withdrawn following the decision taken at Item 5 earlier in the meeting:-

- (i) “The City of Inverness Area Committee Winter Payment Scheme is designed to help people who are most in need. The scheme is not only aimed at people of pension age, but also to all those on low income.

Given the unprecedented rise in Energy costs with each individual household facing an average cost of £693 pa, and coupled with the increased rate of inflation, this Committee agrees to raise the value/rate of the one-off payment by at least 25% (from £88 to £110)”

The following Notices of Motion had also been received by the Head of Corporate Governance –

- (ii) “There are renewed calls for the City of Inverness Area Committee to transform or reimagine the retaining Crown Road Wall.

The Wall is a valuable space, and one of the gateways into the City. It previously featured mural panels depicting images of City Landmarks, and its people, including a well-known tramp – known as forty pockets. The Artwork fell into disrepair and was removed in 2016. Therefore, the City of Inverness Area Committee agrees to seek out appropriate funding, consult with the public and all stakeholders, and to consider all suggestions to improve and reimagine, one of the gateways into Inverness City Centre”.

During discussion, the following points were considered:-

- the Crown Road Wall was an uninspiring gateway to the City Centre. There had been previous attempts to re-invigorate it but, with new developments taking place in the City Centre, the time was now right to revisit it. There was an opportunity to involve WASPS Inverness Creative Art Group as a stakeholder. Although consultation would be needed it was thought this wall could be enhanced at low or zero cost.

There were many ideas which could be considered which would enhance this entry into the Eastgate Centre;

- this was a prime promotional site in Inverness lying empty and even some planting or advertising would enhance its appearance;
- when the mural had been removed, there had been discussion at that point about what might replace it;
- careful consideration had to be given to any art proposal as it might prove controversial and be subject to vandalism;
- it was contended that the wall along the Millburn Road, one of the main arterial routes into Inverness also needed to be enhanced to give a better impression to those arriving in the city;
- while some suggested simply repainting the wall or adding greenery, caution was expressed that this might have a detrimental effect on the masonry; and
- to encompass all such matters, the improvement of the Crown Road Wall could be included in discussions at meetings of the City Development Group.

Thereafter, the Committee **AGREED** the Notice of Motion as detailed.

- (iii) “The City of Inverness Area Committee is committed to regenerate the City of Inverness.

It is accepted that online shopping has had a detrimental effect on ‘the shopping experience’ within the City, which has had a knock-on effect for local businesses and traders. As part of the regeneration, our attention must return to the concept of ‘City Living’. Within the City of Inverness there are huge opportunities. Empty shops, accommodation above shops, which were formerly homes, and are now empty and neglected, properties which could all be converted to housing. The new accommodation in Union Street is a fine example of what can be done. The City of Inverness Area Committee agrees to continue, support and accelerate the concept of ‘City Living’ and to encourage property owners and developers to work alongside this Council to achieve a living breathing City - a vibrant, working and shopping experience within the City of Inverness”.

During discussion, the following points were considered:-

- calls were made for City Vision to be accelerated. Union Street was a prime example of what could be achieved but there were still areas in the City Centre which needed to be improved. Increasing footfall would regenerate the city;
- there was a degree of frustration at the lack of progress. It was recognised that some good work had been achieved but it was important to look at new ideas and concepts. It was important to make the City Centre experience as pleasurable and welcoming as possible;
- other Members argued that there was redevelopment taking place and highlighted the considerable number of projects completed in the last 5 years in the City Centre totalling £33m, Castle Street and Union Street being cited as particular examples . Looking forward too there were many exciting projects including the redevelopment of Inverness Castle and those being explored by the City Redevelopment Group;

- there had been a dramatic increase in the number of people living in the City Centre and there were now more flats being provided suitable for families;
- it would be important to set up a Residents' Group for the City Centre;
- Highland Council did not own all of the buildings, many owned by absentee landlords and large companies. It was vital that pressure was put on these landlords to make essential repairs to their properties. This could be done by drawing up a Landlord Register and "naming and shaming" those who failed to comply; and
- some simple cost-effective measures, such as snowcem, were already being adopted on buildings on Bridge Street to enhance their appearance.

Thereafter, the Committee **AGREED** the Notice of Motion as detailed.

- (vi) "20mph speed limits - this Committee recognises that increases in active travel, along with children and parents using safe routes to schools, and this Council's policy to develop 20-minute communities, will elevate the instances where motorised vehicles will come into conflict with those engaged in all forms of active travel.

In addition, this Committee also recognises the increased risks that may be associated with the changes to pedestrian and cyclist priorities that have been recently introduced.

The City of Inverness Area Committee supports the implementation of 20mph speed limits within existing and all new housing developments towards making our communities better, safer and more sustainable places to live".

During discussion, the following points were considered:-

- communities, parents and active travel users had raised concerns about road safety issues. With new developments coming on stream pedestrians and active travel users were more likely to come more into conflict with traffic users. The Motion was intended to make areas safer for everyone and, by reducing speed, even if one life was saved, it would be worthwhile;
- it was Council policy to develop 20-minute communities as part of its strategic plan;
- reducing speed limits would benefit everyone living in an area and improve quality of life;
- there were major developments taking place in the south of Inverness as well as other areas;
- parents who might have encouraged their children to walk to school were concerned at the speed of traffic along specific routes and, with more schemes coming on stream, this would only be exacerbated. In addition, parents too needed to encourage their children to walk and cycle to school simply than been driven there;
- 20 mph would make communities a safer environment;
- the variable speed limits, ranging from 20-30-40 mph, caused confusion and lower speed restrictions would make it safer. One rule would fit better;

- whilst new developments could engineer speed restrictions it would be more difficult to do so in existing housing schemes;
- it was hoped new car technology would reduce car speed to 20 mph in such zones automatically;
- it was suggested Police Scotland could intimate on Social Media that they would be patrolling 20mph speed zones in certain areas and any offenders would be charged;
- reference was made to the considerable work underway at national level with Transport Scotland and the move to a policy of 20 mph in residential areas. The acceleration of this was supported as it would remove the number of Traffic Orders Regulations required at a local level. It was hoped the collaborative work with officers would continue, both at a local and national level; and
- with a safe speed needing a change of culture, Police Scotland needed to be on board to enforce it.

Thereafter, the Committee: **AGREED** the Notice of Motion as detailed subject to the following addition that “Furthermore the Committee requests that Highland Council use its best endeavours to continue to work with Transport Scotland to ensure timeous delivery of the forthcoming national 20mph policy and that appropriate funding be provided to achieve the delivery and implementation of 20pmh limits in our communities”

5. Inverness Common Good Fund: Discretionary Scheme for Winter Payments 2021/22 extension

There had been circulated Joint Report No. CIA/2/22 by the Interim Head of Revenues & Business Support and the Inverness City Manager.

In introducing the report, the Provost acknowledged the difficult financial circumstances many residents of Inverness City and Area find themselves in due to the exceptional increases in fuel bills. In view of this unprecedented cost increase, Members were invited to consider a one-off special winter fuel payment proposal which would give a reasonable increase in the winter payment to all recipients who were currently entitled.

During discussion, the following main points were raised:-

- reference was made to the first Notice of Motion in item 4 of this Agenda and the signatories indicated that it would be withdrawn;
- in continued support of the community, it was suggested that as fuel prices would remain high and continue to rise, the one-off special winter payment plan should be considered as a permanent increase going forward;
- supporting vulnerable residents who were unable to access the one-off special winter payment via telephone or online methods was emphasised. In this regard it was confirmed that residents could also approach the Citizens Advice Bureau for further support;
- ongoing works to insulate homes to combat the rise in fuel costs was highlighted as essential;
- Members acknowledged their obligation to highlight concern regarding the super profits made by energy companies to MSPs or MPs in order to protect local residents, especially as Highland produced significant quantities of energy;

- a sustainable payment approach from the Common Good Fund should be implemented in tackling the increased fuel costs for residents. In addition, it was queried if the Scottish Government had any additional sources of funding which could be used;
- consideration should be given to residents who did not receive council tax relief, to make sure that they were not overlooked for any appropriate financial support; and
- it was confirmed that Highland Council and Highlands and Islands leaders had written to the Business Secretary to request support regarding the increase of fuel prices

Thereafter, the Committee **AGREED** the following recommendations for the one-off extension of the 2021/22 Inverness Winter Payments Discretionary Scheme:-

- extend the deadline for applications to 30 April 2022 (the deadline was currently 28 February 2022);
- as a one-off for the 2021/22 Scheme, increase the single tier payment for those applicants that satisfy the eligibility criteria to £138 from the current £88 award level. For eligible households who have already received their £88 payment, a further one-off payment of £50 will be paid retrospectively; and
- provide an additional one-off budget of up to £100,000 to accommodate the continuing demand arising from the increased energy costs. This budget would provide for the retrospective payments to those who have already received payments, the increased amount for those who have not yet received payment/are still to apply and to ensure that there were sufficient funds available for increased demand.

