

**The Highland Council**  
**No. 6 2022/2023**

Minutes of Meeting of the Highland Council held in the Council Chamber, Council Headquarters, Glenurquhart Road, Inverness on Thursday, 8 December 2022 at 10.35 am.

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

**Present:**

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

**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 Housing and Property

**Mr B Lobban in the Chair****1. Calling of the Roll and Apologies for Absence  
Gairm a' Chlàir agus Leisgeulan**

Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of Mr L Fraser, Mr S Kennedy, Mrs A MacLean, Ms M MacCallum, Ms M Nolan and Ms S Rawlings.

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

The Council **NOTED** the following Transparency Statements:-

Item 6 (Question 5): Mr A Christie

Item 7 (ii): Mr A Christie

Item 7 (iii): Mr D Gregg and Ms L Kraft

Item 12: Mr A Christie

Item 13: Mr D Gregg

Item 14: Mr A Christie and Mr D Gregg

Item 15: Mr A Christie and Mr D Gregg

Item 18: Mr A Christie and Mr D Gregg

Item 21: Mr A Christie and Mr D Gregg

**3. Confirmation of Minutes  
Daingeachadh a' Gheàrr-chunntais**

There had been submitted for confirmation as a correct record the Minutes of the Meeting held on 27 October 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 as contained in the Volume which had been circulated separately as undernoted:-

Isle of Skye and Raasay Committee, 31 October 2022

Gaelic Committee, 2 November 2022

Comataidh na Gaidhlig, 2 November 2022

Climate Change Committee, 3 November 2022

City of Inverness Area Committee (Special), 4 November 2022

Badenoch and Strathspey Area Committee, 7 November 2022

Lochaber Area Committee, 7 November 2022

Sutherland Area Committee, 7 November 2022

Wester Ross, Strathpeffer and Lochalsh Committee, 8 November 2022

Easter Ross Area Committee, 8 November 2022

Health, Social Care and Wellbeing Committee, 9 November 2022

Economy and Infrastructure Committee, 10 November 2022

Dingwall and Seaforth Area Committee, 14 November 2022

Black Isle Committee, 15 November 2002

Nairnshire Committee, 16 November 2022

Communities and Place Committee, 16 November 2022

Housing and Property Committee, 17 November 2022

\*Education Committee, 23 November 2022  
City of Inverness Area Committee, 24 November 2022  
Audit and Scrutiny Committee, 30 November 2022  
Corporate Resources Committee, 1 December 2022

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

**\*Education Committee, 23 November 2022**

**Starred Item 12 - Review of the statutory consultation exercise on the establishment of Gaelic**

**AGREED** the creation of Gaelic Medium catchment areas for Plockton Primary School and Lochcarron Primary School on the basis set out at paragraph 1.2 of the report.

**City of Inverness Area Committee (Special), 4 November 2022**

**Notice of Amendment:** Item 3: Inverness Common Good Fund: Financial Monitoring and Budget Allocation Report

“We, the undersigned, give this Notice of Amendment to rescind the decision of the City of Inverness Area Committee, meeting on Friday, 4 November 2022, for deferring any decision on reallocating budgets to alleviate poverty.

Signed: Mr A Christie, Mrs T Robertson, Mr C Aitken, Mrs I Mackenzie, Mr D Gregg, Mrs H Crawford, Mr A Graham, Mrs A MacLean, Mr A Mackintosh, Mr D Macpherson, Mrs B McAllister, Mr R Gale and Mr M Reiss.

And instead moved that the Council:

Agree that the remaining uncommitted balance of £72,000 relating to Festive Lights be redesignated to be spend on poverty alleviation measures.”

In this connection, there had been re-circulated Report No CIA/25/22 dated 20 October 2022 by the Executive Chief Officer Communities and Place.

During discussion, Members raised the following issues:-

- Members were reminded by the Convener that although full Council was technically responsible for the Inverness Common Good Fund expenditure, they did not see the financial expenditure reports before they were submitted to the City of Inverness Area Committee;
- the Leader of the City of Inverness Area Committee indicated that he was minded that the remaining balance be remitted back to the City of Inverness Area Committee for reallocation;
- some Members expressed disappointment that the Inverness Common Good Fund expenditure allocation had been spent on additional Christmas decorations without full discussion with all City of Inverness Area Members and had failed to take into consideration the unprecedented rise in the cost of living and the ongoing impact of the Russian/Ukraine war. In this regard it was emphasised that there should be no repeat of this occurrence. However, it was also felt that the City of Inverness Area Members had taken the foregoing into

consideration and that this matter should remain with the City of Inverness Area Committee to discuss and collaboratively resolve; and

- it was stressed that the Council had a duty to be seen by the public to spend the budget responsibly and to get best value for money.

Mr A Christie, seconded by Mr D Macpherson, **MOVED** that Council note that all Highland Councillors had a duty to ensure that Inverness Common Good Funds were spent in line with the intentions of the fund and its origins. Accordingly, Council reminded the City of Inverness Area Committee that when planning future expenditure to reflect upon the current economic situation and resultant poverty levels in its area to ensure that the funds were always targeted in the best possible way.

As an **AMENDMENT** Mr I Brown, seconded by Mrs G Campbell-Sinclair, moved that the Financial Monitoring and Budget Allocation be reverted to the City of Inverness Area Committee for resolution.

On a vote being taken, the **MOTION** received 26 votes and the **AMENDMENT** received 38 votes, with 4 abstentions, and the **AMENDMENT** was therefore **CARRIED**, the votes having been cast as follows:-

#### **For the Motion**

Mr C Aitken, Mr M Baird, Mr J Bruce, Mr A Christie, Mrs H Crawford, Mr R Gale, Mr J Grafton, Mr A Graham, Mr D Gregg, Mr R Gunn, Mr A Jarvie, Mrs B Jarvie, Mr P Logue, Mr A MacDonald, Mrs I MacKenzie, Mr S Mackie, Mr A MacKintosh, Mr D Macpherson, Mrs B McAllister, Ms J McEwan, Mr M Reiss, Mrs T Robertson, Mrs L Saggars, Mr A Sinclair, Ms M Smith and Mr R Stewart.

#### **For the Amendment**

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

#### **Abstentions**

Mr J McGillivray, Mr A Rhind, Ms K Willis, Mr A Baldrey.

#### **Decision**

The Council **AGREED** that the Financial Monitoring and Budget Allocation be reverted back to the City of Inverness Area Committee for resolution.

#### **Minutes of Meetings not included in the Volume were as follows -**

- i. Highland and Western Isles Valuation Joint Board held on 23 September 2022 (approved by the Board on 25 November 2022) – **NOTED**; and
- ii. Redesign Board – held on 28 November 2022 – **APPROVED** *with the exception of those matters to be discussed at Item 16.*

**5. Membership of Committees, etc  
Ballarachd Chomataidhean, msaa**

The Council **AGREED** that Mr M Green replace Mr B Lobban on the Communities and Place Committee.

**6. Question Time  
Àm Ceiste**

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

**Member Questions**

**(1) Mr A Christie**

To the Leader of the Council

“Please could the Leader summarise the key findings and recommendations contained in the document “Report of a joint inspection of services for children and young people at risk of harm in Highland” which was prepared by the Care Inspectorate in partnership with Education Scotland, Healthcare Improvement Scotland and His Majesty’s Inspectorate of Constabulary in Scotland and how any required improvements will be taken forward.”

The response had been circulated.

In terms of a Supplementary question, the cause for the delay in the publication of the Inspection report, the final draft of which had been presented to the Council in September 2022, was queried.

In response, the Leader of the Council agreed to investigate and respond to Councillor Christie.

**(2) Mr A Christie**

To the Leader of the Council

“In light of the unprecedented projected 2023/24 budget gap of £40m+ please could the Leader detail as to what events are planned by the Administration in 2023 with regard to engaging with communities, Unions, Council staff, councillors, third sector organisations, parent councils, general public and vulnerable adult social care service users to receive observations on the budget in the lead up to the Special Budget Meeting of Council in March 2023?”

The response had been circulated.

In terms of a Supplementary question, it was queried whether the Leader of the Council agreed that his response was inadequate in addressing the budget setting process.

In response, the Leader of the Council stated that he did not agree.

**(3) Mr A Jarvie**

To the Leader of the Council

“With it becoming increasingly unlikely the Council will meet its agreement to reach net zero by 2025, will your Administration make a statement that it shall not be meeting the commitment you voted for in the last Council term?”

The response had been circulated.

There was no supplementary question.

**(4) Mr M Reiss**

To the Chair of Corporate Resources

“What provisional financing arrangements are being considered for the replacement of “A” Block at Thurso High School, following the unexpected closure of the building on the receipt of an independent structural survey/assessment in October 2022?”

The response had been circulated.

In terms of a Supplementary question, it was queried what the potential longer-term options for Thurso High School were as referred to in the answer.

