

The Highland Council
No. 4 2022/2023

Minutes of Meeting of the Highland Council held in the Council Chamber, Council Headquarters, Glenurquhart Road, Inverness on Thursday 30 June 2022 at 10.30 am.

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

Present:

Mr C Aitken (remote - am)	Mr S Kennedy
Ms S Atkin	Mr P Logue
Mr M Baird (remote)	Mr D Louden (remote)
Mr A Baldrey	Mr W MacKay (remote)
Mr C Ballance	Mr G MacKenzie
Dr C Birt	Mrs I MacKenzie (remote)
Mr B Boyd	Mr S Mackie
Mr R Bremner	Mr A MacKintosh
Mr I Brown (remote)	Mr R MacKintosh
Mr M Cameron	Mrs A MacLean
Mrs I Campbell (remote)	Ms K MacLean
Mrs G Campbell-Sinclair	Mr T MacLennan
Mr A Christie	Mr D Macpherson
Mrs M Cockburn (remote)	Ms M MacCallum
Ms T Collier	Ms J McEwan
Ms H Crawford	Mr J McGillivray (remote)
Ms S Fanet	Mr D Millar
Mr J Finlayson (remote)	Mr H Morrison
Mr D Fraser	Mrs P Munro
Mr L Fraser	Mr C Munro
Mr R Gale	Ms L Niven
Mr K Gowans	Mr P Oldham
Mr J Grafton	Mrs M Patterson
Mr A Graham	Ms M Reid
Mr M Green	Mr A Rhind
Mr R Gunn	Mrs T Robertson
Mrs J Hendry	Mr K Rosie
Ms M Hutchison	Mrs L Saggars
Mr A Jarvie	Mr A Sinclair (remote)
Mrs B Jarvie	Mr R Stewart
Ms L Johnston	Ms K Willis
Mr R Jones	

In Attendance:

Chief Executive

Acting Depute Chief Executive and Executive Chief Officer, Performance and Governance

Executive Chief Officer, Communities and Place

Executive Chief Officer, Education and Learning

Executive Chief Officer, Health and Social Care

Executive Chief Officer, Infrastructure, Environment and Economy

Executive Chief Officer, Property and Housing

Mr B Lobban in the Chair

Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of Mr J Bruce, Mr D Gregg, Mr A MacDonald, Mrs B McAllister, Ms M Nolan, Ms S Rawlings, Mr M Reiss and Ms M Smith.

2. Declarations of Interest/Transparency Statements Foillseachaidhean Com-pàirt

The Council **NOTED** the following Declarations of Interest:-

Item 9: Ms T Collier

Item 10: Mr K Rosie and Mr R Stewart

Item 10.i: Mr R Bremner, Mr M Green, Mr D Macpherson, Mr C Munro and Mrs T Robertson

Item 11: Mr S Mackie

Item 12: Mr D Gregg

Item 15.i: Mr J Finlayson, Mr K Gowans and Mr D Louden

and the following Transparency Statements:-

Item 7: Mr A Christie

Item 8: Mr A Jarvie

Item 10.ii: Mr C Munro and Mrs T Robertson

Item 11: Mr A Christie

Item 20: Mr D Macpherson

Item 21: Mr G MacKenzie

3. 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 26 May 2022 and 9 June 2022 as contained in the Volume which had been circulated separately - which were **APPROVED**.

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

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

City of Inverness Area Committee 8 June 2022

The Minutes, having been moved and seconded were **APPROVED**.

Minutes of Meetings not included in the Volume were as follows

Investment Sub Committee held on 11 March 2022- **APPROVED**; and
Community Planning Board held on 20 December 2021 (approved by the Board on 8 April 2022) - **NOTED**.

5. Question Time Àm Ceiste

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

Public Question

Mr Ewing

To the Chair of Economy and Infrastructure

“Despite having it in print that funding is available for a Pelican Crossing on the B9006 near the bus stops at Brinckman/Cradlehall, why has it not been installed, instead, why has money been wasted on pavement alterations which only encourage the public to cross at a more dangerous spot?”

The response had been circulated with the Chair of Economy and Infrastructure also intimating that he would provide Mr Ewing with additional technical data (*additional technical data response provided below*).

Highland Council understood that some members of the community desired for both a lights-controlled crossing on the B9006 in the vicinity of Brinckman Terrace and a 30 mph limit to be put in place to cover this stretch of road. Requests of this nature were subject to assessment and as an Authority these assessments were based on guidance set out in Road Safety GB ‘School Crossing Patrol Service Guidelines Rev 2018’ and ‘Setting Local Speed Limits: Guidance for Local Authorities: ETLLD Circular 1/2006’ along with good practice. This ensured that safe and consistent decisions were made across the Local Authority Area.

Highland Council were committed to, and in the process of, delivering a wider road safety strategy for the area of the B9006 from Woodside of Culloden to the existing 30 mph limit gateway near Caulfield Road North. This included the area of the B9006 at Brinckman Terrace. The Council were in the process of promoting a 50mph limit Road Traffic Regulation Order for the B9006 at the Woodside of Culloden. In addition to this the signalisation of the B9006/Tower Road junction, which was being funded by developer contributions, would be delivered to support road safety and active travel. As an Authority, again to support active travel and road safety in the wider area, officers were keen to see the implementation of a 30 mph speed limit on the B9006 from Tower Road junction to the existing 30 mph limit gateway to the West, again this covered the area in question. An independent Road Safety Audit highlighted the fact that the existing mean average vehicle speeds in the area were too high for the implementation of a 30 mph speed limit at present and therefore work was ongoing to achieve a reduction in the existing mean average speed of vehicles in this area to allow this 30 mph limit to be implemented. To provide improved pedestrian crossing facilities on the B9006 in the area of Brinckman Terrace an uncontrolled drop kerb crossing scheme with clear visibility for pedestrians waiting to cross was due to be installed to the East of the existing Bus Stops. This scheme would be supported via signing and lining to increase the conspicuously of the location pedestrians were being encouraged to cross.

Before the installation of any formal (lights controlled or zebra) crossing can take place in any location guidance dictated that a formal assessment, known as an ADPV² Assessment, should be carried out. The numerical assessment value was calculated using the following data; the existing accident history, difficulty factor (road width and vehicle speeds), pedestrian and vehicle volumes at the site. The Assessment criteria a site should meet was as follows:

For sites where the value of Assessment Value was equal to or exceeded **0.5**, detailed site evaluation would be carried out to determine a suitable solution which might include a central refuge; a zebra; or a signal controlled crossing

where the Assessment Value was greater than 1 then consideration would be given to a signal controlled pedestrian crossing.

In 2018, when the concerns were first raised by Mr Ewing, the Road Safety Team undertook all necessary road safety investigations and fed the results back to the Mr Ewing. The results of the 2018 site investigation showed an Assessment Value of **0.219**. Although nothing had materially changed at this site in terms of housing/vehicle numbers an up to date Assessment was carried out in April 2022 with the new Assessment value coming out at **0.218**. This site fell short of the requirements that needed to be met in order for the implementation of a lights-controlled crossing. A key reason for having specific criteria was to ensure that any crossing that was installed was not underused due to a lack of pedestrians crossing as this could create road safety issues e.g. vehicles failing to stop at the formal crossing (red light running) as vehicles were simply not used to seeing the crossing being triggered by pedestrians. In addition, to the assessment requirements not being met at this location, it was also engineering wise not a suitable location for the installation of a lights-controlled crossing. This was due to the desired location being in the middle of 2 lay-by style bus stops meaning it was not physically possible to fit in a crossing on the desire line. It should also be noted that there was an existing lights-controlled crossing on the B9006 440m or thereby to the West of the requested site and an existing pedestrian refuge island 95m or thereby to the East of the site. There had been extensive correspondence with Mr Ewing, Ward Members and constituents explaining why it was an inappropriate location for a formal pedestrian crossing.

During the assessment process it became apparent that the operation of the School Crossing Patroller at this location had been problematic due to illness. As a result, the Authority's Education and Roads Service are currently working together to ensure there was a replacement service supplied. As a consequence of these findings it was recommended that there was a review of operating procedures for School Crossing Patrollers to ensure a closer working relationship between the Education and Roads Services and proposals would be brought to a future Strategic Committee.