6. Inverness Wards Repurposing COVID-19 Fund and Place Based Investment Fund Proposals

Molaidhean airson Maoin Ath-chleachdaidh COVID-19 agus Maoin Stèidhichte air Àite Uàrdan Inbhir Nis

There had been circulated Report No. CIA/3/22 dated 28 January 2022 by the Interim Executive Chief Officer Communities and Place.

The report highlighted progress at Ward level in the delivery of the projects in the Place Based Investment Programme and the funding available to support Covid-19 recovery. All of the recommendations were in line with governance set by the terms of reference of the funding programme and the powers of the Committee to agree adjustments.

Following consideration, the Committee **AGREED** the repurposing of the following Covid-19 funds:-

i. Ward 13 – Inverness West

£9,055 from the Ward COVID-19 Fund to support Amenity Services with repairs and improvements to play parks in their Ward.

ii. Ward 14 – Inverness Central

£10,000 from the Ward COVID-19 Fund to support Amenity Services with improvements to play parks in their Ward.

iii. **Ward 15 – Inverness Ness-side**

£10,345 from the Ward COVID-19 Fund to support Amenity Services with repairs and improvements to play parks in their Ward.

iv. **Ward 16 – Inverness Millburn**

£12,950 from the Ward COVID-19 Fund to support Amenity Services with repairs and improvements to play parks in their Ward.

v. **Ward 19 – Inverness South**

- a) £1,411 from the Ward COVID-19 Fund to support Amenity Services with repairs and improvements to play parks in their Ward; and
- b) the use of COVID-19 funds allocated to the Ward, in support of a project proposal at Millburn Academy to repurpose the library area into an art gallery and performance space combined with a café/restaurant, up to a maximum of £15,000. The final allocation to be determined on receipt of the detailed application.

The Committee also **AGREED** that the previously agreed Placed Based Investment Funding allocations for **Ward 13 – Inverness West**, be amended as follows:

Funding Heading	Previously agreed	Proposed amount
Play Provision	£50,000	£36,000
Residential Path Improvement	£20,000	£34,000
Total	£70,000	£70,000

7. **Play Park Funding – New Allocations**
Maoineachadh Phàircean Cluiche - Sònrachaidhean Ùra

There had been circulated Report No. CIA/4/22 dated 17 January 2022 by the Interim Executive Chief Officer Communities and Place.

In discussion, it was highlighted that there was wider community engagement along with support from Community Support Co-ordinators and the Play Technician Team on Play Park funding available. A press release had been issued regarding the new website on play areas and how community groups could become involved in raising funds and developing play park areas and the link to the website would be shared with Members.

If decisions had been made to remove play park equipment and have an empty play space instead, then the relevant Community Councils would be informed and they would be provided with information on how they could be engaged in developing the play site in future.

Continuing, Whin Park, Inshes Park and some other sites were classed as destination play areas and separate consideration required to be given to funding for those sites as they were not specific to that Ward and this would be the subject of a future report to Committee.

Thereafter, the Committee **NOTED:-**

- i. the funding available and the funding already committed to invest in play parks in the City Wards; and
- ii. a further £55m is to be awarded to Scottish Councils over the lifetime of the Parliament;

and **AGREED:-**

- iii. to split the allocation for the Inverness Area 2021/22 (£66,167) equally between the seven City Wards; and
- iv. to homologate the decisions taken by the Amenities Manager (South) as budget holder and in discussion and consultation with Members at Ward Business Meetings to commit the funds allocated to each Ward as detailed in Table 1 of the report.

8. Placed Based Investment Programme Prògram Tasgaidh Stèidhte air Àite

Declarations of Interest:-

Members declared an interest in this item as follows:-

Mrs C Caddick: Member of Inshes Park Community Association
Mrs M Davidson: Trustee of Glenurquhart Rural Community Association
Mr K Gowans: Employee of Inverness College, UHI
Mr J Gray: involved in the application by Crown Church
Mrs I Mackenzie: Member and Board Member of Crown Church

Having declared an interest, the above mentioned Members indicated they would leave the meeting for consideration of those applications for funding in which they had an interest.

Transparency Statements: Miss J Campbell, Mrs I Mackenzie and Mrs B McAllister made Transparency Statements in respect of this item in that they had a connection to this item by reason of their position on the Victorian Market Stakeholder Group. However, having applied the objective test they did not consider that they had an interest to declare. This was because it was a Council appointment and non-financial. Members requested that this Statement be recorded in the Minutes.

There had been circulated Report No. CIA/5/22 by the Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure, Environment and Economy.

During discussion, Members raised the following main points:-

- when a decision would be taken in relation to any request by the Council to the Scottish Government to request permission to carry over the value of any uncommitted PBIP grant into 2022/23;
- the potential for next year's funding to be received in early course to provide more certainty around some of the projects being delivered next year;
- the need for discussions in relation to the Active Botanical Community Garden in terms of the use of concrete and associated carbon implications;

- whether there was any provision for delays in projects due to issues with the availability of building materials;
- welcoming the spend and investment within the local communities, reference being made to benefits of specific projects set out in the report; and
- it was understood that the issues around the land ownership permission in relation to the Ardersier Outdoor Gym proposal had been resolved.

Thereafter, Members indicated their support for all of the projects listed in the report.

The Principal Regeneration Officer explained there was insufficient funds to support all of the projects detailed in the report. The total funds available for investment in the projects was £225,934.

In response to a point of order, it was confirmed that on the basis of the clarification provided on the available funds and consideration of the assessment of funding to be awarded to each project, it would not be possible to separate the interests declared by Members. Therefore, all Members who had declared an interest in any one of the applications should leave the meeting.

At this point, Mrs C Caddick, Mrs Davidson, Mr K Gowans, Mr J Gray and Mrs I Campbell left the meeting and took no part in the discussion or determination of this item.

On hearing further from the Principal Regeneration Officer and in discussion it was suggested that this item be deferred to provide Members with the opportunity to give further consideration to the applications for funding.

The Committee **AGREED** to **DEFER** further consideration of this item to a Special Meeting of the Committee.

9. Riverside Way: One way with Cycle Contraflow Ness Walk and Bught Road Traffic Regulation Order and Concept Design Consultation
Slighe Taobh na h-Aibhne: Aon-slighe le Sruth Dà-shlighe Rothaireachd air Ceum Nis agus Rathad a' Bhucht Òrdugh Riaghladh Trafaig agus co-chomhairle Dealbhadh Bun-bheachd

There had been circulated Report No CIA/6/22 dated 1 February 2022 by the Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure, Environment and Economy.

During discussion, Members raised the following main points:-

- the Riverside Way was one of the most attractive assets in Inverness and formed part of the City's active travel strategy. The route was used by people from across the City and beyond and had positive benefits for health, the environment and tourism;
- the shift towards safer active travel would contribute to the urgent need to reduce carbon emissions and achieve lower carbon outcomes;
- in relation to the public consultation, the majority of respondents supported the proposal and reference to the many emails Members had received in support of the continuation of the scheme;
- data was sought, and provided, on the daily counts on the route by user type;

- the balance of opinion generated by the consultation between those for and against was marginal and concern was expressed at the number of unresolved objections to the Traffic Regulation Order;
- there would be an impact of the scheme on local residents due to the displacement of traffic and potential to create a rat-run at Ballifeary Lane;
- there was no evidence there had been the modal shift that this investment should reasonably be expected to deliver;
- there had been a failure to engage effectively with the public and residents had highlighted they had not been able to access the online consultation on the Council's website;
- whilst Members fully supported the principles of active travel, in this case the project and its application of those principles together with the engagement with residents, Members and community councils required to be strengthened;
- there were many other ways to promote active travel such as improving road surfaces and the need for a strategic approach in linking up active travel infrastructure across the City;
- the cycle contraflow was confusing for all users and there were many contradictory issues and interests such as vehicle access to stakeholder services and facilities;
- the legitimate concerns of local residents on the impact of traffic on Ballifeary Lane could be overcome through appropriate mitigation;
- rejecting the scheme would have serious consequences for future active travel funding and to the Council's commitment to active travel improvements across Inverness;
- the nature of active travel interventions was that there was no perfect fit and there would be some displacement and a degree of compromise was necessary to change the culture and behaviour in the way the road/shared surfaces were used;
- this was a popular route towards destinations and the proposal would enhance the area, promote safer active travel, improve health and wellbeing and be valued by the residents of Inverness;
- the Riverside Way had been used for walking and cycling for many years and concern that the project was being taken forward due to the fact Sustrans funding was available and concern at the advice to Members in their consideration of the scheme that this funding would be lost if the proposal was not supported; and
- a considerable level of consultation had taken place to date and if Members approved the making of the Traffic Regulation Order, there would be the opportunity for more consultation and consideration of further design improvements design and mitigation measures in regard to displacement.