In response, it was confirmed that that this matter would be addressed in the Capital Plan and would be discussed in the forthcoming weeks.

**(5) Mr D Gregg**

**Transparency Statement: Mr A Christie made a Transparency Statement in respect of this item as a Non-Executive Director of NHS Highland. However, having applied the objective test, he did not consider that he had an interest to declare.**

To the Leader

“I have been contacted by local residents who have been waiting four years for ADHD and other neurodiversity assessments, and are now paying four figures for private assessments. Can the council provide the current number of children waiting for ADHD assessments and the average waiting time for assessment, by geographical area across the council?”

The response had been circulated.

In terms of a Supplementary question, it was queried whether the Leader of the Council would commit to working in partnership with NHS Highland to ensure there was a joint strategy for reducing waiting times for assessments.

In response, the Leader of the Council confirmed that this would be discussed with the Chair of the Health, Social Care and Wellbeing Committee.

**(6) Janet McEwan**

To the Leader of the Council

“With regards to Avonlea Children’s Centre, Wick and Thor House, Respite Centre, Thurso can the leader give us the true position in respect of both these facilities? As I am receiving conflicting information from senior staff and residents”.

The response had been circulated.

In terms of a Supplementary question, further information was sought on what would happen to the 20 staff employed at Avonlea Children’s Centre.

In response, it was confirmed that further information would be provided by the Executive Chief Officer Health and Social Care.

**(7) Alex Graham**

To the Leader of the Council

“How many properties does Highland Council own in the City of Inverness, excluding schools and council houses?”

The response had been circulated.

There was no supplementary question.

**(8) Angela MacLean**

To the Chair of Health, Social Care, and Wellbeing Committee

“Can the chair confirm that Highland Council have a suitable compliment of trained Practice Leads and social workers in each Highland Area to run an effective Service. If there are some vacancies that these will be advertised as soon as possible and not delayed by the job freeze?”

The response had been circulated.

There was no supplementary question.

**7. Notices of Motion  
Brathan Glusaid**

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

- (i) “Highland Council commits to urgently contacting the Scottish Government to call on them to implement a full review of the current situation in some remote and rural areas with Highland Council where Fire Stations were either effectively closed due to being unable to supply the minimum of four firefighters to crew an appliance or unavailable for lengthy periods. This was resulting in no effective/timely response to incidents in areas as dispersed as Caithness, NW Sutherland, Skye and the Aird and Loch Ness Ward.

The review should include age, fitness requirements, training, Fire Brigade Union input, Commercial Buildings Insurance implications, joint RVP procedures, distance living from local stations and crewing levels.

The Review was called for in order to protect lives now”.

Signed: Matthew Reiss    Richard Gale    Chris Ballance

During discussion, Members raised the following issues:-

- support was voiced for the commendable work of the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS), which was much appreciated by all;
- some Members felt that while the overall sentiment of the motion was supported, there was a preference to aim for more local solutions, which would progress the situation more timeously than trying to address it via the Scottish Government. It was pointed out that this had been attempted in 2021 by the previous Council Administration, with the response being that while the SFRS appreciated the concerns and were actively working to overcome them, the matter was operational in nature. It was thought the position was unlikely to have changed;
- the need for local independent scrutiny was emphasised and a summary of efforts undertaken to address the situation was provided;
- the situation was complex and required partnership working;
- it was suggested that the use of the word ‘closed’ in the motion was not fair or accurate and statistics were provided on overall availability levels for various fire stations in the Highlands. However, it was further pointed out that while overall availability levels might be sufficient, there were snapshots in time in areas outwith Inverness during which there had been no appliance availability. A local-based review was required to address this;
- innovative solutions to the recruitment challenges being faced had been undertaken by the SFRS and this was not reflected in the terms of the motion;
- any review should consider the policy requiring a fire crew of four in remote and rural areas, with disappointment being expressed that a crew of three might be available to start immediately tackling a fire but would have to wait for a fourth fire fighter to be sent from elsewhere;
- it was proposed that a letter could be sent to the Scottish Government in addition to a localised review, which should be started as soon as possible;
- a review should also investigate the availability levels of second appliances on the north coast;
- the training commitment of seven weeks for volunteers was considerable;
- Mr G MacKenzie requested the minutes of the meeting held with the SFRS in 2021, and hoped that further discussions would take place with the SFRS, which would be open to Members from all groups; and
- the Convener pointed out that no matter how they voted, all Members appreciated the work of the SFRS.

Mr G MacKenzie, seconded by Mr D Fraser, moved as an **AMENDMENT** that the Highland Council recognised and commended the work of the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service crews and staff across Highland. The Council also recognised that there were challenges facing the retained duty system and were keen to continue to work in partnership with the SFRS Board to find local solutions for local places. To this end, the Council would seek an early meeting with representatives of the SFRS Board to review current practices and consider future solutions, as well as the work already undertaken, as reported to the Communities and Place Committee in November 2022.

On a vote being taken, the **MOTION** received 28 votes and the **AMENDMENT** received 35 votes, with no abstentions, 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 J Bruce, Mr A Christie, Mrs H Crawford, Mr R Gale, Mr J Grafton, Mr A Graham, Mr D Gregg, Mr R Gunn, Mr P Logue, Mr A MacDonald, Mrs I MacKenzie, Mr A MacKintosh, Mr R MacKintosh, Mr D Macpherson, Mrs B McAllister, Ms J McEwan, Mr J McGillivray, Mr M Reiss, Mrs T Robertson, Mrs L Siggers, Mr A Sinclair, Ms M Smith, 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 B Campbell, Mrs G Campbell-Sinclair, Mrs M Cockburn, Ms T Collier, Ms S Fanet, Mr J Finlayson, Mr D Fraser, Mr K Gowans, Mr M Green, Mrs J Hendry, Ms M Hutchison, Ms L Johnston, Mr R Jones, 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, Mr H Morrison, Mr C Munro, Ms P Munro, Ms L Niven, Mr P Oldham, Mrs M Reid, Mr K Rosie.

**Decision**

The Council **AGREED** that the Highland Council recognised and commended the work of the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service crews and staff across Highland. The Council also recognised that there were challenges facing the retained duty system and were keen to continue to work in partnership with the SFRS Board to find local solutions for local places. To this end, the Council would seek an early meeting with representatives of the SFRS Board to review current practices and consider future solutions, as well as the work already undertaken, as reported to the Communities and Place Committee in November 2022.

- (ii) **The following Members made Transparency Statements in respect of this item and having applied the objective test, did not consider that they had an interest to declare:**

**Mr A Christie as a Non-Executive Director of NHS Highland; and  
Mr R Bremner as a member of his family was a development officer.**

“This Council meeting notes that:

On 26 June 2014 Highland Council issued a Community Benefit Policy to enable Highland communities to benefit directly from the use of local resources associated with renewable energy sources. This built on the Scottish Government Good Practice Principles for Community Benefit from Onshore Renewable Developments, interpreting them for the Highland context. The policy was intended to support Highland communities to maximise the benefit they derive from Community Benefit by promoting the following four guiding principles.

It sought a minimum payment to Community Benefit funds equivalent to £5,000 per Megawatt of installed capacity per year (Retail Price Index linked with 2011 as the baseline year). It also proposed the establishment of a Highland Trust Fund, with income from developers to be split between Local Funds and the Highland Trust Fund.

It was now evident that there have been major changes in the field of onshore wind energy, such as

- The price of electricity has tripled
- Turbine sizes are much bigger, often producing six times the power of older turbines
- Some communities have benefitted significantly from voluntary community benefit payments
- Other neighbouring communities with equally pressing needs and impacted by development have had no benefit, due to the varying ways that areas of benefit are determined by developers, communities and other stakeholders.

It was evident that the people of the Highlands are deriving little benefit from the vast profits being generated by turbine owners developers, usually based outside Scotland and that the modest benefit voluntarily provided is not provided equitably to Highland communities.

This Council therefore resolves to:

1. review the Highland Council Policy for Onshore Wind Turbine Development as a matter of urgency, including the proposed Highland Trust Fund which has not yet been established; and
2. call upon the Scottish Government to legislate to allocate at least 5% of gross revenue from wind turbines (rather than £5,000+inflation per turbine) and to widen the areas in which funds are to be distributed”.

Signed: Angus MacDonald    Michael Baird    Alex Graham  
           Molly Nolan            Janet McEwan    Ron Gunn

Following a summary of Mr MacDonald’s motion, Mr Rosie proposed that the focus of the motion was too narrow, and he outlined three areas where collaboration was already providing significant benefits, including the Caithness community heating network, the potential use of windfarms for superfast broadband infrastructure, and hydrogen opportunities. He therefore suggested that the following also be included in the Motion – “that the Council recognised that the vast range of renewable energy opportunities (onshore and offshore wind, hydropower, battery and pumped storage, biomass, solar, wave and tidal power and hydrogen) presented huge opportunities that would enable us to address the challenges faced in our communities and to achieve our wider climate action ambitions. Highland Council supported the formation of a collaborative regional partnership, with the aim and purpose of achieving a road map to Net Zero emissions and affordable energy solutions across the Highlands”.

