

The Highland Council

Minutes of Meeting of the **Economy and Infrastructure Committee** held in the Council Chamber, Council Headquarters, Glenurquhart Road, Inverness on **Thursday, 10 November 2022 at 10.30 am.**

Present:

Mr C Aitken (remote)	Mr W MacKay (remote)
Mr M Baird	Ms J McEwan
Mr I Brown	Ms L Niven (remote)
Mr M Cameron	Mrs T Robertson
Mr K Gowans	Mr K Rosie
Mr M Green	Mr R Stewart
Mr R Jones	Ms K Willis (remote)
Mr P Logue (remote)	

Non-Members also present:

Dr C Birt (remote)	Mr G MacKenzie
Mr J Bruce (remote)	Mrs I MacKenzie (remote)
Mr A Christie (remote)	Mr T MacLennan
Ms S Fanet (remote)	Mr D MacPherson (remote)
Mr J Finlayson (remote)	Mr J McGillivray (remote)
Mr R Gale (remote)	Mr D Millar (remote)
Mr S Kennedy	Mr C Munro (remote)
Mr B Lobban	Mr P Oldham

Officials in Attendance:

Mr M MacLeod, Executive Chief Officer - Infrastructure & Environment
Mr A Maguire, Head of Development and Regeneration
Ms T Urry, Head of Roads and Transport
Ms N Wallace, Service Lead, Environment, Development and Active Travel
Mr M Bain, Project Manager, Infrastructure, Environment and Economy
Ms D Sutton, Amenities Services Manager, Infrastructure, Environment and Economy
Dr S Andrews, World Heritage Project Co-ordinator, Infrastructure, Environment and Economy
Mr S Manning, Principal Traffic Officer, Infrastructure, Environment and Economy
Ms L MacKellaich, Road Safety Officer, Infrastructure, Environment and Economy
Mr D Summers, Principal Transport Officer, Infrastructure, Environment and Economy
Miss J MacLennan, Principal Administrator, Performance & Governance Service
Mr A MacInnes, Administrative Assistant, Performance & Governance Service
Mrs Olalla Bayon-Vazquez, Administrative Assistant, Performance & Governance Service

Also in attendance:

Mr S Reid, Santec
Mr S Canning, Santec

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

Mr K Gowans in the Chair

Business

1. Apologies for Absence Leisgeulan

Apologies were intimated on behalf of Mrs H Crawford, Mr H Morrison and Mr A Rhind.

2. Declarations of Interest Foillseachaidhean Com-pàirt

There were no Declarations of Interest.

3. Good News Naidheachdan Matha

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

- a pilot project was in place to expand inhouse school transport provision
- improvement road works on the A832 at Slatadale was completed
- the Rural Tourism Infrastructure Fund had approved 4 Highland tourism projects in Glencoe, Skye, North West Sutherland and Achmelvich
- on 13 September 2022 the Grade B Listed Dochgarroch Bridge was opened having been closed since March 2021 after a parapet had been hit
- the Annual Highland Tourism Conference was to take place in the Kingsmills Hotel on 27 November
- the Highland Council, in conjunction with the Inverness City Heritage Trust, had created a free downloadable guide to promote essential regular inspections and maintenance of traditional buildings
- Highland Council had been awarded £800,000 from the Place Based Investment Scheme for housing projects in Portree.

4. Corran Ferry – Outline Business Case Aiseag a' Chorrain – Tuairisgeul Cùis Gnothachais

A presentation was undertaken by Stantec providing information on the Outline Business Case for replacement vessels and shoreside infrastructure for the Corran Ferry service, which can subsequently be taken through a Final Business Case. The presentation covered the business case process, the case for change, options and their benefits and disbenefits, the preferred option with the financial and commercial case. The preferred option was for two larger 32-vehicle capacity fully electric vessels and supporting shoreside infrastructure.

In this regard, there was circulated Report No. ECI/25/2022 dated 7 October 2022 by the Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure, Environment and Economy.