Thereafter, the Provost seconded by Ms E Knox **MOVED** approval of the recommendations set out in the report.

As an **AMENDMENT** Mr B Boyd seconded by Mr A Graham moved to (i) reject the proposals; (ii) improve and increase political and community engagement in the project; (iii) revisit and restate the project objectives; and (iv) develop proposals to meet the objectives and positively engage with the community.

On a vote being taken, the **MOTION** received 12 votes and the **AMENDMENT** received 7 votes, with 2 abstentions, and the **MOTION** was therefore **CARRIED**, the votes having been cast as follows:-

For the Motion

C Aitken, I Brown, C Caddick, J Campbell, H Carmichael, M Davidson, J Gray, E Knox, D Macpherson, B McAllister, T Robertson and E Roddick..

For the Amendment

R Balfour, B Boyd, G Campbell-Sinclair, A Graham, A Jarvie, I MacKenzie, R MacWilliam.

Abstention

K Gowans, C Smith.

Decision

The Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the full analysis of the responses from the recent concept design consultation exercise as set out in Appendix 1 of the report;
- ii. **NOTED** the background to the proposed permanent One Way with Cycle Contraflow Traffic Regulation Order and the representations received; and
- iii. **APPROVED** the making of the Road Traffic Regulation Order.

**10. Areas Roads Capital Programme 2022/23
Program Calpa Rathaidean na Sgìre 2022/23**

There had been circulated Report No CIA/7/22 dated 25 January 2022 by the Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure, Environment and Economy.

The Committee **APPROVED** the proposed 2022/2023 Area Roads Capital Programme for the City of Inverness and Area.

**11. Housing Revenue Account: Garage Rents 2022/2023
Cunntas Teachd-a-steach Taigheadais: Màil Gharaidsean 2022/2023**

There had been circulated Report No CIA/8/22 dated 4 February 2022 by the Executive Chief Officer Housing and Property.

The Committee **AGREED** that a 1.5% rent increase be applied to Inverness Garages and Garage Sites.

**12. Housing Performance Report – 1 April to 31 December 2021
Aithisg Dèanadais Taigheadais – 1 Giblean gu 31 Dùbhlachd 2021**

There had been circulated Report No CIA/9/22 dated 4 February 2022 by the Executive Chief Officer Housing and Property.

During discussion, the following issues were raised:-

- it would have been helpful to mention in the report the positive impact Council house repairs and upgrades had on climate change;
- in relation to the length of time taken to complete emergency repairs, whilst it was recognised that Highland was predominantly rural, the target of 14 hours appeared to be a little high given that the Scottish Housing Network

(SHN) benchmark was 4.8 hours. It was also commented that the Highland figures were above the SHN benchmark in all quarters. It having been queried whether the target could be reviewed, it was confirmed that this could be discussed. It was added that the target had previously been 24 hours and it was something that officers strove to improve upon. However, performance had been impacted by Covid;

- information was sought, and provided, on the snagging period for new Council houses, whether the Council was being put at a disadvantage by not being given the same terms as private householders, and whether the housing repairs team had sufficient resources to deal with the growing number of Council houses;
- further information was sought, and provided, on the rent arrears management work that had taken place during lockdown which had resulted in improved arrears figures, and whether more staff were needed on a daily basis; and
- thanks were expressed to the Housing Manager and the Repairs Manager for their diligence and support.

The Committee otherwise **NOTED** the information provided on Housing Performance for the period 1 April 2021 to 31 December 2021.

13. Inverness Common Good Fund Maoin Math Coitcheann Inbhir Nis

a) Financial Monitoring Sgrùdadh Ionmhasail

There had been circulated Joint Report No. CIA/10/22 dated 31 January 2022 by the Executive Chief Officer Resources and Finance and the Inverness City Area Manager.

The Committee **NOTED** the financial monitoring report to 31 December 2021 and that overall expenditure was within agreed budgets.

b) Capital Projects Pròiseactan Calpa

There had been circulated Joint Report No. CIA/11/22 dated 31 January 2022 by the Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure, Environment and Economy and Interim Executive Chief Officer Communities and Place.

During discussion, the following issues were raised:-

- there were a number of projects scheduled to come on stream this year and Members welcomed the progress that had been made; and
- in relation to the Victorian Market, Market Hall and Fish Market Refurbishment project, information was sought, and provided, as to how firm the potential tenancies that had been lined up were, when it would be known if there were any further delays to the project, whether all the units would be full when the market re-opened and, if not, whether there were any measures/incentives that could be put in place to ensure they were filled and that the market re-opened to some fanfare.

Thereafter, the Committee:-

- i. scrutinised and **NOTED** the current status of capital projects; and
- ii. **NOTED** the adjustments being made to the allocations within the Victorian Market, Market Hall and Fish Market Refurbishment project.

**c) Grant Applications over £10,000
Iarrtasan Tabhartais thar £10,000**

There had been circulated Report No. CIA/12/22 dated 31 January 2022 by the Executive Chief Officer Resources and Finance. A copy of supporting documentation had also been circulated as Booklet A.

In relation to the application by LCC Live Event Services Ltd in respect of the European Pipe Band Championships in Inverness in June 2022, some Members expressed concern that granting the recommended sum to a private company would set a dangerous precedent and questioned whether supporting a commercial event was a good use of Common Good funding. Whilst the event would raise the profile of the city, it was a one-day event which was unlikely to lead to benefits such as an increase in bed nights. It was also questioned whether the event would go ahead if the application was not approved; if not, it was not commercially viable. On the point being raised, the Inverness City Area Manager confirmed that it was appropriate to use the Conference Support Budget.

Other Members spoke in support of the application, commenting that the European Pipe Band Championships was a prestigious event which could easily be lost to another local authority area. People travelled from all over the world to attend, and it would benefit shops and businesses in the city. Whilst £29,000 was a significant sum, it was highlighted that the total project cost was £174,542, £70,000 of which went to the Royal Scottish Pipe Band Association. It was added that it was important that the Committee's support for the event was proportionate, and that figures were provided after the event for the purposes of scrutiny.

Thereafter, the Committee determined the current grant applications as follows:-

- 1) Kings Golf Club, Inverness – **APPROVED** a grant of £25,240;
- 2) LCC Live Event Services Ltd – **APPROVED** a grant of £29,000; and
- 3) Visit Inverness Loch Ness – **APPROVED** a grant of £30,000;

and **APPROVED** the following applications submitted by Inverness BID:-

- 1) The City of Inverness Annual Floral Displays 2022 - £64,150
- 2) Operation Respect Easter/Summer/Autumn 2022 – £10,795
- 3) Inverness Gull Project 2022 - £12,000
- 4) Inverness Community Safety Partnership 2022 - £9,700
- 5) Coach Friendly Project 2022 - £10,800

**d) Inverness Events and Festivals – Review of 2021/22 to date and proposals for 2022-23
Tachartasan agus Fèisean Inbhir Nis- Ath-sgrùdadh 2021/22 gu ruige seo agus molaidhean airson 2022/23**

There had been circulated Report No. CIA/13/22 dated 31 January 2022 by the Interim Executive Chief Officer Communities and Place.

During discussion, Members raised the following issues:-

- thanks were expressed to everyone involved in the events that had taken place during what had been a difficult time due to the Covid restrictions that had been in place. The events had been a great success and the feedback from the public had been positive. Particular reference was made to the Christmas event in Bellfield Park which had attracted huge numbers of visitors, and the fireworks display which families had enjoyed from a distance;
- the partnership with High Life Highland was working well and it was anticipated that it would be even more fruitful going forward;
- the proposal to utilise the Events and Festivals budget underspend to provide decorative lighting in the City Centre was welcomed; and
- doing something different could be difficult but the challenges presented by Covid had also presented an opportunity to try something new and it had been really successful.

Thereafter, the Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the previously agreed vision, values and objectives detailed in Appendix 1 of the report;
- ii. **NOTED** that the governance arrangements with scrutiny through the Events and Festivals Working Group, with annual reports to CIAC, continued;
- iii. **NOTED** the spend profile and underspend, as highlighted in section 5.3 of the report, for 2021/22;
- iv. **NOTED** the review of the 2021/22 programme; and
- v. **AGREED** to preserve the current events and festivals budget in the sum of £0.303m for 2022/23 to support the development of a refreshed events and festivals programme.