Member Questions

(i) Mr A Christie

To the Leader of the Council

“Please could the Leader share with us either estimated or clear timescales, the process by which the Administration intends to formulate, debate, and approve the new Administration Programme which will become the Highland Council Programme?”

The response had been circulated.

In terms of a supplementary question, it was queried what the Leader considered to be the best practise in engaging with Members, staff and communities.

In response, the Leader of the Council hoped, referring to the previous Administration's Programme's submission to Council and engagement, to speed that up so that a similar process could be followed and to put in place the ability for public, Members and staff to engage. He was happy to meet with the Leader of the Opposition to ensure he had full input as far as a feed-in process was concerned.

(ii) Mr A Christie

To the Chair of Corporate Resources

“Could the Chair of Corporate Resources (or Budget Lead) please detail the impact both operationally and in financial terms that the Scottish Government Resource Spending Review published on 31 May 2022 will have on the Council with particular regard to the Fraser of Allender Institute assertion that the local government budget will decline by 7% in real terms between 2022/23 and 2026/27?”

The response had been circulated.

In terms of a supplementary question, it was queried, as CoSLA had stated the real-time reduction in the Scottish Government grant over the next four years would result in fewer jobs and cuts to service, what action would the Chair take to lobby the Scottish Government to reverse the damaging financial plan for the Council.

In response, the Chair of Corporate Resources gave a reassurance that the Administration would be in touch with the Scottish Government on a regular and ongoing basis to try and secure additional funding for the Council. The Administration did have some ideas it would put to the Scottish Government. He intended to undertake this role in exactly the same way as Councillor Christie had in the previous Administration and he was open to any suggestions and ideas that Councillor Christie had and, as part of the budget setting process, the Administration would be working across the Chamber to try and make sure every idea was given full consideration in the weeks and months ahead.

(iii) Mrs T Robertson

To the Chair of Housing and Property Committee

“Artificial grass pitches are a significant source of microplastic pollution. The number of these is growing across HIGHLAND.

The weather, pitch maintenance and the shoes and clothes of players can dislodge and transport the microplastic granules away from the field. Each pitch requires replacement of up to 5 tonnes of micro crumb infill on a yearly basis to maintain the standard.

Microplastic pollution has an impact on the soil, waterways and ultimately the ocean.

What practical steps are being taken to reduce or prevent microplastic loss from artificial pitches across our estate?”

The response had been circulated.

In terms of a supplementary question, it was queried what practical measures were in place or were planned to prevent microplastic loss across the Council’s estate.

In response, the Chair of Housing and Property Committee pointed out that KIMO and Fidra had long been promoting the Pitch In Pledge which was designed to tackle artificial pitch pollution. This project aimed to reduce harmful microplastic emissions into the environment from artificial grass pitches. The Council would address the issue of microplastic pollution. The problem was increasing because artificial pitches were becoming increasingly popular as a year-round alternative. Given the concerns raised officers had been asked to undertake a review to consider further measures

such as adding low level perimeter boarding around artificial pitches, installing silt traps to avoid infill being lost down storm drains, boot brushing stations within the pitch perimeter to avoid granules being dispersed outwith the pitch and installing filters in shower drains. All reasonable steps would be taken to reduce the emission of microplastic from artificial playing fields into the environment. The very clear message from KIMO and Fidra, which addressed microplastic pollution, would have to be considered by all owners and operators of artificial grass pitches throughout the Highland area. The Chair of the Economy and Infrastructure Committee had also been asked to take up this environmental challenge through his Committee and membership of KIMO.

(iv) Mr A Jarvie

To the Chair of Corporate Resources

“How many employees have taken the Council to employment tribunal in each of the last 5 years, broken down by high level reasons for lodging the action”.

The response had been circulated.

In terms of a supplementary question, it was queried, as over 50% of employees who had brought employment tribunal claims against the Council had been on the grounds of disability discrimination every year, why the Council was not learning from its lessons and making changes to reasonable adjustment policies, not only to stop these claims but to help employees too.

In response, the Chair of Corporate Resources pointed out that historically there had been a very small number of claims. In 3 of the last 5 years there had only been one single claim. Ideally, the Council would want to see no claims at all but that had to be set in the context of 10,000 employees. He did accept the concern raised regarding claims on the grounds of disability and would look into that further and provide a follow-up response.

6. Notices of Motion Brathan Glusaid

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

(i) This Council recognises that proficiency in learning the fundamentals of literacy and numeracy is a core foundation of primary education.

This Council recognises that children who do not learn such skills at primary school are less likely to have a positive destination when they leave school.

Noting that Highland Council currently benchmarks poorly in Scotland for literacy and numeracy at stages Primary One, Four and Seven, this Council instructs that an Improvement Report be presented by the Executive Chief Officer of Education to the next full Council Meeting following discussions at the Education Committee. This Council instructs that thereafter regular progress updates be submitted to each Education Committee by the Executive Chief Officer of Education, and biannually to Council.

Signed: Ms H Crawford Mr A Christie

During discussion, Members raised the following issues:-

- as school staff and pupils began their summer holidays, Members expressed their appreciation to everyone who worked in and attended Highland's schools for their hard work and resilience during what had again been a challenging year;
- whilst there was much to be proud of in Highland, pupils and teachers had been under immense pressure during Covid. One area that had been particularly impacted was literacy and numeracy, specifically at Primary School level where Highland, according to the Local Government Benchmarking Framework, was now ranked lowest in Scotland at Primary 1, 4 and 7, and it was questioned why these core fundamentals of education were not considered at full Council. There was also minimal reporting at ward level of this most basic and essential of skill sets;
- whilst it was reassuring that much work had taken place "under the radar", it was imperative that it was monitored and scrutinised at the highest level involving all 74 Elected Members;
- a request was made for a Recovery Plan to be presented at the next full Council, following discussion with the Education Committee, with biannual updates thereafter;
- the Council had a responsibility to ensure children had proficiency in literacy and numeracy as, if they had these fundamentals, they were more likely to access skilled jobs and enjoy good health and wellbeing outcomes;
- this was a top priority for many Members, parents and carers and it was hoped the Council would elevate the status of these learning fundamentals to reassure parents that this was also a top priority at Highland Council;
- it was important to listen to the views of young people and this did not always correlate to what was said in the Chamber;
- Education represented a quarter of the Council's revenue expenditure and, as such, it was essential that this money was spent properly and wisely. Attainment was one aspect that could be measured but the results showed Highland to be failing. It was essential pupils received the literacy and numeracy skills they needed and this was the responsibility of policy makers;
- the Council was accountable to parents, who needed reassurance that action was being taken quickly to turnaround the Council's poor ranking in literacy and numeracy;
- teachers new to Highland were predominantly only offered a one-year contract and this was a disincentive for many. It was hoped that an addition to the Motion would be accepted whereby the Education Committee would be instructed to consider whether offering new teachers a one-year contract guaranteed that the best teachers applied, with a report back to the Full Council on this and any budgetary implications;
- all Members wanted to see attainment improve, as did the Education Service. A lot of work was taking place to improve literacy and numeracy attainment and the priority given to health and wellbeing had already been reported to both Full Council and the Education Committee;
- an action plan to improve attainment had already been brought to the Education Committee in February and, since the publication of last year's data, there had been a significant increase in the combined outcomes for children with regards to literacy and numeracy attainment with indicative figures demonstrating a 10% increase across both measures;
- staff had also undergone training and feedback was that there was increased confidence in the planning and moderation of high-quality assessments and their ability to support moderation practices in their own school and further afield. Furthermore, Primary Head Teachers had attended primary-focussed attainment meetings with their collaborative leads in their Associated School Groups;

- there had been a number of other advances supporting other aspects of learning and teaching and attainment including; an increased confidence in the development of children's cognitive skills, health and wellbeing; the development of a mental health and wellbeing website with pupils, parents and practitioners; a counselling service was now being embedded in all schools across Highland; and positive destinations were also improving with Highland now in line with the national average;
- assessment was an ongoing process and the most important means of evaluating the effectiveness of learning and teaching was formative assessment;
- it was important teaching time was spent on learning and teaching and not on excessive data collection and reporting;
- discussions about attainment would get more focus at the Education Committee. In addition, all Members were permitted to attend the Education Committee and, at the discretion of the Chair, able to speak. Bringing Strategic Committee business to Full Council would set a precedent for other Committees;
- language development started at a very early age and therefore parents and carers had a significant impact on this. It went beyond just Education, and the wider factors involved needed to be explored at the Health, Social Care and Wellbeing Committee;
- it was contended that Highland was not at the bottom of the league table as the data had been affected by the Covid pandemic; and
- the Council had a commitment to take on probationer teachers and offering one-year contracts would have a detrimental impact on the Council's ability to do that.