In discussion, the move to greener replacement ferries was welcomed. With regard to the potential use of Hydrogen technology on the ferries, Caledonian Maritime Assets Ltd (CMAL) had a Hy-seas project which aimed to build a sea going ferry powered by hydrogen fuel cells, but this was in its early stages. The specification for the replacement ferries required that they be able to be retrofitted to be powered by hydrogen when the technology was ready.

It was critical that the ageing diesel ferries were replaced and to ensure the Council met its net zero targets. The prospect of the ferries failing was real and the detrimental impact this would have would be significant for the area what was the busiest ferry service in Scotland with over 270,000 vehicles per annum using it. In terms of timeline for the delivery, it would take 3 to 4 years from the date that funding was in place to deliver new ferries with the supporting infrastructure. This project was not currently in the Council's capital programme, although it was recognised as a significant project. Efforts continued to be made with UK and Scottish Governments to look at external funding opportunities, such as the UK Governments Levelling up Fund or new/emerging sources of funding, including the project being included in the Council's capital programme review.

The Committee **AGREED** the Outline Business Case Final Report for replacement Vessels and shoreside infrastructure for the Corran Ferry service.

5. Visitor Management Plan Plana Stiùiridh Luchd-tadhail

There had been circulated Report No. ECI/26/2022 dated 4 October 2022 by the Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure, Environment and Economy.

Members were very supportive of the Visitor Management Plan which brings many economic benefits to the area. In particular, the work of the Ranger Service was highlighted and commended and there was a need to publicise more the fantastic service they provided. This service was very much valued by communities and particularly for the work they did on the North Coast 500.

There were good opportunities to work in collaboration with external stakeholders to improve tourism infrastructure in Caithness. Also, in terms of public transport to the Fairy Pools, Isle of Skye, if this was to be continued next year consideration be given to including the village of Carbost on the route. It was advised that there would be a review on usage to see if public transport services were providing value for money.

It was suggested that the Highland Comfort Scheme should be continued. It was advised that there was one year funding for the Visitor Management Plan, it was not recurring. However, it was recommended that a further report on future proposals would be brought to the next meeting of the Committee when it should be known what funding was available for proposals in the Plan, such as the Highland Comfort Scheme.

The Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the information provided by each Service and the Access Rangers on progress in delivering the 2022 Visitor Management Plan actions and associated budget spend as detailed in Appendices 1 & 2 of the report;
- ii. **NOTED** that there may be a need to vire funds between activities; and
- iii. **AGREED** that a further report on future proposals would be brought to the next Economy & Infrastructure Committee.

6. Revenue and Performance Monitoring - Quarter 2 to 30 September 2022 Sgrùdadh Teachd-a-steach – Cairteal 2 gu 30 Sultain 2022

There had been circulated Report No. ECI/27/2022 dated 19 October 2022 by the Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure, Environment and Economy.

It was highlighted that the report set out some of the key financial pressures being faced by the Service such as public transport commitments. The projected budget gap of £2.729m to the end of 2022/23 was expected to significantly reduce over the remainder of the financial year.

Hydro Ness had been a very successful project and helped with the electricity supply to the Inverness Leisure Centre and it was suggested if this scheme could be replicated on the Conon river for any future development on the banks of that river.

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 30 September 2022;
- iii. net spend at the end of Quarter 2, totaled £12.208m;
- iv. based on the best available information to date, a service budget gap of £2.729m was forecast to end of 2022/23;
- v. many areas of the Service rely on income to pay for services and this continues to improve;
- vi. the budget gap may change positively or negatively depending on applying expenditure and recruitment controls, aligning services to meet budget savings agreed and continuing income recovery in 2022/23;
- vii. further adjustments would be made in future quarterly reporting to reflect the updated apportionment of costs and savings across the new structure; and
- viii. the Directorate's performance information.

7. Capital Monitoring Quarter 2 2022/23 Aithisg Sgrùdadh Calpa 2 2022/23

There had been circulated Report No. ECI/28/2022 dated 28 October 2022 by the Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure, Environment and Economy.