**e) Inverness Common Good Fund – Annual Report 2020/21
Fo-Chomataidh Maoin Math Coitcheann Inbhir Nis – Aithisg Bhliadhnaidh 2020/21**

There had been circulated Joint Report No. CIA/14/22 dated 31 January 2022 by the Executive Chief Officer Resources and Finance and the Interim Executive Chief Officer Communities and Place.

The Committee **AGREED** the final monitoring report and Statement of Accounts for the Inverness Common Good Fund for the year ended 31 March 2021.

**f) ICGF Budget Setting for 2022/23 and Capital Programme
Buidseat ICGF – 2022/23**

There is circulated Joint Report No. CIA/15/22 dated 31 January 2022 by the Executive Chief Officer Resources and Finance and Interim Executive Chief Officer Communities and Place.

During discussion, the following issues were raised:-

- support was expressed for the proposed budget which seemed to be well drafted, proportionate and reasonable. However, a caveat was proposed that the Common Good Fund Strategy be reviewed towards the end of 2022, once the new Council had had a few months to settle in;
- the continued project work on the Fund's assets was important in terms of sustainability;
- the Fund's reserves were there to be used when they were really needed and it was right to use them for additional winter fuel payments;
- it was important to reinvigorate the City Centre and Members reiterated their support for the proposed decorative lighting which would be in place all year and would make the City Centre feel more welcoming; and
- thanks were expressed to former Councillor Graham Ross who had done a significant amount of work in respect of the Inverness Common Good Fund.

Thereafter, the Committee **AGREED**:-

- i. the Common Good Fund budget for 2022/2023 detailed within the report and its appendices; and
- ii. that the Common Good Fund Strategy be reviewed towards the end of 2022.

14. Minutes Geàrr-chunntas

The Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the Minutes of the City of Inverness Area Committee held on 18 November 2021
- ii. **APPROVED** the Minutes of the Inverness Events and Festivals Working Group held on 15 November 2021, 20 December 2021 and 31 January 2022;
- iii. **NOTED** the Minutes of the City and Area Recovery Group held on 1 December 2021 and City Area Development Group held on 24 January 2022;
- iv. **APPROVED** the Minutes of the Inverness East Sports Facilities Working Group held on 16 December 2021 and 27 January 2022 subject to any reference to UHI Inverness College Campus being amended to HIE Inverness Campus; and
- v. **APPROVED** the Minutes of the Inverness Common Good Fund Sub-Committee held on 31 January 2022.

At the conclusion of formal business, the Provost and Leader of Inverness and Area thanked the Head of Service (Community Support and Engagement), the Inverness City Area Manager, Democratic Services staff and support staff in the Town House for their assistance during her tenure. She also thanked her fellow Members, particularly her current and former Depute Provosts, wishing those standing for re-election every success and those not standing a long and happy retirement.

Members reciprocated, paying tribute to the manner in which the Provost and Leader, the first female Provost of Inverness since the 15th century, had carried out her role, latterly through very difficult times. Particular reference was made to her support of the business community in Inverness as well as her work with young people and their organisations. She had been an exemplary Provost and Members wished her well for her retirement.

The meeting ended at 4.30 pm.

The Highland Council

Minutes of Meeting of the **Easter Ross Area Committee** held remotely on Thursday, 17 February 2022, at 10 am.

Present:

Mr M Finlayson
Mr D Louden
Ms P Munro

Mr A Rhind
Ms F Robertson (**in the Chair**)
Ms M Smith

Officials in Attendance:

Mark Rodgers, Executive Chief Officer - Property & Housing
Helen Ross, Senior Ward Manager, CSER
Colin Howell, Head of Infrastructure
Iain Moncrieff, Roads Operations Manager
Rory MacLeod, Housing Manager
Alan Webster, Regeneration Team Leader
Fiona Cameron, LEADER Programme Manager
Ian Graham, Road Safety Officer
Fiona MacBain, Committee Administrator

Also in Attendance:

Inspector Chris Murray, Police Scotland

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

Preliminaries

At the request of the Chair, the Committee **AGREED** to consider Item 5 (Placed Based Investment Programme) and Item 7 (Area Roads Capital Programme 2022-23) immediately after Item 3. This was to allow officers to present at another meeting that was taking place that day.

1. **Apologies for Absence** **Leisgeulan**

Apologies were submitted on behalf of Ms Carolyn Wilson.

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

Mr D Louden – Item 5

3. **Police – Area Performance Summary Report** **Poileas – Geàrr-Aithisg Coileanadh Sgìreil**

There had been circulated Report No ERA/01/22 dated 3 February 2022 by Chief Inspector Kevin MacLeod, (North Highland Area Command).

During discussion, the following issues were considered:

- the overall reduction in vandalism was welcomed, although concern was expressed at the damage being done to the Rose Garden public toilets. It was felt the multi-agency approach being taken to tackle this was not adequately covered in the report. A specific police officer had been allocated to tackling the situation and would be invited to ward business meetings to fully explain actions being undertaken and work being done across wards 6 & 7;
- information was sought on whether the high numbers of missing Looked After children were reflected in national figures, and it was confirmed this was the case and that the figures included Looked After teenagers who returned home after their official curfew and who had to be immediately reported as missing, even though they might only be late home;
- information was sought on the reported increase in hate crimes, but this was not available at the meeting;
- although there had been a reduction in the reporting of incidents of supplying drugs, this was not reflected in the number of people using drugs, and was of concern in certain communities;
- work should be undertaken with Corporate Communications to help publicise Operation Close Pass, which related to changes to the Highway Code and improved safety measures for cyclists;
- Cyber-crime was of concern and was dealt with by a specialist unit based in Glasgow; and
- information was sought and provided on officer numbers at various local police stations.

The Committee:

- i. **NOTED** progress made against the objectives set within the Highland Local Policing Plan 2020-2023 Year 2, attached as Annex A to this report, for the period covering 01 April 2021 - 31 December 2021;
- ii. **AGREED** to invite the new police officer who covered Easter Ross wards to Ward Business Meetings for Wards 6&7; and
- iii. **AGREED** to discuss outwith the meeting with Corporate Communications how to best publicise Operation Close Pass.

4. **Highland Coastal Communities Fund – Assessment of Applications** **Maoin Coimhearsnachdan Cladaich na Gàidhealtachd – Measadh Iarrtasan**

There had been circulated Report No ERA/02/22 dated 1 February 2022 by the Executive Chief Officer, Infrastructure, Environment & Economy.

The Committee **APPROVED** the application from Saltburn & Westwood Community Council to undertaken Saltburn Beach Access Improvements, subject to conditions on the resolution of land ownership or control to the satisfaction of the HCCF team/internal audit, and the provision of a suitable maintenance plan.

5. **Placed Based Investment Programme** **Prògram Tasgaidh Stèidhichte air Àite**

Declaration of Interest: Mr D Loudon declared an interest in this item as a Director & Company Secretary of Tain Heritage Trust, which was a potential beneficiary from the Place Based Investment Programme, and he left the meeting for the duration of this item.

There had been circulated Report No ERA/03/22 dated 10 February 2022 by the Executive Chief Officer, Infrastructure, Environment & Economy.

A key requirement of the decision making process agreed by the Economy and Infrastructure Committee was that Members took into account the views of the community partnerships when allocating the place-based funding and the Ward Manager confirmed that the projects were considered to align with and contribute to the aims of the Community Planning Partnership, with reference to creating vibrant local economies, promoting tourism, increasing mental health and wellbeing, and developing strong and safe communities.

During discussion, the following issues were considered:

- the 50:50 split of the funds between Wards 6 & 7 was confirmed;
- the projects for Ward 6 were welcomed, and updates were sought and provided on various schemes, including Shore Road laybys and Evanton public toilets. It was hoped charging points could be added to a second phase of the Evanton toilet project;
- Ward 7 Members voiced support for the Tain picture house project but felt, on balance, that these funds would be better used for the Streetscape project, with attention drawn to the benefits to the wider public of the pavement improvements. It was suggested that a more detailed breakdown of the anticipated costs of the Picture House refurbishment was required before any future funding could be allocated; and
- attention was drawn to the urgent requirement for additional roads funding for Easter Ross.

The Committee:

- i. **AGREED** to investing £2,887.64 in the TCF Shore Road project, Invergordon;
- ii. **AGREED** to investing £30,000 in CCTV infrastructure in Alness town centre;
- iii. **AGREED** to investing £35,000 in CCTV infrastructure in Invergordon town centre;
- iv. **AGREED** to investing £40,000 in new public convenience provision in Evanton;
- v. **AGREED** to investing £14,948 in Teandallon Play Area, Evanton;
- vi. **AGREED** to holding £17,319.36 as contingency for Ward 6 projects;
- vii. **NOTED** the two proposals for Tain and **AGREED** the Tain Streetscape project should benefit from Place Based Investment Programme investment of £140,000;
- viii. **GRANTED** delegated authority to the Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure, Environment & Economy in consultation with the Area Committee Chair to allocate any uncommitted PBIP grant to approved PBIP beneficiaries in the event that additional investment is required; and

- ix. **AGREED** that the Council write to the Scottish Government to request permission to carry over the value of any uncommitted PBIP grant into 2022/23.