Thereafter, Ms H Crawford, seconded by Mr A Christie, **MOVED** the terms of the Notice of Motion as detailed with the addition of instructing the Education Committee to consider whether offering new teacher to Highland a one-year contract guaranteed the best teachers applied to move to the Highlands with a report back to the Full Council on its findings and any budgetary implications.

Mr J Finlayson, seconded by Mr D Millar, moved as an **AMENDMENT** that the Highland Council was committed to improving literacy and numeracy attainment and, as was outlined at the February Education Committee, there was a plan in place to support this whilst also taking account of the Council's decision to prioritise Health and Wellbeing during the two years of Covid. Updates would continue to be presented to the Education Committee in relation to the Attainment Improvement Plan, which would coincide with the accepted and annual reporting calendar that was in place for all schools. Reporting of Key Performance Indicators relating to attainment would continue to be reported annually to Full Council.

On a vote being taken, the **MOTION** received 27 votes and the **AMENDMENT** received 35 votes, with 1 abstention, and the **AMENDMENT** was therefore **CARRIED**, the votes having been cast as follows:-

For the Motion:

Mr C Aitken, Mr M Baird, Mr A Baldrey, Mr C Ballance, Mr A Christie, Ms H Crawford, Mr R Gale, Mr J Grafton, Mr A Graham, Mr R Gunn, Mr A Jarvie, Mrs B Jarvie, Mr P Logue, Ms M MacCallum, Mr J McGillivray, Mrs I MacKenzie, Mr S Mackie, Mr A MacKintosh, Mr R MacKintosh, Mrs A MacLean, Mr D Macpherson, Ms J McEwan, Mr H Morrison, Mrs T Robertson, Mrs L Saggars, Mr R Stewart, Ms K Willis.

For the Amendment:

Ms S Atkin, Dr C Birt, Mr B Boyd, Mr R Bremner, Mr I Brown, , Mr M Cameron, Mrs G Campbell-Sinclair, Mrs M Cockburn, Ms T Collier, Ms S Fanet, Mr J Finlayson, Mr D Fraser, Mr L Fraser, Mr K Gowans, Mr M Green, Mrs J Hendry, Ms M Hutchison, Ms L

Johnston, Mr R Jones, Mr S Kennedy, Ms E Knox, Ms L Kraft, Mr B Lobban, Mr D Loudon, Mr W MacKay, Mr G MacKenzie, Ms K MacLean, Mr T MacLennan, , Mr D Millar, Mrs P Munro, Mr C Munro, Ms L Niven, Mr P Oldham, Ms M Reid, Mr K Rosie.

Abstention:

Mr A Rhind

Decision

The Council **AGREED** that it was committed to improving literacy and numeracy attainment and, as was outlined at the February Education Committee, there was a plan in place to support this whilst also taking account of the Council's decision to prioritise Health and Wellbeing during the two years of Covid. Updates would continue to be presented to the Education Committee in relation to the Attainment Improvement Plan, which would coincide with the accepted and annual reporting calendar that was in place for all schools. Reporting of Key Performance Indicators relating to attainment would continue to be reported annually to Full Council.

(ii)The SNP Government committed to dualling the A96 Inverness to Aberdeen by 2030.

Specific trunk road interventions emerging from the review included upgrading the A96 between Inverness and Nairn to dual the carriageway and build a Nairn bypass.

The intention to fully dual the A96 was thereafter announced in December 2011, when Scottish Ministers published their Infrastructure Investment Plan, which contained the commitment to dual the A96 between Inverness and Aberdeen, thus completing the dual carriageway network between all Scottish cities.

The public enquiry was held in 2018 and the Inverness to Nairn section has ministerial approval.

Council directs the administration to write to the Government to request the works to upgrade the Inverness to Nairn (including bypass) begin without further delay and to report back to Council on the condition and congestion on the A96.

Signed: Mrs T Robertson Mr L Fraser Ms B Jarvie

During discussion, Members raised the following issues:-

- frustration was expressed at the lack of progress and any timetable for construction. The dualling of the Inverness to Nairn section was environmentally necessary and long overdue;
- dualling would improve journey time and reliability, deliver economic growth, improve connectivity and reduce the rate and severity of accidents;
- to anyone driving through Nairn, it was obvious that there was an urgent need for a bypass. There was severe congestion and pollution along a route which passed a school and along pavements heavily used by pedestrians;
- transport choices throughout Highland were limited and therefore there would continue to be a reliance on cars. The recent rail strike had highlighted this, and bus services were infrequent or non-existent;
- the responses to the consultation for the dualling of the A96 from Nairn to Aberdeen were largely in favour with many citing safety concerns about the present situation;

- what was important now was to concentrate on getting some concrete action from the Scottish Government and an alternative Motion was proposed, as follows:-

“Council notes and welcomes recent statements that the Scottish Government remain wholly committed to the dualling of the A96 from Smithton to Hardmuir including the Nairn bypass.

Council urges the Government to take all necessary steps to make the swiftest further progress and to commit the required funding necessary to carry out the whole work in that project, including the cost of the construction itself, but also the land purchase, and all other preliminary works such as tree felling, archaeological work, as well as the necessary and complex alterations to placement and layout of utilities, cables, pipelines and the like.

Council further asks the Government to provide a detailed timetable setting out when this project will be completed, and stating when each necessary component part of the project is expected to commence and be delivered; and to demonstrate that priority will be attached to this roads project by the Government”.

This Motion was accepted by the signatories of the original who agreed to retract theirs and become co-signatories to this one.

- others argued that dualling the A96 did not support Scotland’s Net Zero target or the National Transport Strategy which encouraged targeted investment in infrastructure which encouraged low carbon transport options; and
- new road building increased carbon emissions so, instead of dualling the A96, it was argued the Inverness-Aberdeen railway line should be duelled.

Thereafter, Mrs T Robertson, seconded by Mr L Fraser, **MOVED** the terms of the Revised Notice of Motion as detailed above.

Ms K Willis, seconded by Mr C Ballance, moved as an **AMENDMENT** that the Council notes and welcomes recent statements that the Scottish Government remain wholly committed to the dualling of the A96 from Smithton to Hardmuir including the Nairn bypass. The Council urges the Government that, in view of the commitments to carbon reduction, the Government should urgently bring forward plans to dual the Aberdeen to Inverness rail line and improve services in order to reduce congestion by achieving modal shift from road to rail.

On a vote being taken, the **MOTION** received 53 votes and the **AMENDMENT** received 5 votes, with no abstentions, and the **MOTION** was therefore **CARRIED**, the votes having been cast as follows:-

For the Motion:

Mr C Aitken, Ms S Atkin, Mr B Boyd, Mr R Bremner, Mr I Brown, Mr M Cameron, Mrs G Campbell-Sinclair, Mr A Christie, Mrs M Cockburn, Ms T Collier, Ms H Crawford, Ms S Fanet, Mr J Finlayson, Mr D Fraser, Mr L Fraser, Mr R Gale, Mr K Gowans, Mr J Grafton, Mr A Graham, Mr M Green, Mr R Gunn, Mrs J Hendry, Ms M Hutchison, Mr A Jarvie, Mrs B Jarvie, Ms L Johnston, Mr R Jones, Mr S Kennedy, Ms L Kraft, Mr B Lobban, Mr P Logue, Mr D Loudon, Ms M MacCallum, Mr W MacKay, Mr G MacKenzie, Mr S Mackie, Mr A MacKintosh, Mrs A MacLean, Ms K MacLean, Mr T MacLennan, Mr D Macpherson, Ms J McEwan, Mr J McGillivray, Mr D Millar, Mr H Morrison, Mr C Munro, Ms L Niven, Mr P Oldham, Ms M Reid, Mrs T Robertson, Mr K Rosie, Mrs L Sagers, Mr R Stewart.