It was highlighted that there had been good progress on major schemes and the Service continued to design and deliver major schemes as detailed in the report. Some projects were more challenging than others on cost, price, inflation and technical difficulties, but overall progress on capital projects was positive.

In terms of the street lighting project, very good progress was being made on LED replacement products on street lighting. The review of the capital programme would look to reprofile the programme in order to complete this project and progress on the capital programme would be reported to Council.

The Committee **NOTED** the financial position as at 30 September 2022 and the estimated year end forecast.

8. Early Adoption of 20mph Speed Limits in Highland Gabhail gu Tràth ri Crìochan Astair 20msu anns a' Ghàidhealtachd

There had been circulated Report No. ECI/29/2022 dated 23 September 2022 by the Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure, Environment and Economy.

It was advised that Transport Scotland had approached Highland Council's Road Safety Team to invite Highland Council to become their pilot Local Authority for the roll out of the National Strategy for the implementation of 20mph speed limits. This early adoption trial would see the widespread introduction of 20mph speed limits in around 130 settlements across the Highland Council Area by Summer 2023. This was a significant piece of work for the Council to undertake but as early adopters the programme of implementation will be fully funded by Transport Scotland.

Members welcomed the proposals in the report which would improve road safety through Highland communities and prevent deaths and injuries on Highland roads and in turn reduce pressures and costs for the health service.

It was hoped that Police Scotland would give their Officers the flexibility to enforce 20mph speed limits and that Transport Scotland would relax the conditions where Camera Partnership vans could be used as these measures would go a long way to help with enforcement. It was confirmed that Officers were working with Police Scotland on enforcement

Public communication on these proposals was important as this was all about changing driver attitudes, encouraging them to slow down and highlighting that a reduction in speed would also see a reduction in carbon emissions.

Having 20mph speed limits around schools, playgrounds and where communities have stated there were risks with speeding, was very welcomed. However, a concern was expressed on the economic impact in Highland from the proposals. Reference was made to a similar scheme in Wales where the cost to the economy was significant. It was advised that research from the Transport Research Institute estimated that the reduction to 20mph across Wales would result in savings of £100m per year. Further, evidence suggested that junctions, buses, traffic signals for example had more of an impact on speed than 20mph limits.

It was highlighted that Transport Scotland had a desire to see 20mph on trunk roads that passed through urban areas and Officers would work with Transport Scotland to see if these 20mph limits could be carried out at the same time as the pilot rollout.

The Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the timeline for implementation that had been provided to Highland Council by Transport Scotland as detailed in Appendix 1 of the report;
- ii. **NOTED** that, as early adopters, the entire delivery of the widespread 20mph limits would be fully funded by Transport Scotland;
- iii. **AGREED** to homologate the Council's positive response to Transport Scotland in agreeing to their request for the authority to become an early adopter of the National 20mph implementation strategy;
- iv. **NOTED** that road assessments were ongoing and The Highland Council Road Safety Team had around 130 settlements around the Council area, with Council adopted roads, with existing speed limits of 30mph or below which were subject to assessment (see Appendix 3 of the report). Members were invited to put forward any additional settlements for assessment to the Road Safety Team;
- v. **NOTED** the early adoption implementation would utilise Temporary Traffic Regulation Orders; and
- vi. **NOTED** the information with regards to speed collection, communication and permanent implementation as detailed in paragraphs 5.6, 7.3 and 9 respectively.

9. Flow Country World Heritage Site Nomination Update
Cunntas às Ùr mu Ainmeachadh nam Flòbhaichean mar Ionad Glèidhteachais na Cruinne

There had been circulated Report No. ECI/30/2022 dated 4 October 2022 by the Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure, Environment and Economy.

During discussion the following comments were made:-

- thanks were expressed to the Officers for their professionalism and hard work for producing the report and getting the project to this stage;
- if the flow country site received world heritage status, it was felt that benefits would be realised not just locally but also on the world stage; and
- Members were excited and welcomed the potential of having a world heritage site within Highland. The opportunity of attracting more tourists to boost the economy was also highlighted

The Committee **NOTED** the report.