Mr MacDonald indicated his willingness to incorporate Mr Rosie’s amendment into his Motion, and asked that the following amendment be made: ‘to call upon the Scottish Government to legislate to allocate at least 5% of gross revenue from wind turbines (rather than £5,000+inflation **per megawatt**) and to widen the areas in which funds are to be distributed’

A brief summary was provided by the Leader of the Council on the work already being undertaken in relation to transmission, green energy and on and off-shore wind turbines.

**Decision**

The Council **AGREED**:-

- i. to review the Highland Council Policy for Onshore Wind Turbine Development as a matter of urgency, including the proposed Highland Trust Fund which had not yet been established;
- ii. to call upon the Scottish Government to legislate to allocate at least 5% of gross revenue from wind turbines (rather than £5,000+inflation per megawatt per turbine) and to widen the areas in which funds were to be distributed; and
- iii. to recognise that the vast range of renewable energy opportunities (onshore and offshore wind, hydropower, battery and pumped storage, biomass, solar, wave and tidal power and hydrogen) presented huge opportunities that would enable us to address the challenges faced in our communities and to achieve our wider climate action ambitions. Highland Council supported the formation of a collaborative regional partnership, with the aim and purpose of achieving a road map to Net Zero emissions and affordable energy solutions across the Highlands.

**(iii) Transparency Statements: the undernoted Members declared connections to this item but, having applied the objective test, did not consider that they had an interest to declare:-**

**Mr D Gregg - as an employee of NHS Highland**

**Ms L Kraft - as a part time case worker for Maree Todd in her capacity as MSP for Caithness Sutherland and Ross**

“This council recognised the importance of Breast Screening in the early diagnosis and treatment of breast cancer for women across the Highlands. It also recognised that to be truly effective it had to be available and accessible to all woman who met the agreed criteria.

That being the case it was incumbent on the council to ensure that the breast screening mobile facility was available to all women within the appropriate times scales.

However, it was known that in some areas access to the unit was difficult and indeed sometimes impossible for some women to access and this in particular referred to women who had restricted mobility or had no access to private or public transport. As an example, one such location was the village of Helmsdale on the East coast of Sutherland. Helmsdale shared a GP practice with the village of Brora which was located 12 miles south of Helmsdale. The Breast Screening unit that attended this area only operated from Brora and as such women from Helmsdale had to arrange personal travel or use public transport to access the unit. In some cases, neither of these options was available if an individual had poor mobility and no access to private transport. As a result, some women were denied access to the unit by virtue of geographical exclusion and in one known instance there had been a gap of 16 years since breast screening had been accessed.

This example highlights the inequity of this service in the remote and rural Highlands and as such the council calls upon the Leader to lobby NHS Highland and the Minister for Public Health, Women’s Health and Sport, to ensure that the breast screening unit was available in villages and communities such as Helmsdale to ensure that every woman had access to this vital service”.

Signed: Richard Gale      Michael Baird      Angela Maclean      Jim McGillivray      Trish Robertson

During discussion, Members raised the following issues:-

- the important work undertaken by the screening service was acknowledged;
- it was suggested that the issues raised by the Motion were operational concerns of NHS Highland and Highland was above the national average for participation in the screening programme. The Council should encourage local Members to pursue the provision of information to the community by NHS Highland;
- a summary was provided of the history of the mobile breast screening programme, which had never been intended to go to all villages, but to serve several settlements while being based in one location, due to infrastructure and set up requirements and time constraints; and
- it was clarified that patients over the age of 50 were invited to attend every three years and those over age 71 could self-refer. People were urged to take up any screening opportunities offered.

### **Decision**

The Council **AGREED** the terms of the Amendment as detailed.

#### **8. Appointment of Police Scotland and Scottish Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS) Scrutiny Leads**

**Cur Ceannard Sgrùdaidh an Dreuchd airson Poileas Alba agus Seirbheis Smàlaidh agus Teasairginn na h-Alba**

The Council **AGREED** the following appointments:-

- the Chair of Communities and Place be appointed as the Council Scrutiny Lead for Police Scotland; and
- the Vice Chair of Communities and Place be appointed as the Council Scrutiny Lead SFRS.

#### **9. Appointment to Highland Opportunity (Investments) Limited Cur an Dreuchd gu Cothrom na Gàidhealtachd (Tasgaidhean) Earranta**

The Council was advised that there was currently one vacant place on Highland Opportunity (Investments) Limited – a company which created and sustained employment in the Highlands through investment in businesses and community enterprises. There were six meetings held during the year and the role of Directors was to consider individual investment proposals and decide on their merit and set out the strategic policy of the company. It was considered desirable for Directors to have appropriate business orientated experience and, in this regard, there had been circulated Role Profile and Skills Set.

The Council **AGREED** Mrs K MacLean be appointed to Highland Opportunity (Investments) Limited.

**10. Appointment to Highland Housing Alliance  
Caidreachas Taigheadais na Gàidhealtachd**

The Highland Housing Alliance was formed to help address the need for affordable housing in the Highlands with the objectives of operating a revolving landbanking fund to facilitate the construction of affordable housing, carrying out infrastructure works to enable sites to become available as feasible building sites, developing projects to provide housing (for sale and rent) at market or near market levels, organising, packaging and managing joint developments with housing associations and others and undertaking research, development and other work to improve the housing procurement process in the Highlands with specific reference to the sustainable use of locally sourced products.

The Council **AGREED** that Mrs A MacLean replace Mrs M Paterson on the Highland Housing Alliance.

**11. Financial Crisis – Workforce Planning and Preparation  
Èiginn Ionmhasail – Dealbhadh agus Deisealachadh Feachd-obrach**

There had been circulated Report No. HC/41/22 by the Head of Finance.

Following an introduction to the report by the Chief Executive and Head of Corporate Finance and Commercialism, Members raised the following main points: -

- the scale of the crisis was unprecedented and there was uncertainty around the Council's flat cash settlement from the Scottish Government and in relation to budgets for pay awards and inflation assumptions and forecasts. This was a material change from previous years and it was taking longer to reach the point where it was possible for the Administration to consult with Opposition Members;
- through COSLA, it was clear all other local authorities in Scotland were facing challenges due to the financial crisis;
- central to the crisis was the impact on the Council's staff and highlighting the People Strategy set out in the report and reinforcing the commitment to protect the Council's staff where possible;
- tribute was paid to the Council's senior officers, staff and the trade unions for their positive approach in working with Members to consider measures to achieve savings and retain posts wherever possible;
- front line staff had brought forward ideas for cost savings at engagement sessions and budget holders had been involved in workshops with staff;
- the aim was to gather information, appraise all the options and consider how to protect jobs and services. To bring forward draft budget proposals at this stage would be premature and irresponsible;
- representations were being made to the Scottish Government on the unique challenges facing the Highlands. This included bringing forward ideas and solutions and the potential for them to be implemented;
- the lack of collaboration to date with Opposition Members on its proposals was highlighted and the Administration needed to share information and be more open and transparent about the ongoing discussions and proposals for next year's revenue budget;
- it was disappointing the Council was now having to ensure it operated safely and met the minimum statutory requirements when previously the authority had always strived to be the best and break new ground;

- the level of staff savings required demonstrated the seriousness of the situation. Difficult decisions would have to be made and these would impact on services, jobs and people across the Highland;
- a special meeting of the Council should be held in January 2023 to review the impact of the Scottish Government budget settlement on the Highland Council;
- the Council's current financial position and projected budget gap was unprecedented, based on financial forecasts in previous years;
- the Scottish Government's underspend on this year's budget should be used to meet the shortfall for all local authorities immediately and help support communities;
- details of the posts that were being protected or removed was sought and how the savings had been calculated and the consideration given to the needs and priorities of Services;
- the resilience of the people, communities and businesses in the Highlands was praised as was the sustained performance on Council tax and non-domestic collection rates;
- in common with all other local authorities, there would have to be wholesale changes in how services were delivered and an evaluation of whether some services could continue to be delivered;
- further clarity needed to be provided on the proposed savings on the Health, Wellbeing & Social Care budget, given the ageing population in Highland and concern at the potential loss of front line care staff;
- further clarity was requested on the proposed savings on the Education budget. The need to protect children and invest in their future should be paramount in the consideration of budget cuts;
- an explanation was sought, and provided, on the average head count of staff compared to 2017, in terms of the prudent use of the significant additional Covid funding received and additional duties during this period. Vacancy management controls had been put in place in relation to the previous year's budget;
- in relation to staff savings, clarification was provided that the focus was on the prioritisation of services and on reducing agency spend in directorates and localities, to achieve best value. Details of the flow chart process would be shared with Members and senior officers were willing to attend Member group meetings if required;
- there was a need to consider the current level of capital projects in view of the significant costs to the revenue budget in servicing the Council's borrowing;
- the single biggest risk that the Council faced was that of long-term financial sustainability. Members had to accept the realities of the situation and demonstrate to the public the crisis could be mitigated through dialogue and by accepting the need to change; and
- in regard to the discussion, the Administration had not shared with Opposition Members the ideas, solutions, savings proposals and changes to services being discussed. This did not demonstrate collaboration or working in partnership.