For the Amendment:

Mr A Baldrey, Mr C Ballance, Dr C Birt, Mr R MacKintosh, Ms K Willis

Decision

The Council **NOTED** and welcomed recent statements that the Scottish Government remain wholly committed to the dualling of the A96 from Smithton to Hardmuir including the Nairn bypass. The Council urges the Government to take all necessary steps to make the swiftest further progress and to commit the required funding necessary to carry out the whole work in that project, including the cost of the construction itself, but also the land purchase, and all other preliminary works such as tree felling, archaeological work, as well as the necessary and complex alterations to placement and layout of utilities, cables, pipelines and the like. The Council further asks the Government to provide a detailed timetable setting out when this project will be completed, and stating when each necessary component part of the project is expected to commence and be delivered; and to demonstrate that priority will be attached to this roads project by the Government”.

(iii) This Council congratulates the organisers, volunteers and funders who helped stage celebratory events for Queen Elizabeth II's Platinum Jubilee.

Given the years of COVID-19 restrictions, which severely limited community interactions and curtailed so many events and celebrations, it was encouraging to see so many communities coming together to mark such a historic moment.

From the lighting of beacons to street and garden parties, quizzes and sports nights, the Highland Council recognises the unique role that Highland events played in marking seventy years of dedication and service to our Country and The Commonwealth.

Signed: Mr S Mackie Mr A Jarvie

During discussion, Members raised the following issues:-

- pleasure was expressed at being an Elected Representative and a Civic Leader in Caithness and being able to mark this historic achievement with fellow Local Members, communities, local groups and youth organisations;
- whilst there were major events held in London, local communities in the Highlands had also marked this milestone in their own way to thank Queen Elizabeth II for 70 years of public service and commitment, not only to her country but to the Commonwealth;
- it was important to thank the individuals, organisers, volunteers and funders who helped create events for the Jubilee. These events didn't just happen: they required careful planning, funding, organising and working with local bodies and other organisations;
- multiple generations had come together along with family, neighbours, friends and even complete strangers to celebrate events, all in different ways. This was especially welcomed given its inclusivity after the Covid pandemic;
- Inverness itself had lit the Town House and the Ness Bridge in red, white and blue;
- it was hoped that it wouldn't just be a one weekend event but that other events would take place throughout the Jubilee year;
- the Platinum Jubilee was a once in a lifetime event;
- reference was made to the opinion poll produced at the time of the Jubilee by British Futures which reported that only 45% of Scotland wanted a continuation of the monarchy. This percentage was much lower among younger people and those

from ethnic and diverse backgrounds. This was in contrast to England where support for the monarchy was much greater;

- the recognition of the Queen's service was unquestionable but a whole year of celebrations was debatable when there was a high number of families now relying on food banks; and
- it was important to bear in mind Councillors were elected to represent everyone in their ward and not just to promote a political agenda.

Decision

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

7. Annual Accounts 2021/22 Cunntasan Bliadhna 2021/22

Transparency Statement: Mr A Christie made a Transparency Statement in respect of this item in that he had a connection to this item a Non-executive director of NHS Highland, General Manager of Inverness, Badenoch and Strathspey Citizens Advice Bureau and the parent of a child in secondary education in relation to extra-curricular activities. However, having applied the objective test he did not consider that he had an interest to declare.

There had been circulated Report No. HC/12/22 dated 17 June 2022 by the Executive Chief Officer Resources and Finance.

During discussion, Members raised the following issues:-

- tribute was paid to Mr A Christie for working in a collegiate and consultative way in his role as Budget Leader and the former Chairs and Vice Chair of the Corporate Resources Committee were also thanked for their work in relation to the budget. This work was reflected in the strong position outlined in the Annual Accounts and on there being a robust medium-term financial plan in place;
- the Head of Corporate Finance and Commercialism and staff were commended on the large volume of work involved in producing the Annual Accounts, particularly given the additional pressures faced during the Covid period;
- concern that the Finance Team was under resourced and confirmation that there would be the opportunity to review this matter as part the Programme for the Council;
- the increase in the Council's reserves was welcomed on the basis this would place the Council in a stronger position in terms of the significant challenges faced going forward;
- concern at the lack of time Members had been afforded to scrutinise the Annual Accounts before the Council meeting in terms of good governance;
- a projected overspend had been reported to Members throughout the year and whether this had represented a true reflection of the financial position given the year-end figures. It was confirmed that more detailed information on the factors that had led to the year-end position would be reported to the next cycle of strategic committees;
- concern at the brevity of the report and that it would be helpful to have information on the total income generated and expenditure incurred in tabular form;
- an assurance was sought that, going forward, Members would receive financial reports on progress with the budget against the significant risks and challenges set out in the report at each Corporate Resources Committee and Council meeting;

- the budget process and discussions over the past two years had been positive and productive and it was important to continue this process going forward. There would be the opportunity for Member discussions on the Council's finances at the Corporate Resources Committee and on an individual basis;
- clarification was sought and provided that more detailed information on the underspend shown on the Health and Social Care budget would be reported to the Health, Social Care and Wellbeing Committee in addition to an All Member seminar on 4 August 2022;
- the report represented the start of the Member scrutiny process of the Annual Accounts and there would be the opportunity for more detailed discussions at the next Corporate Resources Committee and strategic committees and thereafter at the Audit and Scrutiny Committee;
- highlighting that the context around the allocation of General Fund earmarked, non-earmarked and other useable reserves was clearly stated in the report; and
- the opportunities for Members to further develop their knowledge in terms of the financial information provided and in facing the significant risks and challenges ahead.

Decision

The Council **AGREED** to receive the unaudited Annual Accounts for the Highland Council, Highland Charities Trust, Highland Charitable Trust and the Highland Council Pension Fund for the year ended 31 March 2022 and **NOTED** that these would be presented to the appointed auditor by the prescribed date of 30 June 2022.

8. Embedding Trauma-informed Practice in Highland Council Stèidheachadh Cleachdadh Trauma Fiosraichte ann an Comhairle na Gàidhealtachd

Transparency Statement: Mr A Jarvie made a Transparency Statement in respect of this item in that he had a connection to this item as an employee of the Mental Welfare Commission. However, having applied the objective test he did not consider that he had an interest to declare.

There had been circulated Report No. HC/13/22 dated 20 June 2022 by the Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure Health and Social Care.

During discussion, Members raised the following issues:-

- there was a need to understand and demonstrate the principles of being trauma-informed, as outlined in the report, across all levels and services within the Council and Members were encouraged to accept responsibility in terms of their key role in ensuring the Council became a trauma-informed organisation;
- through a commitment to being trauma-aware and trained, Council Members and staff had an important role to play in understanding and responding to people affected by trauma;
- while this was an excellent report, concern was expressed as to how the work set out in the report could be achieved within the sum of £50k allocated to the Council by the Scottish Government for this initiative;
- an assurance was sought and provided that the report would be remitted to the next Health, Social Care and Wellbeing Committee for more detailed consideration of how this initiative was to be adequately funded and resourced, going forward, to achieve the required outcomes;

- it was important to recognise that the number of people in Highland affected by trauma would have increased significantly as a result of the impacts of Covid and this emphasised the importance of having a trauma-informed approach embedded across Highland; and
- the commitment to a trauma-informed approach had to be for the lifetime of the Council to underline the Council's support for those experiencing both short and longer-term effects of trauma.

Decision

The Council:-

- NOTED** the Improvement Service document 'Elected Member Briefing Note – Trauma was Everybody's Business' at Appendix 1 to the report;
- AGREED** to communicate their support for Highland Council to become a trauma-informed organisation and to supporting a trauma-informed workforce;
- AGREED** to support and promote the implementation of the national training programme for officers and Elected Members;
- AGREED** to commit to implement a network of trauma-informed Champions tasked to collaborate across services and teams to make the necessary connections across the organisation; and
- AGREED** that this report be submitted to the next meeting of the Health, Social Care and Wellbeing Committee on 24 August 2022.