10. Update to Parking Policy
Cunntas às Ùr mu Phoileasaidh Parcaidh

There had been circulated Report No. ECI/31/2022 dated 29 September 2022 by the Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure, Environment and Economy.

During discussion the following comments were made:-

- it was suggested to add comments to paragraph 1.3 of the report regarding supporting local communities when it came to encouraging growth and investment in our tourist based economy;
- it was requested to receive a timeous indication of income for Skye parking charges and agree timescales on receiving regular indicators;
- regarding on-street parking income, it was requested to include in the Policy how these funds were to be reinvested in local roads infrastructure;
- its was requested that paragraph 1.4 of the draft Policy be updated as the Highland Council Tourism Committee no longer existed; and
- the report was welcomed as it focussed on ways to increase income for Highland in a fair, flexible and sustainable manner.

The Committee **AGREED** the amendments as detailed in section 4 of the report and to adopt as Council policy.

11. Thurso Conservation Area Appraisal & Conservation Area Management Plan Plana Measaidh & Stiùiridh Sgìre Glèidhteachais Inbhir Theòrsa

There had been circulated Report No. ECI/32/2022 dated 14 September 2022 by the Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure, Environment and Economy.

During discussion the following comments were made:-

- Members felt that was important to recognise the level of public engagement and the consultation process;
- the report was welcomed and Members thanked the officers concerned; and
- the inclusion of St Peters Kirk within the boundary was praised.

The Committee:-

- i. **AGREED** to adopt the Thurso Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan as planning guidance; and
- ii. **APPROVED** the proposed amendments to the statutory Conservation Area boundary.

12. Roads Structures Annual Report Aithisg Bhliadhna Structaran Rathaidean

There had been circulated Report No. ECI/33/2022 dated 3 October 2022 by the Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure, Environment and Economy.

The Committee **NOTED**:-

- i. the position of the Bridge Stock Condition Indicators in Highland; and

- ii. the current position in Highland in relation to the number of structures inspections undertaken.

**13. Cycle 1 Local Flood Risk Management Plans – Final Reports
Cearcall 1 Planaichean Stiùiridh Cunnart Tuile Ionadail – Aithisgean
Deireannach**

There had been circulated Report No. ECI/34/2022 dated 5 October 2022 by the Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure, Environment and Economy.

The Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the contents of the Section 38 Final Report and progress made on the measures within the current Highland and Argyll Local Flood Risk Management Plan;
- ii. **AGREED** to make the Section 38 Final Report for the Highland and Argyll Local Plan District available to the public on the Council's website;
- iii. **NOTED** the contents of the Section 38 Final Report and progress made on the measures within the current Findhorn, Nairn and Speyside Local Flood Risk Management Plan; and
- iv. **NOTED** that Moray Council would approve and publish the Section 38 Final Report for the Findhorn, Nairn and Speyside Local Plan District.

**14. Cycle 2 – Local Flood Risk Management Plans
Cearcall 2 – Planaichean Stiùiridh Cunnart Tuile Ionadail**

There had been circulated Report No. ECI/35/2022 dated 5 October 2022 by the Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure, Environment and Economy.

The Committee **AGREED**:-

- i. the content of the Highland and Argyll Local Flood Risk Management Plan allowing publication by The Highland Council to take place by 31 December 2022; and
- ii. the content of the Findhorn, Nairn and Speyside Local Flood Risk Management Plan, allowing Moray Council to publish the Local Plan by 31 December 2022.

**15. Community Transport Grants
Tabhartasan Còmhdhail Coimhearsnachd**

There had been circulated Report No. ECI/36/2022 dated 5 October 2022 by the Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure, Environment and Economy.

The Committee:-

- i. **APPROVED** continuation of funding Community Transport organisations for 2023/24 within the existing budget and in line with discussions held with each individual group; and

- ii. **NOTED** that a future report would be presented during 2023 on longer term proposals for community transport.