Thereafter, Mr A Christie, seconded by Mrs T Robertson, **MOVED** approval of the recommendations in the report and an additional recommendation that a special meeting of the Council be held in January 2023 to review the impact of the Scottish Government budget settlement on the Highland Council.

Mr K Gowans, seconded by Mr R Bremner, moved as an **AMENDMENT** approval of the recommendations in the report.

On a vote being taken, the **MOTION** received 27 votes and the **AMENDMENT** received 41 votes, with no abstentions, and the **AMENDMENT** was therefore **CARRIED**, the votes having been cast as follows:-

### **For the Motion**

Mr C Aitken, Mr M Baird, Mr J Bruce, Mr A Christie, Mrs H Crawford, Mr R Gale, Mr J Grafton, Mr A Graham, Mr D Gregg, Mr R Gunn, Mr A Jarvie, Mrs B Jarvie, Mr P Logue, Mr A Macdonald, Mrs I MacKenzie, Mr S Mackie, Mr A Mackintosh, Mr D Macpherson, Mrs B McAllister, Ms J McEwan, Mr J McGillivray, Mr M Reiss, Mrs T Robertson, Mrs L Saggars, Mr A Sinclair, Ms M Smith, Mr R Stewart.

### **For the Amendment**

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 B Campbell, Mrs G Campbell-Sinclair, Mrs M Cockburn, Ms T Collier, Ms S Fanet, Mr J Finlayson, Mr D Fraser, Mr K Gowans, Mr M Green, Mrs J Hendry, Ms M Hutchison, Ms L Johnston, Mr R Jones, Ms E Knox, Ms L Kraft, Mr B Lobban, Mr D Louden, Mr W MacKay, Mr G MacKenzie, Ms K MacLean, Mr R MacKintosh, Mr T MacLennan, Mr D Millar, Mr H Morrison, Mr C Munro, Ms P Munro, Ms L Niven, Mr P Oldham, Mrs M Paterson, Mrs M Reid, Mr A Rhind, Mr K Rosie, Ms K Wills.

### **Decision**

The Council **NOTED**:

- i. the controls being undertaken to address the in-year budget pressures;
- ii. the work being done to identify a sustainable reduction in staffing levels to help address the anticipated budget gap in 2023/24; and
- iii. that engagement with staff and unions was ongoing and would inform proposals that would be brought forward as part of the budget setting process in March 2023.

## **12. Chief Social Work Officer Annual Report 2021-2022 Aithisg Àrd-Oifigear Obrach Sòisealta 2021-2022**

**Transparency Statement: Mr A Christie made a Transparency Statement in respect of this item as a Non-Executive Director of NHS Highland. However, having applied the objective test, he did not consider that he had an interest to declare.**

There had been circulated Report No. HC/42/22 by the Executive Chief Officer Health and Social Care.

Following an introduction to the report by the Executive Chief Officer Health and Social Care, Members raised the following main points: -

- the Executive Chief Officer was thanked for the report and tribute paid to all staff on the excellent social work services delivered in Highland in challenging circumstances;
- it was not clear whether the recent significant increase in child neglect numbers would continue and joint work with partners on this complex area was ongoing;
- an update was sought, and provided, on the way forward in improving service delivery, innovation and achieving outcomes in the current financial crisis;

- an explanation was sought, and provided, on the factors impacting on the number of children taken into foster care and the number of available foster carers. A report on allowances for foster and kinship carers to the Health, Social Care and Wellbeing Committee was being brought forward and a national decision awaited;
- an assurance was sought, and provided, that the agreed additional payment to kinship carers would be issued in the near future;
- the success of the Home to Highland project was highlighted and confirmation the target for bringing children back from out of area placements had been achieved;
- in relation to the above project, concern at the approach being taken to close some children's houses. It was explained a review had concluded there were too many children in residential care in Highland and a plethora of work was being undertaken around enabling children to remain at home. The portfolio of houses was being reviewed in terms of need and up to date design more suitable for young people;
- concern was expressed at the process followed and communication with local Members in regard to the closure of Avonlea, Wick. A summary was provided on this matter during which it was explained the Care Inspectorate had ultimately served an enforcement notice and this meant Avonlea would close. The Service was working closely with the young people, families and staff to consider needs. The enforcement notice had accelerated matters and the ability to have smaller residential units in place. Learning points had been taken from the process;
- local Members in Ward 3 appreciated the clear information the Chief Executive, ECO Health and Social Care and team had provided on Avonlea and the ability to be involved in the ongoing discussions;
- an update was sought, and provided, on the work in progress to provide for children experiencing mental health issues following the pandemic with earlier access to the range of available mental health services;
- the pressure on care at home services and staffing including the impact of Brexit, the level of unmet need particularly in North Highland and the impact of the planned reduction in delivery hours. In response, a summary was provided on the range of measures being progressed in partnership to tackle this issue;
- the difficulties the public were experiencing in relation to care at home carers provision were highlighted and that clients found it difficult to bond and have a conversation with their carer due to time pressures;
- care homes and care at home services were essential to reduce delayed discharges and to the wellbeing of older people who remained in hospital due to a lack of reablement or package of care. It was explained the key focus for the Service and NHS Highland was on getting care at home right as this would have positive effects on all the other services;
- there was concern at the number of young people remaining in residential placements and an update was provided on the range of opportunities being explored to support and enable looked after and other groups of young people;
- the Highlands Advance Nurse Practitioner Programme and trainee schemes had been successful and should continue to be supported;
- the available respite provision for children with special and complex needs was explained and the ongoing work to build different types of provision, given that one approach did not fit all, was recognised;
- the level of direct support being provided to child carers at home needed to be given a special mention. It was confirmed that a report on young carers was due to be submitted to the Health, Social Care and Wellbeing Committee;
- an update was sought, and provided, in relation on respite provision at Thor House, Thurso and the planned move for the children currently resident in the premises. Feedback was also being sought from families and young people in the area on need and the location of provision;

- in future, the annual report would be submitted closer to the relevant year end and confirmation was given that the amalgamated report of all local authorities, and the relevant link, would be circulated to Members in due course;
- further information and examples were requested in relation to the reference in the report to the complexity of cases and why they were taking longer than previously; and
- information was sought on the additional number of carers that would be required to meet the shortfall of hours per week of unmet need; how the weekly figures for the turnover of care home beds compared to the numbers that required a care home; and the potential for Care Home Oversight Group to establish a risk register of care homes.

The Convener advised that written responses to questions would be provided to Members where it had not been possible to provide a response at the meeting.

### **Decision**

The Council **NOTED** the issues raised in the annual report and the implications for social work and social care services within Highland Council and NHS Highland.

### **13. Our Future Highland: The Highland Council Programme 2022 - 2027 Ar Gàidhealtachd Ri Teachd: Prògram Chomhairle na Gàidhealtachd 2022 – 2027**

**Transparency Statement: Mr D Gregg made a Transparency Statement in respect of this item as a Board Member of Inverness Citizens Advice Bureau. However, having applied the objective test, he did not consider that he had an interest to declare.**

There had been circulated Report No. HC/43/22 by the Acting Depute Chief Executive.