9. Family Leave for Elected Members Fòrladh Teaghlaich airson Buill Thaghte

Declaration of Interest: Ms T Collier declared an interest in this item due to personal circumstances and, in accordance with paragraph 5.6 of the revised Code of Conduct, left the meeting for this item.

There had been circulated Report No. HC/14/22 dated 1 June 2022 by the Executive Chief Officer Performance and Governance.

During discussion, Members raised the following issues:-

- concern was expressed that there was no provision for dependents/carers leave for Elected Members and that COSLA had not recognised the important role carers played in society and in looking after vulnerable people within the guidance;
- the Council should therefore lobby on introducing dependents/carers' leave for Elected Members and an assurance was sought and provided that the Leader would have discussions with the Leader of the Opposition on taking this forward with COSLA;
- the salary for the average Elected Member acted as a disincentive to potential candidates coming forward for election given the workload involved. The Council should lobby the Scottish Government and COSLA at the earliest opportunity to make the case for realistic salaries for Elected Members and to encourage a broader and more diverse range of candidates at the next election that was more representative of the population;
- the potential for Elected Members to benefit from carers' packages for dependants in common with the conditions of Scottish Government employees;
- it was hoped the adoption of the Family Leave guidance would encourage more women to stand for election; and
- confirmation was sought and provided that the Council was actively considering facilities for Elected Members who were new mothers.

Decision

The Council **AGREED** to adopt the COSLA Family Leave Guidance.

10. Short Term Lets Màil Gheàrr-ùine

Declaration of Interest: Mr K Rosie as a Short Term Let provider and Mr R Stewart as a close family member ran a tourism business and, in accordance with paragraph 5.6 of the revised Code of Conduct, they left the meeting for these items.

i. Short Term Let Licensing Regime Reim ceadach

Declaration of Interest: Mr R Bremner as a Short Term Let provider, Mr C Munro and Mrs T Robertson as a part owner of a Short Term Let, and Mr M Green and Mr D Macpherson as a close family member was a Short Term Let provider and, in accordance with paragraph 5.6 of the revised Code of Conduct, they left the meeting for this item.

There had been circulated Report No. HC/15/22 dated 7 June 2022 by the Principal Solicitor, Regulatory Services.

During discussion, Members raised the following issues:-

- the new legislation, which it was felt would be beneficial, was welcomed. It was clarified that this would be cost neutral as it was governed by the Civic Government (Scotland) Act and fees would therefore require to be set at a level which covered the Council's costs to manage the licensing scheme;
- it was confirmed that the six-week consultation period had already commenced. Robust engagement with stakeholders and the responses to date were welcomed;
- although ensuring that properties met the mandatory safety standards was welcomed, there was a need to ensure that the licensing scheme was not an added burden to operators given the significant importance of the tourism industry across the Highlands;
- the licensing scheme would not impact on permanent housing including rentals;
- neighbours/residents could raise concerns through the complaints process;
- the work of the staff was commended given the significant challenges ahead in implementing the scheme within the required timescales. Confirmation was provided that additional staff resource would be required to administer the scheme; and
- given the high impact of this legislation across the Highlands, there was a need for Highland Council to lead on implementation of the scheme to ensure that the best and most efficient licensing regime was adopted.

Decision

The Council **NOTED** the position given the scale of and potential impact of the proposed licensing regime across the Council area.

ii. Establishing a Short-Term Let Control Area for Ward 20:

Badenoch & Strathspey

**A' Stèidheachadh Raon Smachd Màil Ghearr-ùine airson Uàrd 20:
Bàideanach & Srath Spè**

Transparency Statement: Mr C Munro and Mrs T Robertson made a Transparency Statement in respect of this item in that they had a connection to this item as the part-owner of a self-catering business. However, having applied the objective test they did not consider that they had an interest to declare.

There had been circulated Report No. HC/16/22 dated 13 June 2022 by the Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure, Environment & Economy.

During discussion, Members raised the following issues:-

- the application to designate Ward 20 (Badenoch and Strathspey) as a Short-Term Let (STL) Control Area was being made in response to the requests from local residents and businesses to address the significant lack of availability of affordable accommodation. There was an imbalance between holiday homes/rental properties and it was hoped that the STL Control Area would enable the balance to be shifted. The scheme would also be used as a tool to manage current and future housing needs for both locals and businesses, particularly in the smaller geographical areas;
- the Members of Ward 20 (Badenoch and Strathspey) were complimented for their approach - recognising the issue, investigating and examining the options, and putting forward a potential solution. Members should utilise the tools available to adopt appropriate solutions that addressed housing needs in their local areas;
- the lack of affordable housing (to buy or rent) was the most significant issue in Badenoch and Strathspey and although the STL Control Area would aid this issue it would not resolve it in full. Tourism was vital to the local economy and it was therefore important that the concerns raised by local businesses regarding implementation of the STL Control Area were recognised. However, concern was raised at the large volume of empty properties across the area and it was hoped that some of these properties could be used as permanent housing which would help to retain and attract people to live and work in the local area. Overall, it was felt that the STL Control Area would not have a negative impact on tourism but it would have a positive impact on the local housing crisis;
- implementation of the STL Control Area would require careful balance as tourism was vital to the local economy but the need to ensure the provision of affordable housing for the workers that supported this industry was also recognised. A single policy would not address the housing needs issue alone and there was a need to build more affordable homes. It was necessary to ensure that the STL Control Area did not have a negative impact on the area as a whole and it was therefore proposed that a review should be undertaken after 12 months to determine if it had met expectations and delivered on the outcomes without having an adverse impact on the tourism sector. It was essential that the policy was adaptable and potentially repealed if it was not having the desired effect. Concerns were raised at the implementation of the STL Control Area, particularly as it was managed through the Planning Applications process which required each application to be considered on individual merits, and the impact of this on existing operators;
- this was new and emerging legislation and there would therefore be much to learn. The consultation responses highlighted a number of concerns regarding holiday homes and it was requested that further information be provided, at the Members' Workshop, on the total number of second homes in Highland. It was further requested that the Workshop be expanded to include increasing the provision of affordable housing for key workers;

- further information was sought and provided on the process to be undertaken to enable these control measures to be adopted in other pressurised areas across the Highlands;
- confirmation was provided that in order to avoid market saturation, new builds for STLs would be managed through the planning applications process;
- the need to ensure economic and tourism benefits from STLs were balanced with the needs and concerns of local communities was recognised. However, the need to increase housing was evidenced through school rolls and the need for key workers across a number of vital sectors. This was a tool which could be utilised to increase housing and local populations and thus creating sustainable communities; and
- additional housing was being built in the area but this was being purchased directly off plan with a view to being utilised as a STL. It was impossible for local people to secure homes and as a result there was a housing crisis in Badenoch and Strathspey which needed to be addressed.

Thereafter, Mr K Gowans, seconded by Mr C Munro **MOVED** the recommendations as set out in the report. As an **AMENDMENT**, Mr A Jarvie, seconded by Mr A Christie, moved that an additional recommendation be included that should the Scottish Ministers approve this STL control area application, to review the policy after 12 months, assessing the outcomes against the initial expectations.

On a vote being taken, the **MOTION** received 43 votes and the **AMENDMENT** received 20 votes, with no abstentions, and the **MOTION** was therefore **CARRIED**, the votes having been cast as follows:-

For the Motion:

Ms S Atkin, Mr C Balance, Mr A Baldrey, Dr C Birt, Mr B Boyd, Mr R Bremner, Mr I Brown, Mr M Cameron, Mrs G Campbell-Sinclair, Ms T Collier, Mrs M Cockburn, Ms S Fanet, Mr J Finlayson, Mr D Fraser, Mr L Fraser, Mr K Gowans, Mr M Green, Mrs J Hendry, Ms M Hutchison, Ms L Johnston, Mr R Jones, Mr S Kennedy, Ms E Knox, Ms L Kraft, Mr B Lobban, Mr D Louden, Mr W Mackay, Mr G MacKenzie, Mr R Mackintosh, Ms K MacLean, Mr T MacLennan, Mr J McGillivray, Mr D Millar, Mr H Morrison, Mr C Munro, Mrs P Munro, Ms L Niven, Mr P Oldham, Mrs M Paterson, Ms M Reid, Ms K Willis, Mr A Rhind, Mr K Rosie.