16. Inshes Junction Improvements – Stopping Up of U4403 Beechwood House Road
Leasachaidhean Ceangal-rathaid nan Innseagan – Stad Suas U4403 na Coille-Faidhbhile

The Committee **NOTED** that this item was to be considered by the City of Inverness Area Committee.

17. Achmelvich Car Park
Pàirc Chàraichean Achadh Mhealbhaich

There had been circulated Report No. ECI/38/2022 dated 19 October 2022 by the Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure, Environment and Economy.

The Committee **AGREED** £0.300m Highland Council loan funding with associated loan charges to be fully funded from income generated from parking charges from the car park.

18. Appointment of City Region Deal Monitoring Group
Cur an Dreuchd Buidheann-sgrùdaidh a' Chùmhnaint Baile Roinne

The Committee **AGREED** to **RECOMMEND** to Council the appointment of the Chair and Vice Chair of Audit and Scrutiny Committee and to appoint the Chair and Vice Chair of Economy and Infrastructure and 6 other Member to the City Region Deal Monitoring Group as follow:-

Mr I Brown, Mr D Fraser, Mr P Logue, Mr J McEwan, Ms L Niven and Mrs M Reid.

18a. Transport assistance for Ukrainian Displaced Persons
Taic còmhaidh do dhaoine eas-chruthach Ucràineach

There had been circulated Report No. ECI/42/22 dated 3 November 2022 by the Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure, Environment & Economy.

During discussion, Members raised the following issues:-

- the level of funding provided to the Council by central Government for the support of Ukrainian displaced persons was questioned;
- bus fares in the UK were expensive compared to what Ukrainian refugees had been used to and, when trying to find work, could prove prohibitive. By finding employment Ukrainian refugees could then become full members of the community. These refugees had faced trauma when escaping from war-torn Ukraine and many were still worried about family and friends still in the country so, it was suggested, any Service underspend should be redirected to funding this. However, it was pointed out that there would be competing priorities for any underspend and the Committee was not in a position to commit any such funds at this stage;

- if the Council were unable to fund transport assistance for one year then it should fund it for as long as it could;
- having the framework
- those on Universal Credit didn't get free bus travel and this again disadvantaged them from finding employment;
- there was a general lack of buses and bus drivers; and
- information was sought, and provided, as to how some other local authorities were funding similar schemes.

The Committee **AGREED** that a scheme be developed and implemented, should external funding be received as part of the overall support packages available from Scottish or UK Governments.

19. Minutes Geàrr-chunntas

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

- South PAC – 23 June 2022 (pp 1063-1068);
- North PAC – 10 August 2022 (pp 1069-1075);
- South PAC – 18 August 2022 (pp 1076-1084);
- North PAC – 27 September 2022 (pp 1085-1090);
- South PAC – 4 October 2022 (pp1091-1096).

20. 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 be excluded from the meeting for the following item on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraphs 6 and 9 of Part 1 of Schedule 7A of the Act.

21. Property Transactions Monitoring Report Aithisg Sgrùdaidh Ghnothachasan Seilbhe

There had been circulated to Members only Report No. ECI/39/2022 dated 5 October 2022 by the Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure, Environment & Economy.

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

22. Land and Property Fearann agus Cuid-seilbhe

There had been circulated to Members only Report No. ECI/40/2022 dated 7 October 2022 by the Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure, Environment & Economy.

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

23. Public and School Transport Retendering and Contract Awards
Ath-thairgseadh agus Duaisean Cùmhnaid airson Còmhdhail Poblach is Sgoile

There had been circulated to Members only Report No. ECI/41/2022 dated 20 October 2022 by the Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure, Environment & Economy.

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

24. Land and Property – Cromwell Road, Inverness
Fearann is Seilbh - Rathad Chrombail, Inbhir Nis

There had been circulated to Members only Report No. ECI/43/22 dated 2 November 2022 by the Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure, Environment & Economy.

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

The meeting ended at 12.40 pm