Following an introduction by the Leader of the Council, the following issues were raised during discussion:-

- it was emphasised that it was the Programme of the Council, not the Administration;
- the Council Programme, the Corporate Plan and Service Plans, which would be approved by Strategic Committees, were interlinked and it was hoped they would all come together by late spring of 2023;
- it was disappointing not to hear more about the walkabouts that had taken place at locations across the region;
- Members commended the “vision boards” produced by schools, some of which specifically mentioned community gardens and growing spaces. In that regard, reference was made to the decision, at a recent meeting of the City of Inverness and Area Committee, to designate for housing development a field that had been earmarked to be a community growing space. The local community was upset at the loss of such a space, and the importance of listening to communities was emphasised;
- measuring the success of the Programme was going to be challenging;
- general support was expressed for the areas of the Programme relating to the economy, education and housing, and the review in 2023, when more would be known about the economic situation, would provide an opportunity for refinement;

- concern was expressed that paragraph 4.1 of the report, which set out the context in which the Programme was placed, did not mention climate change. Members quoted from the UN Secretary General's opening speech at COP27, in which he had stated that climate change was the defining issue of our age, and it was unacceptable, outrageous and self-defeating to put it on the backburner. The progress report to the Council meeting on 27 October 2022 had indicated that, as part of the engagement programme, Climate Change Committee Members would be asked to participate in a focus group to consider the Programme in the light of the Council's climate change and adaptation requirements. However, the focus group had not taken place and Members remained concerned about the Programme. The message concerning the unprecedented climate and ecological crisis needed to be forefront, along with the other significant considerations, and it was necessary to act now to embed climate action across all Council activities and assets;
- in relation to the public survey that had been carried out, 805 responses represented approximately 0.5% of the population of Highland. From a statistical analysis perspective, to have a confidence rating of 95% or above would require around 9,000 responses;
- there had been approximately 8,000 abandoned calls to the Service Centre in the past year, and it was heartening to see the aspiration to improve response times in replying to enquires and service requests from the public;
- the proactive nature of the Programme was commended;
- it would be helpful to get an idea of the numbers pertaining to the proposals to broaden the Council's income base through taxation and to implement the tourism levy;
- it was good to see housing featuring so prominently in the Programme. However, it was disappointing there was no mention of mid-market affordable rent or shared ownership options. In addition, Highland had a high level of self-build housing compared to the Scottish average and it would be helpful to hear what other housing plans the Administration hoped to bring forward;
- whilst there clearly had been an attempt to engage with the wider community, the response from Community Councils and Parent Councils had been disappointing, and it was necessary to review the approach to engagement and consider how to get a better response in future;
- the proposed conversion of Council assets for housing use was welcomed, and it was suggested consideration be given to converting some assets to key worker housing;
- there had been a good response to the walkabouts and public meetings in Skye;
- it was clear that young people had a vision for Highland and they were the people that were going to be living here in the future;
- the proposed Programme was a starting point and all Members had a responsibility to ensure there was a natural linkage with the Corporate Plan and Service Plans and that the Programme positively impacted communities and constituents;
- future generations would never forgive the current generation if it made choices that required the continued use of fossil fuels in Highland, known as the region of renewables, and it was necessary to be creative and find different ways of travelling;
- it was welcomed that the Programme did not present addressing climate change as punitive but as an opportunity to raise money and create jobs in Highland which, in areas such as Lochaber, had some of the lowest wages in Scotland;
- the vision set out in the Programme was a step in the right direction in terms of having a quality employment market to reverse the trend of young people leaving Highland;

- in relation to building houses to support communities and economic growth, the need for age-friendly communities was emphasised and it was requested that this be included in the Programme;
- whilst it was recognised that it was the Council's Programme, the importance of community services was emphasised, particularly in terms of health and social care service provision and caring for the aging population;
- the Gaelic version of the Programme, which sent a strong message as to the Council's commitment to Gaelic, was welcomed;
- appreciation was expressed to the Officer Support Group for their assistance in putting the Programme together and organising the associated engagement activity;
- the importance of public engagement and working with communities to find local solutions was emphasised;
- in response to the comments regarding climate change, it was highlighted that one of the Programme's five high-level outcomes was dedicated to addressing the climate emergency, and that the Climate Change Committee had committed to have a two-day seminar to agree net-zero targets and action plans;
- in the section about a sustainable Highland environment, there was a little about valuing and protecting Highland's natural environment but a lot more about making the most of the financial opportunities from renewable energy, and it was important to recognise that these two aspirations might conflict with each other on occasion. Whilst in favour of increasing Council and community-owned renewable energy projects, care was needed, and a commitment was sought within the Programme to look after Highland's natural capital to ensure there was no further loss of habitat and decline in wildlife;
- the school vision boards included saving bees, local food growing, space for animals and planting trees, and it was essential to take these matters on board as part of addressing the ecological crisis. In that regard, it was highlighted that an area of Common Good land in Nairn had been identified for food growing and ecological benefit and it was hoped to be able to bring this forward in the next few years;
- the explicit support within the Programme for local place plans which met communities' needs was welcomed;
- it having been noted there had been no survey responses by the under 20 age group, it was queried what attempts had been made to engage with secondary school pupils. In addition, not all 16 year olds were in school and it was suggested a special effort should be made to engage with them;
- it was necessary to get to an era where addressing climate change trumped all other policies and that was not seen as controversial. People should also apply the same thinking in their personal lives; and
- attention was drawn to the finding in the "My Life in the Highlands" survey that 47% of young people did not plan to stay in their local area for longer than five years. Young people had to want to live in and move to Highland to grow the economy and improve society and, in relation to the earlier contribution regarding the need for age-friendly communities, it was important that communities were also youth-friendly.

### **Decision**

The Council **APPROVED** the Council Programme for 2022 – 2027.

**14. Draft Corporate Plan 2022-27  
Dreachd Phlana Corporra 2022-27**

**Transparency Statements:** the undernoted Members declared connections to this item but, having applied the objective test, did not consider that they had an interest to declare:-

**Mr A Christie - as a Non-Executive Director of NHS Highland**

**Mr D Gregg - as an employee of NHS Highland and a Board Member of Inverness Citizens Advice Bureau**

There had been circulated Report No. HC/44/22 by the Chief Executive.

Following an introduction by the Chief Executive and the Leader of the Council, the following issues were raised during discussion:-

- the importance of assurance, as opposed to reassurance, whether at Area Committee, Strategic Committee or Full Council level, was emphasised;
- concern was expressed that there was still a considerable amount of work to be done on the Corporate Plan, and information was sought, and provided, as to how it would be taken forward at a time when the team was depleted;
- the value of indicators such as “Cost per library visit” and “Cost per visit to museums and galleries” was questioned and it was suggested these needed to be looked at further;
- it was considered that some of the attainment indicators needed to be strengthened. In addition, it was necessary to measure against the virtual comparators and authorities that Highland compared itself to when looking at attainment, not other figures. In response, the Chair of the Education Committee explained that the Council’s targets were clearly laid out, stretch aims having already been agreed with Education Scotland. He also referred to the Raising Attainment Strategy presented to the Education Committee on 29 September 2022 and the discussion on the Scottish Credit and Qualification Framework at the Education Committee on 23 November 2022, and assured Members that the point regarding comparison was being taken on board;
- a Members’ Seminar was needed to review the Corporate Plan prior to the final version coming back to Full Council in March 2023;
- concern was expressed regarding actions and measures that were in partnership with other bodies, such as the Community Planning Partnership, as the Council was not dependent on itself to achieve them;
- it was encouraging to see the new indicator relating to CO2 emissions and clarification was sought, and provided, as to whether it related to the Council’s own operations and whether there was a clearly established baseline; and
- there was a long waiting list for Council housing and it was suggested that consideration be given to an indicator relating to the waiting list and the number of people being housed by the local authority.

**Decision**

The Council **NOTED**:

- i. the draft Corporate Plan for 2022-27 at Appendix 1 to the report;
- ii. the final version of the Corporate Plan would come forward for Member approval in March 2023;

- iii. the Corporate Plan would support the delivery of the Highland Outcome Improvement Plan;
- iv. the Corporate Plan would be the subject of an Annual Performance Report in September each year; and
- v. the Plan was normally reviewed following the Annual Performance Report to Council and any changes would be submitted to Council for approval;
- vi. and **AGREED** that a Members' Seminar on the Corporate Plan be arranged prior to consideration of the final version at Full Council in March 2023.

**15. Contract Standing Orders  
Gnàth-riaghailtean Cùmhnaint**

**Transparency Statements: the undernoted Members declared connections to this item but, having applied the objective test, did not consider that they had an interest to declare:-**

**Mr A Christie - as a Non-Executive Director of NHS Highland  
Mr D Gregg - as an employee of NHS Highland**

There had been circulated Report No. HC/45/22 by the Head of Finance.

The Council **APPROVED** the changes to the Contract Standing Orders and **AGREED** that these should become effective from 1 January 2023.

**16. Redesign of the Highland Council – Work Programme Update  
Ath-dhealbhadh Chomhairle na Gàidhealtachd – Cunntas às Ùr mun Phrògram Obrach**

There had been circulated Report No HC/46/22 by the Acting Depute Chief Executive.

During discussion, Members raised the following issues: -

- the Redesign Board was considered to be one of the most important Council bodies and all Members were encouraged to attend meetings and workshops. The Board had a crucial role in finding ways for the Council to improve and streamline processes and to generate income;
- in relation to the proposals for the Inverness Town House, some Members highlighted the importance of the Grade A listed building to the city and to the Highlands, for historical and economic reasons, and suggested the hasty departure of council staff from it posed a risk to the Council's ability to find an appropriate and suitable alternative use for the building by March 2023. The departure should be postponed to facilitate more measured planning for the future, noting that the cost of this postponement was less than 1% of the £40m budget gap, and it was likely there would still be a cost to the Council in relocating staff elsewhere. The sudden loss of Council workers from the town centre would impact city centre businesses, with whom further consultation was urged, and the proposals would be a loss to the Inverness Common Good Fund;
- other Members pointed out that if the savings to the Council from the proposed departure of staff from the Town House in March 2023 were not realised, those savings would have to be sourced from other budgets. Any postponement would affect the whole asset rationalisation programme;
- it was requested that Drummie be considered as one of the proposed key bases, there being none proposed for Sutherland at present; and

- the location for the new bus company was welcomed and it was noted that the Council had been successful in recruiting new drivers and might be able to share their approach with Stagecoach.