For the Amendment:

Mr C Aitken, Mr M Baird, Mr A Christie, Mrs H Crawford, Mr R Gale, Mr J Grafton, Mr A Graham, Mr R Gunn, Mr A Jarvie, Mrs B Jarvie, Mr P Logue, Mr M MacCallum, Mrs I Mackenzie, Mr S Mackie, Mr A Mackintosh, Mrs A MacLean, Mr D Macpherson, Ms J McEwan, Mrs L Sagers, Mrs T Robertson.

Decision

The Council:-

- NOTED** the new and emerging legislation to control and manage short-term lets as summarised in Section 4 of the report;
- NOTED** the consultation feedback and the potential implications that a Short-Term Let Control Area would have on communities within Ward 20 (Badenoch and Strathspey) as set out in Appendix 1 and summarised in Section 5 of the report; and
- based on the consultation feedback and available evidence, **AGREED** to apply to Scottish Ministers to designate Ward 20 (Badenoch and Strathspey) as a Short-Term Let Control Area and to delegate authority to Officers to:-

- a. submit the Short-Term Let Control Area proposal to Scottish Ministers;
- b. following the decision by Scottish Ministers, bring back a further report to the Economy and Infrastructure Committee confirming the outcome and outlining the next steps, including the date of the commencement of the Control Area; and
- c. arrange a Members' workshop to discuss the differing planning policy options for considering and determining planning applications for secondary letting within the Short-Term Let Control Area.

11. Local Authority Covid Economic Recovery (LACER) Funding Maoineachadh Ath-shlànachadh Eaconamach Covid Ùghdarrais Ionadail

Declarations of Interest: Mr S Mackie declared an interest in this item as a non-Council appointed Director of Caithness Citizens Advice Bureau and, in accordance with paragraph 5.6 of the revised Code of Conduct, he left the meeting for this item.

Transparency Statement: Mr A Christie made a Transparency Statement in respect of this item in that he had a connection to this item as General Manager of Inverness, Badenoch and Strathspey Citizens Advice Bureau. The report proposed as part of a much more significant package of measures totalling £3.69m but allocating £25,000 to Highland Citizens Advice Bureau to support energy advice. Having sought advice from officers and having applied the objective test he did not consider that he had an interest to declare. However, he had also discussed this with the Convener and in the event that there was discussion of this specific award or its level to the CAB then he would leave the Chamber for the duration of that discussion.

There had been circulated Report No. HC/17/22 dated 15 June 2022 by the Chief Executive.

During discussion, Members raised the following issues:-

- everyone was aware of the impact of Covid on Highland Communities and while there was a return to normality the adverse impact and legacy of Covid remained. The proposals contained in the report were endorsed and welcomed. The proposals would build on the existing and planned support for businesses and much needed financial help for vulnerable people, young children and adults. The cost of living impact on households would hit the vulnerable and low income households hardest of all. The proposals would put much needed money into the pockets of those in most need of it;
- the work the Welfare team had undertaken over the last few years had been tremendous. It was particularly welcomed that using welfare records already held by the Council, households who are eligible to receive the proposed Cost of Living Support and the Living Support for Vulnerable Children and Young People will receive payments automatically without the need to complete and submit application forms;
- there was a concern that the LACER funding was non recurring as it was felt the cost of living crisis would not be short term and it was hoped that there would be additional support in future to continue with this much needed financial support for those most in need;
- it was queried why Environment Health had been targeted to receive funding when other business support could be offered. It was advised that businesses had to comply with Environmental Health and Trading Standards. It was intended to streamline these functions to support businesses but there was not the capacity to do this within the existing teams. Therefore LACER funding would be invested in

these teams to streamline processes making it easier for businesses to work with these teams and free staff time to support businesses better;

- Members were being inundated with requests for help with poverty and Members needed to address this by being observant to signs of poverty when meeting people and to look to make LACER recurring funding. This issue should also be a regular item on all Ward Business meetings to address what can be done locally to help people; and
- the Environmental Health, Trading Standards and Welfare teams did a fantastic job throughout the Covid period. Staff had attended Community Hubs and were able to assist people in person. There were many different funding streams and there was a need to work with the various community groups to direct support to those who needed it. Community Support Co-ordinators had been very effective in supporting communities.

Decision

The Council **NOTED**:-

- i. that the Highland Council's LACER funding was non-recurring;
- ii. that the proposed support for business was in addition to business grant provision for economic recovery, growth and resilience;
- iii. the ongoing measures and activities being undertaken to maximise households' incomes. This includes removing complex application processes, using well-established referral pathways, making best use of social media and the Council's website, and through the effective and well-established collaboration between the Council's Welfare Support team and Citizens Advice;

and **AGREED**:

- iv. that £0.210m be provided on a non-recurring basis for regulatory compliance by businesses through increased support and online services from Environmental Health and Trading Standards;
- v. to provide a non-recurring £3.429m package of welfare support for households most disproportionately impacted by the pandemic; and
- vi. the welfare eligibility criteria, payment arrangements and timescales for making payments, as set out in section 9 of this report.

12. Levelling Up Fund Maoin Dèanamh Co-ionann

Declaration of Interest: Mr D Gregg declared an interest in this item as a relative was employed in the Civil Service Department dealing with Levelling Up Funds.

There had been circulated Report No. HC/18/22 dated 15 June 2022 by the Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure, Environment & Economy.

During discussion, Members raised the following issues:-

- the Levelling Up Fund was a great opportunity for Highland and the efforts of Officers in preparing the Round 2 bids was acknowledged and work had already commenced on bids for the next round;
- the Portree Harbour bid, if successful, would potentially be transformational for the area and thanks were extended to Portree and Braes Community Trust and all those involved in this work over many years. The partnership working with the community in this strong bid was acknowledged;

- the bid for funding for the North Coast 500 if successful would make a huge difference to the area and thanks were extended to all those involved in preparing the bid;
- in terms of the North Coast 500 bid, there were concerns expressed regarding the proposed significant investment in roads infrastructure and tourism site access, with less investment proposed in active travel which supports Scotland's net zero targets and national transport strategy. Therefore, it would be preferable to see more spend on low carbon transport in the application rather than the roads aspect of the bid. It was also highlighted that there had been numerous complaints from locals on the level of traffic and speeding on the North Coast 500. Any investment that would encourage more traffic and speeding was going in the wrong direction. Therefore, there should be more investment on Active Travel. In particular, it was queried if the bid included the high priority active travel route between Inverness and Beaulieu and, if not, it was requested this be included at least to feasibility level;
- it was advised that, if the bid for funding was successful, this would allow the flexibility for the Council to spend more of its resources in other areas. There were some communities on the North Coast 500 who would welcome this bid to support the infrastructure and boost the economy in their area;
- there would be real benefits to local communities on the North Coast 500 if traffic calming measures could be introduced;
- there was disappointment that there was no mention of proposed investment in Sutherland or Ross in Round 3 Levelling up Fund bids. There were a number of investment opportunities in these areas that would make an enormous impact to the various communities. It was therefore proposed that there be an amendment to the report to request that a review of the application to Round 3 of the levelling up fund for Caithness, Sutherland and Ross be carried out to include investment opportunities in Sutherland and Ross;
- it was intended to put more resources into identifying projects in Caithness, Sutherland, Ross and Lochaber areas so that there were projects ready for consideration for various funding streams. However, it was not possible to guarantee projects would be ready for submission in certain areas and there were specific criteria to be met in what could be applied for;
- all areas of the Council would have investment opportunities in communities for levelling up funding and it would be useful to know the number of projects currently being worked on. Also, there should be a programme of projects ready for any future funding streams that might become available; and
- the importance of maintenance of electric vehicle charges was highlighted. Also, the bid for Electric Vehicle charging points would be shared with all Members.

Thereafter, Mr K Gowans, seconded by Mrs T Robertson, **MOVED** approval of the recommendations in the report.

As an Amendment, Mr R Gale, seconded by Mr J McGillivray, moved as an **AMENDMENT** an additional recommendation to the report to request that a review of the application to Round 3 of the levelling up fund for Caithness, Sutherland and Ross be carried out to include investment opportunities in Sutherland and Ross.