**6. Highland Council Place Based Funds
Maoinean Chomhairle na Gàidhealtachd Stèidhichte air Àite**

There had been circulated Report No ERA/04/22 dated 31 January 2022 by the Executive Chief Officer, Communities and Place

The Ward Manager highlighted section 4.7 of the report which contained a missing sentence and confirmed that the proposed £3,000 allocation for Alness Toilets in the Cromarty Firth ward met the criteria and aims of the fund.

During discussion, the following issues were raised:

- Support was voiced for the use of any additional funds being allocated to the purchase of two battery and solar powered Speed Indicator Devices, although it was asked that alternatives also be investigated and details provided to Members. Speed indicators near pedestrian crossings would be particularly useful; and
- it was hoped the play park projects would be fulfilled as quickly as possible and the need for a further design process was queried given the limited options for placing the equipment. Members should be kept updated on timescales to allow them to respond to queries.

The Committee **APPROVED** the proposed applications and funding allocations and **AGREED** to investigate the purchase of two Speed Indicator Devices, or similar alternative.

**7. Area Roads Capital Programme 2022-23
Prògram Calpa Rathaidean Sgìreil 2022-23**

There had been circulated Report No ERA/05/22 dated 11 January 2022 by the Executive Chief Officer, Infrastructure, Environment & Economy.

During discussion, the following issues were raised:

- concern was expressed about various roads projects in Tain and Easter Ross which had not been completed and appeared to have been removed from the list of planned projects. Members asked for more regular updates on local projects to enable them to respond to queries from the public and it was suggested the Council's CRM system should be investigated as a possible means of achieving this;
- attention was drawn to the poor state of repair of many roads in the area, several with significant potholes, and Members felt strongly that the Council roads allocation to the Cromarty Firth and Tain & Easter Ross wards was unfair, with reference being made to significant road repair work being undertaken in Wester Ross in comparison. The Area Roads Officer and his team were thanked for their dedication and hard work in the face of a challenging budget situation. Members made it clear the problem lay with lack of resources from the Council and asked that a letter be sent to the Council

Leader and Budget Leader by the end of the day to ensure it could be shared prior to the Redesign Board on 18 February 2022 at which the Roads Project Brief was being approved;

- it was clarified that the verges on the back road from Dingwall to Evanton were due to be repaired from a different budget;
- appreciation was expressed for the projects that had been undertaken and information sought on others that had not been; and
- assurance was sought and provided that drainage and verge improvements were also considered when tarring projects were being undertaken in a particular area.

In response to comments, attention was drawn to the Roads Project Brief that was being considered the following day by the Redesign Board, and would consider the budget allocation across the Highlands, as well as communication and effective scheduling. In relation to the Easter Ross roads allocation, it was explained that the capital works requested by Members that were undertaken in 2020-21 had exceeded the 2020-21 budget and resulted in less funding being available in 2021-22. Members asked that the current figures for this year's roads capital budget be provided to them outwith the meeting, including budget allocations, expenditure to date and anticipated corresponding adjustment of the budget into next financial year. A brief summary of progress with various local projects was provided and it was confirmed that money allocated to an area would remain in that area.

The Committee:

- i. **APPROVED** the proposed 2022/23 Area Roads Capital Programme for Easter Ross Area;
- ii. **AGREED** to thank the Area Roads team for their dedication and hard work in the face of a challenging budget situation;
- iii. **AGREED** to write to the Council Leader and Budget Leader to draw attention to the need to increase the Roads budget for Easter Ross. This should be done by 17 February 2022 to allow the letter to be shared at the Redesign Board on 18 February, when the Roads Project was being considered;
- iv. **AGREED** to investigate a means of improving communication with the public on progress with roads projects, this investigation to consider the use of the CRM system; and
- v. **AGREED** to provide Committee Members, outwith the meeting, the current figures for this year's roads capital budget, to include budget allocations, expenditure to date and anticipated corresponding adjustment of the budget into next financial year.

**8. Bridgend Primary School, Alness – Traffic Calming on Caplich Road and Ardross Road
Bun-Sgoil Cheann na Drochaide, Alanais – Socrachadh Trafaig air Rathad na Caplaich agus Rathad Àird Rois**

There had been circulated Report No ERA/06/22 dated 28 January 2022 by the Executive Chief Officer, Infrastructure, Environment & Economy.

The Committee:

- i. **NOTED** the background to the proposed traffic calming measures and the representations received;
- ii. **APPROVED** the construction of the associated traffic calming; and
- iii. **NOTED** the intention to monitor the area after the construction including commissioning a traffic survey at the junction of Caplich Road/Perrins Road to determine the effectiveness of the new road layout and traffic calming measures.

9. Housing Performance Report Aithisg Choileanaidh Taigheadais

There is circulated Report No ERA/07/22 dated 3 February 2022 by the Executive Chief Officer, Housing and Property.

During discussion, the following issues were considered:

- Members praised the area housing staff for their hard work, responsiveness to queries, and support offered to vulnerable clients, which was much appreciated;
- it was hoped the excellent work undertaken to reduce rent arrears would continue and improve the situation even further;
- it was disappointing that targets for non-emergency repairs in Tain and Easter Ross were not being met. Non-emergency repairs had been significantly affected by the Covid crisis;
- information was sought on responsibility for maintaining pavements and car parks in housing estates, and on issues previously raised under the Housing Revenue Account. Staff from repairs and maintenance would be asked to attend ward business meetings to review works required; and
- Mrs P Munro asked that she be contacted by housing staff in relation to the storage of foodbank items at Milnafua.

The Committee:

- i. **NOTED** the information provided on housing performance in the period 1 April 2021 to 31 December 2021;
- ii. **AGREED** to thank the Housing team for their hard work and responsiveness; and
- iii. **AGREED** to ask Housing staff to contact Mrs P Munro in relation to the storage of foodbank items at Milnafua.

10. Garage Rents Màil Gharaidsean

There had been circulated Report No ERA/08/22 dated 3 February 2022 by the Executive Chief Officer, Housing and Property.

A 1% increase was recommended, in line with the increase to Council house rent, and discussion ensued on whether to accept this recommendation, or freeze the rents at their current level, particularly given the small size and poor

state of repair of some of the garages. Further issues raised included the following:

- a future report was required on the viability of the garage stock, along with an options appraisal for their use and continuity;
- the HRA would not be a suitable source of funding for this and an asset transfer to facilitate the use of external funding might be required;
- the environmental budget was not used for garage improvements;
- a 1% increase only represented approximately £1.5k of income, minus the administrative costs; and
- a Highland-wide policy on garages might be required.

The Committee **AGREED** to retain the status quo for the garage rents, namely a rent freeze, giving due consideration to bringing back a report as soon as possible on the viability of garage stock and an options appraisal for their use and continuity.

11. Invergordon Common Good Fund Maoin Math Coitcheann Inbhir Ghòrdain

There had been circulated Report No ERA/09/22 dated 8 February 2022 by the Executive Chief Officer, Resources and Finance and Executive Chief Officer, Community and Place.

A brief summary was provided of the situation with the Bouchardon Bust and Invergordon Town Hall, with particular reference to the high maintenance costs of the hall, which made it more of a liability than an asset. It was generally considered preferable to sell the hall, even if only for a nominal sum, to enable the building to be preserved for the future, the Council having no budget to do anything other than mothball it. Assurance was sought that the Town Hall belonged to the Common Good Fund and not the Highland Council. It was suggested that it would be preferable for any proceeds from the sale of the Bust to be used to form a fund, such as a common good fund, to which local groups could apply for the benefit of the local community;

The Committee:

- i. **NOTED** the Invergordon Common Good Fund Annual Report for 2020/22;
- ii. **NOTED** the position of the Invergordon Common Good Fund, as shown in the 2021 Quarter 3 monitoring statement;
- iii. **APPROVED** the proposed budget for 2022/23; and
- iv. **AGREED**:
 - a. to commence work on an options appraisal and outline business case for a use of any seedcorn money returned from the sale of the Bouchardon Bust, i.e. setting up of an Invergordon common good fund which would generate substantial income for the community to use for local projects for the future; and
 - * b. **TO RECOMMEND** to Highland Council to dispose of Invergordon Town Hall by sale, after considerable years of attempting to bring it into viable use to provide sufficient income for its continued use.