Mr B Lobban, seconded by Mr R Bremner, **MOVED** to note the Work Programme for the Redesign Board, comprising major projects and a programme of Lean and Rapid Reviews, and agree the recommendations as set out in the Redesign Board minute held on 28 November 2022.

Mr A Graham, seconded by Mr A Christie, moved as an **AMENDMENT**, to agree the recommendations as set out in the Redesign Board minute held on 28 November 2022, subject to the exit date to vacate staff from the Town House premises being deferred to 31 March 2024.

On a vote being taken, the **MOTION** received 37 votes and the **AMENDMENT** received 21 votes, with two 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 B Campbell, Mrs G Campbell-Sinclair, Mrs M Cockburn, Ms T Collier, Ms S Fanet, Mr J Finlayson, Mr D Fraser, Mr K Gowans, Mr M Green, Mrs J Hendry, Ms M Hutchison, Ms L Johnston, Mr R Jones, 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, Mr H Morrison, Mr C Munro, Ms P Munro, Ms L Niven, Mr P Oldham, Mrs M Reid, Mr K Rosie, Ms K Willis.

#### **For the amendment**

Mr C Aitken, Mr M Baird, Mr C Ballance, Mr J Bruce, Mr A Christie, Mrs H Crawford, Mr J Grafton, Mr A Graham, Mr D Gregg, Mr R Gunn, Mr P Logue, Mrs I MacKenzie, Mr A MacKintosh, Mr R MacKintosh, Mr D Macpherson, Ms J McEwan, Mr M Reiss, Mrs T Robertson, Mrs L Saggars, Ms M Smith, Mr R Stewart.

#### **Abstentions**

Mr R Gale, Mr A MacDonald.

#### **Decision**

The Council:

- i. **NOTED** the Work Programme for the Redesign Board, comprising major projects and a programme of Lean and Rapid Reviews; and
- ii. **AGREED** the recommendations as set out the Redesign Board Minute held on 28 November 2022.

### **17. Inverness Business Improvement District (BID) Sgìre Leasachadh Gnothachais Inbhir Nis**

There had been circulated Report No. HC/47/22 by the Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure, Environment and Economy.

The Council **APPROVED** the assessment made in Appendix 1 to the report relative to the Inverness BID Proposal and **AGREED** not to exercise the Council's right of veto.

**18. Inverness Business Improvement District Ballot for New Term from 1 April 2023 – 31 March 2028**

**Baileat Sgìre Leasachadh Gnothachais Inbhir Nis airson na Teirme Ùire bho 1 Giblean 2023 – 31 Màrt 2028**

**Transparency Statements: the undernoted Members declared connections to this item but, having applied the objective test, did not consider that they had an interest to declare:-**

**Mr A Christie - as a Non-Executive Director of NHS Highland**

**Mr D Gregg - as an employee of NHS Highland**

There had been circulated Report No. HC/48/22 by the Executive Chief Officer Communities and Place.

During discussion, Members raised the following issues: -

- concern was expressed on proposals for Academy Street, Inverness. The paper referred to a welcoming and vibrant City but the refusal to pilot a traffic order in Academy Street to see the effect of displaced traffic on other areas of the City was an opportunity missed. If the Council was working in partnership with the Inverness Business Improvement District (BID) and businesses the Council should have piloted the removal of traffic through Academy Street before agreeing to do this;
- it was highlighted that the recommendations on Academy Street were agreed at the last City of Inverness Area Committee in November 2022 and there was ongoing public consultation on the Academy Street proposal;
- full support from the Council should be given to Inverness BID and the ballot for the new term in order to continue the great achievements of the business improvement district. In future it was hoped that businesses in other areas of the City could be included in Inverness BID;
- Inverness BID had been invaluable in helping other areas with the problem Gull issue. They had been very interactive and shared policies on this issue. However, a view was expressed that Gulls were a declining species in the UK and money spent on dealing with problem Gulls could be better used; and
- in past elections businesses in the BID area had voted in favour, by increasing percentages, of renewal of the BID and the business survey also endorsed the work of BID.

**Decision**

The Council **AGREED**:

- i. the draft Business Plan (Appendix 1) from Inverness Bid; and
- ii. to support the new 5-year term for the Inverness Business Improvement District in the forthcoming ballot on 23 March 2023.

**19. Review of UK Parliamentary Constituencies: Revised Proposals  
Ath-sgrùdadh de Roinnean-Pàrlamaid na RA: Molaidhean Ath-sgrùdaichte**

There had been circulated Report No. HC/49/22 by the Executive Chief Officer Performance and Governance.

The Council:-

- i. **NOTED** the initial and revised constituency maps at Appendices A-D to the report;
- ii. **NOTED** the recommendations approved at the Communities and Place Committee; and
- iii. **AGREED to HOMOLOGATE** the response to the Boundary Commission at Appendix E to the report.

**20. Planning Review Body (PRB)  
Buidheann Ath-sgrùdaidh Dealbhaidh**

There had been circulated Report No. HC/50/22 by the Acting Depute Chief Executive and Executive Chief Officer Performance and Governance.

The PRB only had a small membership and thus it could sometimes be difficult to get a quorum and the proposed increase in membership was therefore welcomed. However, concern was expressed regarding the second recommendation in that the PRB did not give adequate consideration to local knowledge in all applications as the PRB membership did not comprise of a Member from each ward. Consequently it was proposed that this recommendation should be replaced.

Mr T MacLennan, seconded by Mr B Lobban, **MOVED** the recommendations as set out in the report.

Mrs T Robertson, seconded by Mr A Christie, moved as an **AMENDMENT**, that the second recommendation be replaced with the following wording 'As not every ward is represented on PRB, some applications will not have the benefit of local knowledge, therefore the exclusion of ward Members to participate on applications for their ward'.

On a vote being taken, the **MOTION** received 39 votes and the **AMENDMENT** received 14 votes, with two 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 B Campbell, Mrs G Campbell-Sinclair, Mrs M Cockburn, Ms T Collier, Ms S Fanet, Mr J Finlayson, Mr D Fraser, Mr R Gale, Mr K Gowans, Mr M Green, Mrs J Hendry, Ms M Hutchison, Ms L Johnston, Mr R Jones, 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, Mr H Morrison, Mr C Munro, Ms P Munro, Ms L Niven, Mr P Oldham, Mrs M Reid, Mr K Rosie, Mrs L Saggars, Ms K Willis.

**For the Amendment**

Mr C Aitken, Mr J Bruce, Mr A Christie, Mr J Grafton, Mr A Graham, Mr D Gregg, Mr R Gunn, Mr P Logue, Mrs I MacKenzie, Mr A MacKintosh, Mr D Macpherson, Ms J McEwan, Mrs T Robertson, Mr R Stewart.

**Abstentions**

Mr C Ballance and Mr R MacKintosh.

**Decision**

The Council **AGREED**:

- i. an increase in the PRB membership from 6 to 8 elected Members (an increase of 1 Member from each NPAC and SPAC), each PAC to appoint its additional PRB Member at its next meeting; and
- ii. that Members of the PRB might determine Notices of Review in their ward (a removal of the automatic restriction currently in place).

**21. Highland Armed Forces Community Covenant Update  
Cunntas às Ùr mu Chùmhnant Coimhearsnachd Feachdan Armaichte na Gàidhealtachd**

**Transparency Statements: the undernoted Members declared connections to this item but, having applied the objective test, did not consider that they had an interest to declare:-**

**Mr D Gregg - as an employee of NHS Highland  
Mr A Christie - as a Non-Executive Director of NHS Highland**

There had been circulated Report No. HC/51/22 by the Executive Chief Officer Communities and Place.

The Council:-

- i. **NOTED** the considerable progress made with partners across a range of activities which support the Armed Forces Community Covenant; and
- ii. **AGREED** to the appointment of Councillor Leslie-Anne Niven as Armed Forces and Veterans' Champion on an interim basis.

**22. Timetable of Meetings 2023  
Clàr-ama Choinneamhan 2023**

The Council **AGREED**:

- that a Special Meeting of the Council be held on Wednesday 1 February 2023 at 10.00am to review the Capital Programme;
- the Planning Review Board commence at 2pm on Wednesday 1 February 2023 or following the conclusion of Council; and
- a Seminar on the Capital Programme be held on 18 January 2023.

**23. Deeds Executed  
Sgriobhainnean Lagha a Bhuilicheadh**

It was **NOTED** a list of deeds and other documents executed on behalf of the Council since the meeting held on 27 October 2022 was available on the Council's Website.