On a vote being taken, the **MOTION** received 46 votes and the **AMENDMENT** received 9 votes, with 4 abstentions, and the **MOTION** was therefore **CARRIED**, the votes having been cast as follows:-

For the Motion:

Ms S Atkin, Mr A Baldrey, Dr C Birt, Mr B Boyd, Mr R Bremner, Mr I Brown, Mr M Cameron, Mrs G Campbell-Sinclair, Mrs M Cockburn, Ms T Collier, Ms H Crawford, Ms S Fanet, Mr J Finlayson, Mr D Fraser, Mr L Fraser, Mr K Gowans, Mr M Green, Mr

R Gunn, Mrs J Hendry, Ms M Hutchison, Ms L Johnston, Mr R Jones, Mr S Kennedy, Ms E Knox, Ms L Kraft, Mr B Lobban, Mr D Louden, Ms M MacCallum, Mr G MacKenzie, Mr S Mackie, Mr A MacKintosh, Mrs A MacLean, Ms K MacLean, Mr T MacLennan, Ms J McEwan, Mr D Millar, Mrs P Munro, Mr C Munro, Ms L Niven, Mr P Oldham, Mrs M Paterson, Ms M Reid, Mr A Rhind, Mrs T Robertson, Mr K Rosie, Mr R Stewart.

For the Amendment:

Mr C Atkin, Mr A Christie, Mr R Gale, Mr J Grafton, Mr A Graham, Mr W MacKay, Mr D Macpherson, Mr J McGillivray, Mr H Morrison.

Abstention:

Mr C Balance, Mr A Jarvie, Mr R MacKintosh, Ms K Willis.

Decision

The Council **AGREED** that:

- i. bids were submitted in Round 2 of the Levelling Up fund for the North Coast 500 (Transport Bid) and Portree Harbour (standalone Heritage bid);
- ii. that the submission of the finalised bids was delegated to the Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure, Environment & Economy, in consultation with the Council Convener, the Council Leader and the Chair and Vice Chair of Economy and Infrastructure Committee as outlined in paragraph 6.1 of the report; and
- iii. work continues on the preparation of bids for the Caithness and Sutherland and Ross, Skye and Lochaber Constituency bids over the coming year to ensure readiness for Round 3 of the Levelling Up Fund process.

**13. Shared Prosperity Fund
Maoin Soirbheachais Co-roinnte**

There had been circulated Report No. HC/19/22 dated 15 June 2022 by the Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure, Environment & Economy.

During discussion, Members raised the following issues:-

- the funding was an opportunity to help communities develop plans/projects they might have but did not know how to progress further. It could provide capacity to develop local place plans or high-end feasibility studies, Nairn Harbour redevelopment being cited as a potential example of the latter. It was a good news story and it was important to communicate it to communities as soon as possible and to not miss the opportunity to take advantage of it;
- there was no reference to poverty in the report and it was suggested that the Investment Plan should, as much as possible, try to address poverty and inequality. The funding could be used to build up and sustain communities and to benefit vulnerable people - eg through the provision of learning opportunities. Community Link Workers were due to finish in July and some of the funding could potentially be used to continue their contracts;
- it had been left to a small group of people to decide how the funding was spent and, given that the Investment Plan did not have to be submitted until 1 August 2022, a request was made that it be circulated to all Members for comment prior to final approval. The Chair of the Economy and Infrastructure Committee confirmed that he was happy for the draft Investment Plan to be circulated to Members;
- European Social Fund funding for the Move On project would cease at the end of the year and the Communities and Place team would be coming forward in due course with a proposal in that regard and with a view to building on the success of

the project. In addition, the Communities and Place team would be looking at plans to provide local funding for local projects along the lines of the place investment policy;

- reference was made to the lack of independent garages in Highland that were trained to repair electric cars. UHI West Highland's college in Fort William had indicated that it could hire equipment and personnel to train local independent engineers but it did not have the money to do so, and it was suggested the Shared Prosperity Fund might be a source for the funding required; and
- whilst the Shared Prosperity Fund was an exciting opportunity for Highland, many of the lead officers were also involved in the LACER funding and the Levelling Up Fund, and an assurance was sought, and provided, that there was sufficient capacity and projects would not be held up.

Decision

The Council:

- i. **AGREED** the proposed approach and activities to be included in the Investment Plan;
- ii. **NOTED** the process underway and timelines associated with the finalisation and submission of the Investment Plan;
- iii. **AGREED** the approval of the final Investment Plan for submission to the UK Government would be delegated to the Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure, Environment & Economy, in consultation with the Council Convener, the Council Leader and the Chair and Vice Chair of Economy and Infrastructure Committee for the reasons outlined in paragraph 6.5 of the report; and
- iv. **AGREED** that the Investment Plan be circulated to all Members for comment prior to final approval.

14. Opportunity Cromarty Firth – Green Freeport Bid Cothrom Linne Chromba – Tairgse Saor-phuirt Uaine

There had been circulated Report No. HC/20/22 dated 15 June 2022 by the Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure, Environment & Economy.

During discussion, Members raised the following issues:-

- Mr Roy MacGregor, Chairman of Global Energy Group, and officers were thanked for their work in preparing what was an outstanding bid submitted to the Scottish and UK Government on 20 June 2022;
- this bid, one of the most exciting in decades, would have the potential in unlocking a transformational economic boost for the Highlands and would put Highland on the world stage and cross party support was called for;
- whilst the development focused on the Cromarty Firth, it would influence the wider economy of the Highlands in terms other services such as education, health, further education and the arts;
- the Council had been a member of the Opportunity Cromarty Firth Consortium from an early stage. It was a major project for Highland that would deliver against national outcomes, delivering national energy security and addressing climate change;
- independent reports had already shown that the Cromarty Firth was the only area in Scotland able to deliver on the ambitions for offshore wind of the magnitude required in the UK Energy Security Strategy;
- in addition to offshore energy, all the components were there for the production of Green Hydrogen at scale, probably nationally, with no CO₂ being produced;

- the supply chain was also there from manufacture to operation to maintenance;
- the wider economic spend in communities, but particularly Invergordon, was highlighted;
- Highland had the potential to generate one third of Europe's energy demand which would secure Highland's position as a power-house for Europe;
- the aim was to present a Global Centre for Excellence with skills and innovation in renewable energy. It would be a showcase of what high quality training and job creation could do, providing genuine job opportunities for young people who then could stay, work and thrive in Highland;
- a Green Freeport in the Cromarty Firth had the potential to generate up to 25k quality, sustainable long term jobs and such opportunities needed to be seized;;
- the bid had the backing of major players in the global energy industry;
- it was important to have similar shovel ready projects in place so that when funding came along they could be taken forward;
- this offered not just a regional, national but a continental and international opportunity but it was important to future proof and build on this to ensure a sustainable way forward for generations to come;
- this proposal would reverse the depopulation of Highland;
- on behalf of Cromarty Firth Rising, a call was made for Highland Council to be in charge of any consultation following on from any successful bid. It was vital communities were consulted on all aspects as it developed and that benefits generated were fed down to all;
- the decision making mechanism for the selection of the successful bids was questioned and it was hoped it would not be politically biased; and
- without doubt, the Cromarty Firth Freeport bid was viewed as the best bid submitted and it was hoped that both Scottish and UK Governments would support it. The transformational change it would bring would far outweigh any of the others and, in wake of a successful announcement, there were other opportunities which would arise.

Decision

The Council:-

- i. **NOTED** the summary and update on the OCF Project including the OCF Consortium's bid for Green Freeport status, as outlined in Section 4 of the report;
- ii. **AGREED** to homologate the Council's support for the OCF project and Green Freeport bid as set out in the letter of support prepared and signed by the Leader of the Council at Appendix A;
- iii. **AGREED** for the Council to continue its support for the Consortium and relevant communities in enabling the delivery of OCF and promoting its benefits to the region and Scotland/UK; and
- iv. **NOTED** that the result of the Green Freeport competitions due to be announced later in 2022 and next steps would be reported to a future Committee.

15. Appointments Cur an Dreuchd

i. Senior Strategic Chairs

Declarations of Interest: Mr J Finlayson, Mr K Gowans and Mr D Loudon declared an interest in this items as postholders of positions under discussion and, in accordance with paragraph 5.6 of the revised Code of Conduct, they left the meeting for this item.