12. Tain Common Good Fund Maoin Math Coitcheann Bhaile Dhubhthaich

There had been circulated Report No ERA/10/22 dated 3 February 2022 by the Executive Chief Officer, Resources and Finance and Executive Chief Officer, Community and Place.

The Ward Manager highlighted the Tain Golf Club Road project for which a budget of £20,000 had been set aside from reserves to carry out repairs, but for which there had been a query raised relating to land ownership. An investigation had been undertaken and although the land on which the works was required was in third party ownership, there were clear benefits from the project for the wider public and for the land owned by the common good fund.

Although not included in the report, Mr Louden expressed concern about how land at Blarliath had come to be in the ownership of the Highland Council rather than the Common Good Fund and he asked that this issue be included as a standing item on ward business meetings and included as a section on the Common Good monitoring reports, accepting that it would be some time before there was sufficient staff resource to carry out this work.

The Committee:

- i. **NOTED** the Tain Common Good Fund Annual Report for 2020/21;
- ii. **NOTED** the position of the Tain Common Good Fund, as shown in the 2021 Quarter 3 monitoring statement;
- iii. **APPROVED** the proposed budget for 2022/23; and
- iv. **AGREED** to have Blarliath land ownership as a standing item on ward business meetings and included as a section on the Common Good monitoring reports, accepting that it would be some time before there was sufficient staff resource to carry out this work.

13. Minutes Geàrr-chunntas

There had been circulated and were **NOTED** Minutes of Meeting of the Easter Ross Area Committee held on 18 November 2021.

The meeting ended at 1.20pm

The Highland Council

Minutes of Meeting of the Isle of Skye and Raasay Committee (Comataidh an Eilein Sgitheanaich agus Ratharsair) held remotely on **Monday, 21 February 2022 at 10.30 am.**

Present:

Mr John Finlayson
Mr John Gordon

Mr Calum MacLeod
Mr Calum Munro

Officials in attendance:

Mr W MacKinnon, Ward Manager, Communities and Place
Mr C Howell, Head of Roads & Infrastructure, Infrastructure, Environment & Economy
Mr G Macdonald, Roads Operations Manager, Infrastructure, Environment & Economy
Mr R MacLeod, Housing Manager, Housing & Property
Ms I MacIver, Housing Investment Officer, Housing & Property
Ms F Cameron, Programme Manager, Infrastructure, Environment & Economy
Mr S Dalgarno, Development Plans Manager, Infrastructure, Environment & Economy
Ms D MacAllister, Engagement Coordinator, Infrastructure, Environment & Economy
Mr A Webster, Regeneration Team Leader, Infrastructure, Environment & Economy
Mr A MacInnes, Administrative Assistant, Performance & Governance

Also in Attendance:

Area Commander (South) J Valentine, Police Scotland (Item 5 only)

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

Mr J Gordon in the Chair

Preliminaries

The Chairman welcomed Members to this last meeting of the Area Committee for this term of the Council. There were a number of good news stories on the agenda which was testament to all the hard work and vision of local Members and Officers over the last term.

**1. Apologies for Absence
Leisgeulan**

There were no apologies for absence.

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

There were no declarations on interest.

**3. Housing Revenue Account: Garage Rents 2022/23
Cunntas Teachd-a-steach Taigheadais: Màil Gharaidsean 2022/23**

There had been circulated Report No. SR/1/22 by the Executive Chief Officer Housing and Property which provided information on garage rents for Skye &

Raasay and invited the Committee to set rent levels for garages on the Housing Revenue Account for 2022/2023.

Following consideration, the Committee **AGREED** a 1% rent increase to apply to Skye & Raasay garages.

4. **Minutes Geàrr-chunntas**

There had been circulated for information, Minutes of Meeting of the Isle of Skye and Raasay Committee (Comataidh an Eilein Sgitheanaich agus Ratharsair) held on 29 November 2021, which were approved at the Highland Council meeting held on 10 December 2021.

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

5. **Police Scotland Local Committee Performance Report Aithisg Choileanaidh Comataidh Ionadail Poileas Alba**

There had been circulated Report No SR/2/22 by the Area Inspector for Police Scotland which provided an update on the progress with reference to the objectives outlined in the Highland Policing Plan 2020-2023.

In discussion, reference was made to a workshop planned next month to refresh Police engagement with Community Councils following the Covid-19 pandemic. There were Police Officers nominated as contacts for each Community Council in the area and a list of these would be shared with Members so they know who to contact should they receive any queries from Community Councils.

It was advised that the Skye and Lochalsh area were to have 2 additional Officers and it was confirmed there were no planned reductions in staffing numbers in the area at present. Inspector Ross McCartney had recently been promoted and clarification would be provided to Members on staffing changes of local Officers as a result of this.

It would be beneficial to brief local Members confidentially of any significant incidents such as with drugs for awareness purposes. Therefore, an undertaking was given to provide Members with updates of significant crime issues in the local community.

It was advised that the county line drug trade was not a current concern in this area and mainly an issue for the Inverness area. In terms of drugs misuse, enforcement action was not the only option, but also re-engaging with the Drugs and Alcohol Partnership to see what support could be given to people. There was also the option of anonymous reporting and consideration would be given to publicising this more.

Reference was made to recent changes in the Highway code for cyclists and it was queried if anything could be done by the road safety team to raise awareness to motorists of these changes. It was advised that there would be media releases for road users on cycle safety when the weather improved and there was likely to be more cyclists on the road. Also, reference was made to Operation Close Pass where Police Scotland would deploy plain-clothes officers on bikes and drivers who overtake cyclists to closely may be pulled over, provided with advice and if

necessary cautioned for dangerous driving. An undertaking was given to carry out this operation on the Isle of Skye in the summer months.

In terms of road traffic offences, the number of these were still high in the area and anecdotally careless driving was mostly by visitors to the area, while MOT offences tended to be local drivers. Further research on this would be undertaken to see if more driver education was required and an update would be provided in the next performance report.

In terms of road safety, particularly at specific speeding/accident hotspots, road surveys and engaging with the community were measures that would be undertaken to mitigate these issues.

Thereafter, the Committee **NOTED**:-

- i progress made against the objectives set within the Highland Local Policing Plan 2020-2023 Year 2, attached as Annex A to the report, for the period covering 1 April, 2021 to 31 December, 2021;
- ii Police contacts would be shared with Members so they know who to contact should they receive any queries from Community Councils;
- iii clarification would be provided to Members on staffing changes of local Officers;
- iv Members would be provided with updates on significant crime issues in the local community;
- v Operation Close Pass would be undertaken on the Isle of Skye in the summer months; and
- vi Further research on road traffic offences would be undertaken to see if more driver education was required and an update would be provided in the next performance report.

6. Area Roads Capital Programme 2022/23 Prògram Calpa Rathaidean na Sgìre 2022/23

There had been circulated Report No.SR/3/22 by the Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure, Environment & Economy which provided details of the proposed 2022/23 Area Roads Capital Programme for the Isle of Skye and Raasay Area.

In particular, it was noted that the local allocations of the capital budget for 2022/23 remained to be established and Members hoped there would be a positive budget for this area. Recognition was given to how hard the local Roads team was working in difficult conditions. It was also recognised that through the Scottish Roads Condition Survey, roads in this area were deteriorating. It was recognised that there was not sufficient funding to improve all roads, but there was a need to have a planned approach to road improvements. The roads in the proposed programme were recognised as some of the worst roads needing repair and was supported by Members.

In terms of flexibility in the 2021/22 programme for unplanned urgent work on roads, this could only be done by removing other works in the current programme. A new pothole patcher pro machine would be a great asset for the area in road maintenance and every effort would be made to maximise its use. An update was provided on staffing in the local roads team and it was hoped vacancies could be filled soon, so that there would be a full staffing complement. In relation to white

lining road markings, a pan-Highland contract for white lining to undertake the backlog of road markings across Highland was being looked at.

The Committee **APPROVED** the proposed 2022/23 Area Roads Capital Programme for the Isle of Skye and Raasay Area.

**7. Isle of Skye and Raasay HRA Capital Programme 2022/23
Prògram Calpa Cunntas Teachd-a-steach Taigheadais an Eilein Sgitheanaich
is Ratharsair 2022/23**

There had been circulated Report No. SR/4/22 by the Executive Chief Officer Housing and Property which contained details of the level of HRA capital resources for Skye and Raasay for 2022-23.

It was highlighted that post April, 2022 there would be significant financial pressures on all tenants with increases in energy costs. It was queried if there was any further funding available for heating replacements. It was advised that due to Covid-19 there was a backlog of projects to be undertaken in the Capital Programme and therefore the budget this year for heating replacements was proposed to be reduced. However, if good progress was made on the backlog, there was flexibility to accelerate from future years work within the Programme and it was hoped that the next Capital Programme would be a 3 or 5 year programme.