**24. Urgent Additional Item**

In terms of Standing Order 8, the Convener had agreed that the following be taken as an additional urgent item:-

**Recruitment Process for Chief Executive  
Pròiseas Fastaidh airson Àrd-Oifigear**

There had been circulated Report No HC/52/22 dated 6 December 2022 by the Head of People.

The Committee **AGREED**:-

- i. the Appointments Panel and recruitment process as detailed in paragraphs 5.1 of the report;
- ii. consideration of all administrative issues related to the recruitment be delegated to the Appointments Panel;
- iii. that external advisers be used as set out in paragraph 6.1 and 7.1 of the report and the extent of this involvement should be approved by the Appointments Panel and not exceed £20k;
- iv. the arrangements for appointing an interim Chief Executive;

and **NOTED**:-

- v. the salary was £159,499 with the 2022/23 pay award pending.

The meeting ended at 5.50 pm.

## The Highland Council

Minutes of Meeting of the **Easter Ross Area Committee** held remotely on Monday, 23 January 2023, at 10.30 am.

### Present:

Ms T Collier  
Mr D Louden  
Ms M Nolan

Ms S Rawlings  
Mr A Rhind

### Officials in Attendance:

Mr M Rodgers, Executive Chief Officer, Housing and Property  
Ms H Ross, Senior Ward Manager  
Mr I Moncrieff, Roads Operations Manager  
Mr J Mitchell, Area Housing Manager (East)  
Ms P Betts, Project Officer – Community Regeneration  
Ms F MacBain, Committee Administrator

### Also in Attendance:

Mr M Stubbs, Station Commander, Scottish Fire and Rescue Service

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

**Mr D Louden in the Chair  
(except for Item 4 when Ms M Nolan was in the Chair)**

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

Apologies were intimated on behalf of Mrs P Munro and Ms M Smith.

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

Item 4 – Mr D Louden and Ms T Collier.

#### 3. **Fire – Area Performance Summary Report Smàladh – Geàrr Aithisg Coileanadh Sgìreil**

There had been circulated Report No ERA/01/23 dated 11 January 2023 by the Local Senior Officer for Highland.

During discussion, the following issues were raised:

- the reduction in the number of deliberate fires and the improved performance in relation to road traffic accidents were welcomed. Information was sought and provided on work being undertaken, particularly in schools, to tackle antisocial behaviour in relation to fire starting;

- concern was expressed at the poor state and safety of a building in the centre of Tain, which fire crews had recently attended. A meeting was proposed with Building Standards to further consider this; and
- information was sought and provided on the policy for dealing with repeated false alarms, which would include the provision of specialist alarm advice to mitigate against unwanted signals. It was emphasised that alarms would always be responded to despite there having been repeated false alarms.

The Committee **NOTED** the Area Performance Report and **AGREED** to arrange a meeting with the SFRS and the Council's Building Standards team to discuss the derelict building in the centre of Tain.

#### 4. Community Regeneration Funding – Application Approvals Maoineachadh Ath-bheòthachadh Coimhearsnachd – Aontaidhean Iarrtasan

##### Declarations of Interest:

**Mr D Louden declared an interest in this item as a Director of Tain Heritage Trust, and he left the meeting for the duration of the item. Ms M Nolan took the chair in his absence.**

**Ms T Collier declared an interest in the application from Invergordon Museum due to a family connection, and she left the meeting during discussion of that application.**

There had been circulated Report No ERA/02/23 dated 9 January 2023 by the Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure, Environment & Economy.

Projects were considered and decided as follows:

Applicant	Project	Grant awarded
Tain Heritage Trust	The Picture House Regeneration Project	£54,131.00
Tain Youth Café YMCA	Children, Youth and Family support	£12,672.20
Evanton Social & Event Group	Winter Lunches for Over 60s	£2,700
Ross Sutherland Rugby Club	Improving External Club Areas	£30,000
Befrienders Highland	Extending Face to Face Mental Health Befriending	£10,825.20
Milton Community Woodland	Solar Panels upgrade	<b>Deferred</b> pending further information on the costs
Milton Community Woodland	Path maintenance	<b>Deferred</b> pending further information on the costs and the length of path.
CCAST	Mansfield Estate support programme	£25,137.78, <b>subject to receipt of a letter of support from the</b>

		<b><i>Council's Tenant Participation officers.</i></b>
Change Mental Health - (previously Support in Mind Scotland)	Easter Ross Outreach	<b>Deferred</b> pending receipt of further information, with the project being welcomed in principle.
Royal British Legion, Invergordon	Refurbishment of Legion Hall	<b>Deferred</b> pending receipt of further information. Support should be offered with the application if required.
Invergordon Museum	Heat hub	<b>Deferred</b> pending receipt of further information on the long term viability of the project, with particular reference to ongoing maintenance and replacement costs.

The Committee:

- i. **NOTED** all applications presented for funding and that an approval of funding should detail the amount approved and outline any conditions of funding that Members wished to attach to the approval over and above the required technical conditions. A deferral would allow an applicant to resubmit the current application at a future date with updated information or for the project to be approved subject to further funding becoming available. A rejection would mean that the application would not proceed and any future application to the fund should be brought forward initially as a new expression of interest; and
- ii. **AGREED**, as detailed above, which applications should receive a funding award from HCCF up to the value of the available area allocation.

## 5. **Area Roads Capital Programme 2023-24** **Prògram Calpa Rathaidean Sgìreil 2023-24**

There had been circulated Report No ERA/03/23 dated 9 January 2023 by the Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure, Environment & Economy.

During discussion, the following issues were raised:

- the improvements planned for the Dingwall to Evanton Back Road were welcomed;
- it was suggested that the budget be re-prioritised in light of the recent damage caused by severe winter weather, however this would likely cause an unworkable delay and move towards an ad hoc rather than a structured programme. In addition, patching work was generally undertaken after the end of the winter period, due to the need for resources to be used for winter maintenance and the likelihood of patching work failing if immediately followed by severe winter weather. It was also clarified that any additional patching work would have an impact on other budgets, there being a finite amount of funding; and

- information was sought and provided on why liquid tar was no longer used to seal the centre of roads, although the vertical edges of roads were still sealed when appropriate.

The Committee **APPROVED** the proposed 2023/24 Area Roads Capital Programme for Easter Ross Area.

**6. Place Based Investment Fund Update  
Cunntas às Ùr mun Mhaoin Stèidhichte air Àite**

There had been circulated Report No ERA/04/23 dated 13 January 2023 by the Executive Chief Officer Community and Place.

The Committee **AGREED** the reallocation of the £3,000 of PBIF monies to the Community Grants stream aimed at addressing the 4 harms of Covid.

**7. Invergordon Common Good Fund  
Maoin Math Coitcheann Inbhir Ghòrdain**

There had been circulated Report No ERA05/23 dated 12 January 2023 by the Executive Chief Officer Community and Place.  
6539

Members queried the downward revaluation of the Bouchardon Bust and an explanation would be sought from Finance outwith the meeting. A brief summary was provided of the comprehensive statutory process, including public consultation, that would be required to sell the Bust should Members decide to initiate this.

The Committee:

- i. **NOTED** the Invergordon Common Good Fund Annual Report and end of year position for 2021/22;
- ii. **NOTED** the position of the Invergordon Common Good Fund, as shown in the 2022/23 Quarter 3 monitoring statement;
- iii. **AGREED** the proposed budget for 2023/24; and
- iv. **NOTED** the current position in relation to the Town Hall and the Bouchardon Bust; and
- v. **AGREED** further information on the downward revaluation of Bouchardon Bust would be provided to Members outwith the meeting.

**8. Tain Common Good Fund  
Maoin Math Coitcheann Bhaile Dhubhthaich**

There had been circulated Report No ERA06/23 dated 12 January 2023 by the Executive Chief Officer Community and Place.  
7028

Members drew attention to the outstanding action in relation to the possible investment of the fund through the Pensions Committee Investment Sub-Committee, which would be followed up later in the year.

The Committee:

- i. **NOTED** the Tain Common Good Annual Report and accounts for 2021/22 and end of year position;
- ii. **NOTED** the position of the Tain Common Good Fund, as shown in the 2022/23 Quarter 3 monitoring statement;
- iii. **AGREED** the proposed budget for the Tain Common Good for 2023/24; and
- iv. **NOTED** the outstanding action to investigate whether the Fund should be invested through the Pensions Committee Investment Sub-Committee remained outstanding.

## 9. Minutes Geàrr-chunntas

There had been circulated and were **NOTED** Minutes of Meeting of the Easter Ross Area Committee held on 8 November 2022, which were approved by the Council on 8 December 2022.

## 10. Garage Rents Màil Gharaidsean

There had been circulated Report No ERA/07/23 dated 17 January 2023 by the Executive Chief Officer Housing and Property.

It was explained that the Housing Manager would attend a Ward Business Meeting in February to discuss previously raised concerns about the condition and future use of garage stock.