Following agreement to the establishment of two Senior Strategic Chairs at the meeting on 9 June 2022, the Council was invited to agree that the Chair of Education and Chair of Economy and Infrastructure be appointed.

During discussion, it was commented that, whilst there was no opposition to appointing two Senior Strategic Chairs, there was no information provided as to what cross-cutting Council-wide responsibilities they would have. It was important to evidence the reasons for the proposed appointments, the additional responsibilities that merited the increase in salary, and how the Senior Strategic Chairs would be scrutinised and held to account. In response, the Administration undertook to provide detail of what this would involve.

In addition, given the overarching responsibilities of the post of Chair of Corporate Resources it was proposed that this should be one of the Senior Strategic Chairs especially given its prominence in every aspect of the Council and having financial oversight of Council budgets.

Thereafter, Mr R Bremner, seconded by Mr D Fraser, **MOVED** that the Senior Strategic Chairs be those of the Education Committee and the Economy and Infrastructure Committee.

Mr Gale, seconded by Mr A Christie, moved as an **AMENDMENT** that, given the overarching aspect of the Corporate Resources Committee, that the role of Chair of Corporate Resources should be one of the two Senior Strategic Chairs.

On a vote being taken, the **MOTION** received 36 votes and the **AMENDMENT** received 17 votes, with 1 abstention, and the **AMENDMENT** was therefore **CARRIED**, the votes having been cast as follows:-

For the Motion:

Ms S Atkin, Mr A Baldrey, Mr C Ballance, Dr C Birt, Mr B Boyd, Mr R Bremner, Mr I Brown, Mr M Cameron, Mrs G Campbell-Sinclair, Mrs M Cockburn, Ms T Collier, Ms S Fanet, Mr D Fraser, Mr L Fraser, Mr M Green, Mrs J Hendry, Ms M Hutchison, Ms L Johnston, Mr R Jones, Mr S Kennedy, Ms E Knox, Ms L Kraft, Mr B Lobban, Mr G MacKenzie, Mr R MacKintosh, Ms K MacLean, Mr T MacLennan, Mr D Millar, Mr H Morrison, Mrs P Munro, Mr C Munro, Ms L Niven, Mr P Oldham, Mr A Rhind, Mr K Rosie, Ms K Willis.

For the Amendment:

Mr C Aitken, Mr M Baird, Mr A Christie, Ms H Crawford, Mr R Gale, Mr J Grafton, Mr A Graham, Mr R Gunn, Mr A Jarvie, Mr P Logue, Mr S Mackie, Mr A MacKintosh, Mrs A MacLean, Mr D Macpherson, Ms J McEwan, Mrs T Robertson, Mrs L Sagers.

Abstentions:

Mr J McGillivray

Decision

The Council **AGREED** that the Chair of the Education Committee and the Chair of the Economy and Infrastructure Committee be appointed as Senior Strategic Chairs.

ii. **South Planning Applications Committee**

The Council **NOTED** additional membership to the South Planning Applications Committee to that submitted to the Council's last meeting on 9 June 2022 as follows:-

Substantive Members – Mr D Fraser, Mr A Graham and Mr K Gowans (latter was formerly a Substitute Member)

Substitute Member – Mr D Macpherson

In relation to the Redesign Board, the Council **AGREED** that the membership would be formed from nominations from the Leaders of the Independent, SNP, Liberal Democrat and Scottish Conservative Groups.

iii. **Northern Roads Collaboration Joint Committee**

The Northern Roads Collaboration Joint Committee was a Joint Committee established by Aberdeen City Council, Aberdeenshire Council, Angus Council, Argyll and Bute Council, Comhairle nan Eilean Siar, Moray Council, and The Highland Council (the “Constituent Authorities”) under sections 56 and 57 of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973.

The Joint Committee appointed two named representatives from each Constituent Authority to its membership. The creation of the Joint Committee represented the joint commitment of the Constituent Authorities to work collaboratively for the joint discharge of road and road-related functions, including ports and harbours (the “Roads Collaboration”).

The Council **AGREED** to appoint the Chair and Vice Chair of the Economy and Infrastructure Committee with Mrs T Robertson and Mr K Rosie as substitute Members to represent the Highland Council on the Northern Roads Collaboration Joint Committee

iv. **Scottish Joint Council for Local Government Employees**

The full Scottish Joint Council (SJC) met once a year in November. Each Council had been invited to nominate one Member to the SJC. Where the nominated councillor was unable to attend a meeting, the constitution allowed another councillor to substitute. Councillor representatives on the SJC Steering Group met 3-6 times a year and were drawn from the group of councillors nominated to the SJC at the COSLA Convention.

The Council **AGREED** to appoint Mr B Lobban to the Scottish Joint Council for Local Government Employees.

v. **Scotland Excel Joint Committee**

Scotland Excel was governed by a joint committee and was formed under section 57 of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 to carry out a range of procurement functions on behalf of Councils and associate members. The Joint Committee was made up of Elected Members from each of Scotland’s local authorities.

The Council **AGREED** to appoint Mr D Loudon to the Scotland Excel Joint Committee.

vi. **Community Planning Partnership Board**

The remit of the Community Planning Partnership Board was to provide collective strategic leadership and oversight of service delivery with the aim of improving services and outcomes for Highland communities; to promote and develop improved partnership working; to provide vision, direction and governance for community

planning activity; and to provide oversight and scrutiny of partnership activity and priorities.

The importance of the Board having been emphasised, the Council **AGREED** to appoint Mr R Bremner and Mr G MacKenzie to the Community Planning Partnership Board.

vii. **NHS Highland Health & Social Care Committee**

At its last meeting the Council appointed Mrs M Cockburn, Mr D Fraser and Mr R Gunn to the NHS Highland Health & Social Care Committee. However, Mrs Cockburn had a place on this Committee by virtue of being appointed by the Council to the NHS Highland Board.

Accordingly, the Council **AGREED** to appoint Dr C Birt to the Health & Social Care Committee.

16. Timetable of Meetings for the remainder of 2022
Clàr-ama Choinneamhan airson na tha air fhàgail de 2022

The Council **AGREED** the amended circulated timetable of Meetings for the remainder of 2022, subject to the Licencing Committee and Board moving from 9 August to 3 August.

The Council also **NOTED** that a proposed Timetable for Meetings in 2023 would be circulated for consideration at the September Council meeting.

17. Recess Powers
Cumhachdan Fosaidh

The Council **AGREED** that, during the recess period, powers should be granted to the Chief Executive and Executive Chief Officers, in consultation with the Convener, Leader of the Council, relevant Committee Chair and the Leader of the Opposition, to deal with issues arising during that time and that a report should be prepared for the first meeting of the Council or relevant Committee following the period where these powers had been exercised.

18. Deeds Executed
Sgrìobhainnean Lagha a Bhuilicheadh

Members **NOTED** that a list of deeds and other documents executed on behalf of the Council since the meeting held on 26 May 2022 was available on the Council's Website.

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

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

**20. Commercial Property Investment Opportunity
Cothrom Tasgadh Seilbh Coimeirsealta**

Transparency Statement: Mr D Macpherson made a Transparency Statement in respect of this item in that a relative was an investor in property in Fort William. However, having applied the objective test he did not consider that he had an interest to declare because the properties were not connected to those under discussion. He requested that this Statement be recorded in the Minutes.

There had been circulated to Members only Report No. HC/21/22 dated 16 June 2022 by the Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure, Environment & Economy.

Decision

Following private discussion, the Council **AGREED** the recommendation as detailed in the report with approval of negotiation to be determined under Recess Powers.

**21. Tain 3-18 Campus Project
Pròiseact Àrainn Bhaile Dhubhthaich 3-18**

Transparency Statement: Mr G MacKenzie and Mrs L Niven made Transparency Statements in respect of this item in that close family members were employed by the developer of the Tain 3-18 Campus. However, having applied the objective test he did not consider that they had an interest to declare because the family members were not employed on the Tain 3-18 Campus. They requested that this Statement be recorded in the Minutes.

There had been circulated to Members only Report No. HC/22/22 dated 16 June 2022 by the Executive Chief Officer Housing and Property.

Decision

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

The meeting ended at 5.40pm.