Also, it was requested that regular updates be provided to Members with progress on works with environmental improvements. If Members were in agreement this budget could be used towards heating systems, insulation, windows and doors. Guidance was given to tenants on how best to use their heating system and independent heating advice and Welfare support referrals were also available. In addition, the housing team would raise awareness to tenants of any additional grants or funding that was available such as from the Energy Efficient Scotland Programme.

The Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the allocation of resources to Skye & Raasay Area as set out at 5.7;
- ii. **NOTED** the guideline investment priorities as set out in sections 5.2 and 5.3 of the report;
- iii. **AGREED** the proposed one-year HRA Capital Programme for Skye & Raasay 2022-23 as set out in Appendix 1;
- iv. **NOTED** the position relating the current year HRA Capital Programme; and
- v. **NOTED** that updates on the Housing Revenue Account Capital Programme would continue to be provided through ward briefings and at future Local Committees as requested by local Members, in addition to reporting to Housing and Property Committee.

**8. Highland Coastal Communities Fund – Assessment of Applications
Maoin Choimhearsnachdan Cladaich na Gàidhealtachd – Measadh Iarrtasan**

There had been circulated Report No. SR/5/22 by the Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure, Environment & Economy which invited Members to consider applications for funding from the Highland Coastal Communities Fund. The Isle of

Skye and Raasay Committee had been awarded £493,223.34 of Crown Estates revenues for distribution.

There were 3 applications for funding and an update on funding requested was provided. In particular, there had been amendments to the proposed amounts to be awarded to the Motorhome Service point and Old Man of Storr projects, in light of additional information received since the papers for the meeting had been issued.

Members expressed support for the applications, as amended, and welcomed this significant additional funding for this area. In terms of the remaining Coastal Communities funding available for this area, it was advised that given applications for funding across Highland were oversubscribed it was intended to engage with communities to refine priorities for the funding and therefore help manage expectations from applicants and to make decision making easier. The Skye and Raasay Futures Plan would be a good basis to focus this community engagement. It was therefore proposed to call for projects towards the end of the Local Government Election period, so that applications could be brought to Local Committees at one of their early meetings in the new Council term.

Following consideration, the Committee **AGREED** to award Highland Coastal Communities Fund funding as follows:-

Camuscross & Duisdale initiative – Motorhome Service point - £34,332.60
 Highland Council – Old Man of Storr – Future Development - £77,000.00
 Highland Council – Bagging Mower - £13,750.00

9. **Place Based Investment Programme Prògram Tasgaidh Stèidhichte air Àite**

There had been circulated Report No. SR/6/22 by the Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure, Environment & Economy which invited the Committee to consider proposals for the use of Place Based Investment Programme funding. This Committee had been allocated £76,594.

In particular, it was confirmed that the proposals were supported by the Community Planning Partnership and were in line with the Skye and Raasay Futures Plan.

Members supported the proposals in the report and therefore the Committee:-

- i. **AGREED** to invest £29,465 in the Broadford Toilet Project;
- ii. **AGREED** to invest £38,297 in further refurbishment works to Portree Community Centre;
- iii. **AGREED** to holding £8,832 as contingency; and
- iv. Grant delegated authority to the Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure, Environment and Economy in consultation with the Area Committee Chair to allocate the contingency as required to approved PBIP beneficiaries in the event that additional investment is required.

10. Skye and Raasay Future Am ri Teachd an Eilein Sgitheanaich is Ratharsair

There had been circulated Report No. SR/7/22 by the Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure, Environment & Economy which provided an update on progress being made with the Skye and Raasay Future project.

It was highlighted that the theme of today's meeting was about investment in infrastructure across Skye and Raasay and the role of Skye and Raasay's 'Highlights' document was very significant as it pulled together all the good news stories in terms of investment in the Skye and Raasay area. The importance of a collaborative approach to the project was also highlighted.

The Skye and Raasay Future webpage was a very good resource for the community and showed all the updates on projects and the webpage should be promoted more.

In terms of the Programme Board membership, it was confirmed that local Members would be part of the Board and the Terms of Reference for the Board would be updated to reflect this.

The Committee **NOTED**:

- i. that the current Skye & Raasay Future Storymap and document has been finalised and is available at www.highland.gov.uk/skyeraasay;
- ii. the Terms of Reference for the Programme Board enclosed at Appendix 1, subject to it being amended to include local Members as part of the membership of the Board;
- iii. that partners support the ongoing working arrangements for SARF, the collective responsibility for implementation, and the membership of the Programme Board; and
- iv. the Skye & Raasay 'Highlights' briefing shared at the Committee meeting and would be issued immediately after.

In terms of Standing Order 9, with the consent of Members, the following item had been taken immediately after item 8 on the agenda.

In terms of Standing Order 8, the Chairman agreed to consider the following item as an urgent item of business as Islands Infrastructure funding had to be committed by the end of March, 2022.

11. Islands Infrastructure Fund – Allocation of Funding

There had been circulated Report No. SR/8/22 by the Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure, Environment & Economy which invited the Committee to agree recommended projects to receive an award of funding from The Highland Council through the Islands Infrastructure Fund.

Members supported the recommended projects, which was more welcome funding for this area and tied in with the Committee's ambitions in the Skye and Raasay Futures Plan.

The Committee **AGREED** the recommended projects outlined in Appendix 1 and shown below to receive an award of funding from The Highland Council through the Islands Infrastructure Fund as per the individual amounts detailed:-

Kilt Rock Car Park Extension, Isle of Skye - £171,725

Elgol Toilets and Parking, Chemical Waste Unit, Isle of Skye - £48,923

Sleat Community Motorhome Facilities, Sabhal Mor Ostaig, Isle of Skye - £109,992

Road Infrastructure Raasay - £49,360

Valedictory

As this was the last meeting of the Committee prior to the Local Government Election, the Chairman acknowledged that much had been achieved over the last few years, despite the challenges faced by the Covid-19 pandemic. The Chairman highlighted that he would not be standing for re-election and expressed what a privilege it had been to serve the Isle of Skye and Raasay area and working with the Members of the Committee and Officers of the Council.

Members expressed their appreciation to the Chairman for the support he had given them over the last term of the Council and his commitment to the Skye and Raasay area and wished him well for the future.

The meeting ended at 12.15 pm.

The Highland Council

Minutes of Meeting of the **Communities and Place Committee** held in the Council Chamber, Council Headquarters, Glenurquhart Road, Inverness on Wednesday 23 February 2022 at 11.30 am.

Present:

Mr G Adam	Mr A Henderson
Mr R Balfour	Mr A MacInnes
Dr I Cockburn (Substitute)	Ms M Smith
Mr R Gale (Video Conferencing)	Ms J Tilt (Video Conferencing)

Non-Members also present:

Mr R Bremner (Video Conferencing)	Mr D Macpherson
Mr J Finlayson	Mr D Mackay
Mr B Lobban	Mr W MacKay (Video Conferencing)

In attendance:

Mr A Gunn, Interim Executive Chief Officer Communities and Place
 Ms C Campbell, Head of Service (Community Operations and Logistics), Communities and Place
 Ms A Clark, Head of Service (Community Support and Engagement), Communities and Place
 Mr A McKinnie, Strategic Lead, Waste Strategy & Operations, Communities and Place (Video Conferencing)
 Mr A Yates, Strategic Lead, Environmental Health & Bereavement Services, Communities and Place
 Ms R MacKinnon, Principal Policy Officer, Communities and Place
 Ms K Ellen, Community Food Growing Coordinator, Communities and Place (Video Conferencing)
 Miss M Murray, Committee Administrator, Performance and Governance

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

Mr A Henderson in the Chair

Business

1. Apologies for Absence Leisgeulan

Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of Mr B Allan, Mr A Baxter, Mr J Bruce, Ms K Currie, Mr C Fraser, Mr J Gordon, Mr D MacLeod, Mr R MacWilliam, Mr H Morrison, Mrs M Paterson and Mr A Rhind.

2. Declarations of Interest Foillseachaidhean Com-pàirt

The Committee **NOTED** the following:-

Item 8 – Ms M Smith (Declaration of Interest)
 Item 8 – Mr A Henderson (Transparency Statement)

3. Revenue Budget Monitoring for Quarter 3 of 2021/22 Sgrùdadh Buidseat Teachd-a-steach airson Cairteal 3 de 2021/22

There had been circulated Report No CP/1/22 dated 4 February 2022 by the Interim Executive Chief Officer Communities and Place.

The Chairman pointed out that the financial position had improved and this was against a very challenging savings target. Thanks were expressed to all Officers for the hard work in achieving this.

The Committee **NOTED**:-

- i. the Quarter 3 position as shown on Appendices 1 and 2 of the report and that the forecasted outturn position was a pressure of £288k;
- ii. that savings forecasted to be delivered this year amounted to £505k against a target of £567k, with £62k at risk of delivery, and were factored into the outturn position; and
- iii. in addition to the underachievement of income remaining a risk for the Service, a review of various budget headings was taking place to help inform targets and other budgets at a subjective level, all within the overall Service budget target into 22/23.

4. Consultation - Review of the Public Sector Equality Duty in Scotland Co-chomhairle – Ath-sgrùdadh air Dleastanas Co-ionannachd na Roinne Poblach ann an Alba

There had been circulated Report No CP/2/22 dated 2 February 2022 by the Interim Executive Chief Officer Communities and Place.

During discussion, the following issues were raised:-

- clarification was sought, and provided, as to how gender-based budget analysis would be achieved; and
- the emphasis placed on training in the proposed response was welcomed and it was suggested that it should also be included in the response to Question 14.1, which sought views on the proposals set out by the Scottish Government and the further areas explored.

The Committee **NOTED** the Council's draft response to the consultation questions and **AGREED** that it be submitted to the Scottish Government, subject to an addition at Question 14.1 regarding the need for training.

5. Community Food Growing Strategy Ro-innleachd Fàs Bidh Coimhearsnachd

There had been circulated Report No CP/3/22 dated 3 February 2022 by the Interim Executive Chief Officer Communities and Place.

During discussion, the following issues were raised:-

- the Chairman asked if there was scope for the Council to set an earlier target than the 2027 target specified in the strategy as this would create greater focus;
- there were examples of farmers selling vegetable packs so communities could buy local produce to make soup;
- it was important to encourage communities to participate but the mechanism by which this would be achieved was questioned. There were areas which were keen to explore this but were unclear of the process;
- it was vital that good practice in terms of Community Food Growing Initiatives was shared with others who were keen to participate;
- Invergordon was looking at the prospect of allotments and Birchwood Highland, who had a presence in the town, was supportive of this;
- the Scottish Government had identified Alness and Invergordon as part of a carbon saving initiative and a Community Food Growing Strategy would sit well with this;
- in some areas the difficulty in providing allotments was due to affordable land supply. In many cases such land was used for development instead so the Council might need to consider how it could help when new housing developments came on stream, such as by allocating a portion of land for community food growing;
- there were swathes of land which had been farmed in the past but which were now lying fallow. Farmers needed to be incentivised to recultivate these areas;
- the creation of a Community Food Growing Co-ordinator was welcomed but information was sought, and provided, as to how this and the Strategy was to be funded; and
- reference was made to the excellent work that the Rural Complex in Fort William had achieved in the past where, as part of the Seeds to Supper scheme, local school pupils had been encouraged to come along, sow seeds and eventually eat the produce they had grown.

The Committee:-

- i. **AGREED** and adopted Growing our Future – Highland Community Food Growing Strategy; and
- ii. **NOTED** that an annual update on the progress of implementing the Strategy would be presented to the Communities and Place Committee.

6. Response to Scottish Government’s Consultation – National Litter and Fly Tipping Strategy
Freagairt do Cho-chomhairle Riaghaltas na h-Alba – Ro-innleachd Nàiseanta Sgudail is Sitigidh Mhi-laghail

There had been circulated Report No CP/4/22 dated 3 February 2022 by the Interim Executive Chief Officer Communities and Place.

During discussion, the following issues were raised:-

- the Environmental Health Team were commended for their work;
- particular issues had arisen regarding fly tipping in Wester Ross as a result of the influx of tourists, some of which had caused distress, and the enforcement element was therefore to be welcomed;
- it was recognised that the public needed to dispose of waste goods. Whilst the bin collection worked for smaller items, larger items needed to be taken to

Recycling Centres but these had restricted opening hours, particularly at weekends;

- examples of how other countries dealt with the issue were mentioned, with both positive and negative outcomes, and there was merit in looking at best practise in other Scottish local authorities;
- a lot of fly tipping was due to criminality, with bogus firms setting up and agreeing to dispose of waste from householders for a fee to then fly tip the waste. The Council then had to dispose of the refuse;
- there was a role for Countryside Rangers to support education;
- there was less likely to be littering and fly tipping in areas where there was no debris;
- the more support that could be given to volunteer litter picks the better;
- reference was made to a significant degree of fly tipping which had taken place at an Inverness public play park. It was important that as much intelligence as possible was provided in such instances, such as CCTV, licence number plates etc, to allow a prosecution to proceed. Those who had been charged with fly tipping should be made an example of;
- the cost of waste disposal was a disincentive to responsibly deal with it; and
- clarification was required in relation to Questions 10 and 11 regarding litter hubs to avoid any possible contradiction.

The Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the consultation carried out by the Scottish Government on the National litter and flytipping strategy including the proposed potential actions to tackle litter and flytipping in Scotland; and
- ii. **AGREED** the response prepared by the officers within the Communities and Place Service as detailed in Appendix 1 of the report, subject to the responses to Questions 10 and 11 being clarified to avoid any contradiction.

7. Community Asset Transfer Requests Iarrtasan Gluasad So-mhaoin Coimhearsnachd

There had been circulated Report No CP/5/22 dated 9 February 2022 by the Interim Executive Chief Officer Communities and Place.

During discussion, the following issues were raised:-

- the proposal from Dunbeath and District Centre to develop a new health and wellbeing centre would provide significant community benefits which would considerably outweigh the potential capital receipt. 52 responses had been received during the notification period, the majority of which welcomed the proposal. 10 responses were against the proposal, highlighting concerns about awareness of it. However, Dunbeath was a small village so it was difficult to understand how a lack of awareness could be the case. The current centre had been operating since 1992 and had been well received, and tribute was paid to how it had operated during the Covid 19 pandemic and responded to local power outages. In assessing the application, community benefit, capacity to deliver and sustainability had all been graded as very strong;
- it was disappointing that the Community Council was not in support given the benefits it would generate and the good work undertaken over the last two years and before. The proposal was to expand what was already provided in what

was a rural community. The Council was looking to support such initiatives and this application was exemplar;

- turning to the sale of the Lochcarron Playgroup Cabin to Lochcarron Leisure Centre, this building was very much at the heart of the community. Many people had and would benefit from this facility and it was important it remained part of the village; and
- assurances were sought, and provided, that there were different arrangements in place to ensure with each Community Asset Transfer that the Council were not disadvantaged if assets were sold on with a view to profiteering.

The Committee **AGREED**:-

- i. the sale of the Lochcarron Playgroup Cabin for £1,000 to Lochcarron Leisure Centre, subject to the terms of transfer set out in section 2.1 of the report; and
- ii. the sale of Land South West of Neil Gunn Place, Dunbeath for £1, to Dunbeath and District Centre, subject to the terms of transfer set out in section 2.2 of the report.

8. Blue Badge Petition Athchuinge Bhaidseachan Gorma

Declaration of Interest:- Ms M Smith declared an interest in this item as she was a Blue Badge holder and, in accordance with paragraph 5.6 of the revised Code of Conduct, left the meeting.

Transparency Statement: Mr A Henderson made a Transparency Statement in respect of this item by reason of having a relative in possession of a Blue Badge. However, having applied the objective test he did not consider that he had an interest to declare. This was because any decision to abolish the reapplication charge would be a recommendation to Full Council and was so remote that he would not benefit in any way. He had requested that this Statement be recorded in the Minutes.

There had been circulated Report No CP/6/22 dated 2 February 2022 by the Interim Executive Chief Officer Communities and Place.

During discussion, the following issues were raised:-

- in response to a question it was confirmed that the £20 administration fee represented full cost recovery. If a decision was taken to abolish it then money would need to be found from elsewhere;
- Members were assured that there was a process in place to identify people applying for a Blue Badge who weren't eligible;
- it was necessary to reapply every 3 years to comply with Scottish Government legislation, the reasons for which were explained,
- due to cessation of knee and hip operations during the Covid 19 pandemic there might be some who needed a Blue Badge at the moment but who would have recuperated and would no longer require a Blue Badge when the time came to reapply;
- removing the £20 administration fee could result in a deluge of applications; and

- there was only one other local authority in Scotland who did not charge. Removing the £20 administration fee across all Councils would cost a significant amount of money.

The Committee:-

- i. **NOTED:-**
 - a) the contents of the petition;
 - b) that it has been accepted as compliant with Council procedure;
 - c) the current volume and full cost recovery for processing Blue Badges
 - d) the budget pressure implication of removing the charge for the reapplication of blue badges; and
- ii. **AGREED** to keep the £20 administration charge for reapplications.

The meeting ended at 12.55 pm.