During discussion, the following issues were raised:

- Members considered a 7% increase too high whilst in the midst of a cost of living crisis. Discussion took place on the amount of investment that could be raised by a 3% or a 7% increase, and whether the funds raised (approx. £13k on a 7%) was a significant enough sum to make a reasonable difference to the situation. It was clarified that no funding from the Housing Revenue Account would be available to invest in garages and the need for a revenue stream in order to improve them was vital; and
- concern was expressed at the high rate of garage voids (42%) and options to tackle this would be considered in the first instance at the Ward Business Meetings in February 2023.

Mr D Loudon **moved** that a 7% rent increase be applied, as recommended in the report.

Ms M Nolan, seconded by Ms T Collier, moved as an **amendment**, that a 3% rent increase be applied.

Mr Louden's motion failed to find a seconder and fell, and the Committee **AGREED** a 3% rent increase to apply to Easter Ross Garages.

The meeting ended at 12.10pm.

## Highland Council

Minutes of Meeting of the **Nairnshire Committee** held on Microsoft Teams on Monday 23 January 2023 at 10.30am.

### Present:

Mr L Fraser  
Mr M Green

Ms B Jarvie  
Mr P Oldham

### In attendance:

Mr L Hannah, Ward Manager, Communities and Place  
Ms F Cameron, Programme Manager, Infrastructure, Environment and Economy  
Mr R Porteous, Roads Operations Manager, Infrastructure, Environment and Economy  
Mr J Mitchell, Principal Housing Officer, Housing and Property  
Mr J Henderson, Policy Assistant, Empty Homes & PRS Liaison, Housing and Property  
Ms L Harrison, Accountant, Resources and Finance  
Mrs L Dunn, Joint Democratic Services Manager, Performance and Governance  
Ms R Ross, Committee Officer, Performance and Governance

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

**Mr M Green in the Chair**

## BUSINESS

### 1. Apologies for Absence Leisgeulan

There were no apologies for absence.

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

There were no declarations of interest.

### 3. Housing Revenue Account: Garage Rents 2023/24 Cunntas Teachd-a-steach Taigheadais: Màil Gharaidsean 2023/24

There had been circulated Report No NC/**01/23** by the Executive Chief Officer Housing and Property.

During discussion, the following main points were raised:

- occupancy of garages was very high with only one vacant unit currently available. Further information was sought and provided in regard to how vacant garages were allocated;
- the garages were mostly used for storage purposes, with many not rented by Council house tenants, and were inexpensive compared to commercial storage unit rates, so a 7% rent increase was reasonable;
- confirmation was provided that the Council did not have a statutory duty to provide garages;

- further information was sought on the level of net profit received and the cost of replacement, the ongoing costs associated with garages and the potential sites that might require investment, the details of which would be reported to a future Ward Business Meeting;
- it was clarified that there was not a freeze on garage repairs and that currently the garages were in good condition and therefore low maintenance; and
- further information was sought on the number of Council garages, during which it was confirmed that out of the 97 units, there were 34 garages provided by the Council and the remaining 63 were rented garage sites.

Thereafter, the Committee:

- AGREED** a 7% rent increase be applied Nairnshire Garages and Garage Sites; and
- NOTED** that further information would be reported to a future Ward Business Meeting in respect of the ongoing costs associated with garages and the potential sites that might require investment.

**4. Nairnshire HRA Capital Programme 2022-23 Update and 2023-27 Programme Cunntas às Ùr air Prògram Calpa Cunntas Teachd-a-steach Taigheadais 2022-23 agus Prògram 2023-27**

There had been circulated Report No NC/02/23 by the Executive Chief Officer Housing and Property.

During discussion, the following main points were raised:

- funding for making homes more accessible and investment to ensure that the housing stock was maintained at the highest standards was welcomed;
- hope was expressed for the interest rate to reduce given the impact of this on loan charges; and
- it was clarified that, ongoing repairs were a revenue expenditure whereas the upgrades, as discussed in the report were a capital expenditure, but the Service sought to recover costs that were incurred as result of damage by the tenant.

Thereafter, the Committee:-

- NOTED** the update on the 2022-23 Nairnshire HRA Capital Programme at section 5 of the report and Appendix 1 to the report;
- NOTED** the resources available to Nairnshire at paragraph 6.7 of the report;
- AGREED** the proposed investment priorities in the HRA Capital Programme for Nairnshire 2023-27 as set out in Appendix 2 to the report; and
- NOTED** that updates on the Housing Revenue Account Capital Programme will continue to be provided through ward briefings and at future Local Committees as requested by local Members, in addition to reporting to Housing and Property Committee.

**5. Area Roads Capital Programme 2023/24  
Prògram Calpa Rathaidean Sgìreil 2023/24**

There had been circulated Report No NC/03/23 by the Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure, Environment & Economy.

During discussion the following main points were raised:-

- attention was drawn to the fact that the 2023/24 area roads capital programme was based on the previous year's budget pending approval of the local allocations capital budget. Any changes in budget would be reported to the Committee;
- continued engagement at Ward Business Meetings and repairs to the B9007 were welcomed although some laybys on the Cawdor road towards the railway station were in need of attention/repair; and
- the roads in Nairn were in a better condition than many other areas across the Highlands.

Thereafter, the Committee **APPROVED** the proposed 2023/24 Area Roads Capital Programme for Nairn Area.

**6. Community Regeneration Funding – Assessment of Applications  
Maoineachadh Ath-nuadhachadh Coimhearsnachd – Measadh Iartasan**

There is circulated Report No NC/04/23 by the Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure, Environment & Economy. In presenting the report, the Programme Manager informed the Committee that the application from The Nairn Beach Access Panel had reduced to £28,666 as it had received 50% funding from another source.

During discussion the Committee indicated the worthiness of all the projects but acknowledged that funds were limited and thus there was a need to ensure these were maximised. Therefore, Members expressed their support for funding being allocated to the Nairn Beach Access Panel (£28,666) and TeamHamish (£54,590) as these projects had already secured the necessary match funding to enable these projects to be completed.

Thereafter, the committee:

- i. **NOTED** all applications presented for funding the determination outcomes available; and
- ii. **AGREED** that funding be awarded from the Highland Coastal Communities Fund as follows:
  - a. Nairn Beach Access Panel - Platform and Ramp - £28,666; and
  - b. TeamHamish Nairn Links Regeneration Phase 2 - £54,590.

**7. Nairn Common Good Fund – Audited Accounts 2021/22, 2022/23 Quarter 3 Monitoring and General Update, 2023/24 Budget  
Maoin Math Coitcheann Inbhir Narann – Cunntasan Sgrùdaichte 2021/22, Sgrùdadh Ràitheil Cairteil 3 2022/23 agus Cunntas Coitcheann Às Ùr, Buidseat 2023/24**

There had been circulated Report No NC/05/23 by the Executive Chief Officer Communities and Place.

During the discussion the following main points were raised:-

- attention was drawn to monthly reports distributed to Members with spreadsheets showing a breakdown of costs which were very helpful for decision making;
- it was clarified that 100% of invitation to pay parking charges were being received by the Common Good Fund and a review of parking charges would be carried out which was welcomed;
- clarification was sought and received that the expenditure figures provided for Invitation to Pay parking Schemes were forecasted figures;
- the new 2-year fixed term part-time post of Nairn Common Good Fund Officer, which would enable swifter progress to move projects forward was welcomed. Confirmation was provided that the budget included provision for on-costs and further information would be circulated to Members on the salary for the post;
- a workshop would be held to consider the composition of the Nairn Common Good Fund Engagement Group, the first meeting of which would take place in March 2023. The inclusion of a youth voice within the Engagement Group was welcomed; and
- the importance of being cost effective and ensuring the Common Good Fund achieved best value was emphasised.

Thereafter, the Committee:

- i. **AGREED** the Nairn Common Good Fund Statement of Accounts for 2021/22 (Appendix 1a) and the final 21/22 Monitoring Statement (Appendix 1b);
- ii. **NOTED** the position of the Nairn Common Good Fund and 2022/23 outturn as shown in the Quarter 3 monitoring statement against budget (Appendix 2a and 2b);
- iii. **AGREED** the Nairn Common Good Fund budget for 2023/24 detailed within the report (Appendix 3); and
- iv. as part of the 2023/24 budget, **AGREED** to the:
  - 1.) creation of a new part time Nairn Common Good Fund Officer post to support the development of the Fund and its associated project work and **NOTED** that details of the salary would be circulated to Members; and
  - 2.) addition of a Common Good Events budget line of £10k.

## 8. Minutes Geàrr-chunntas

There had been circulated and **NOTED** Minutes of Meeting of the Nairnshire Committee held on 15 November 2022 which were approved by the Council on 8 September 2022.

## 9. 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 involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 6 of Part 1 of Schedule 7A of the Act.

**10. Nairn Common Good Fund – Former Harbour Street Jet wash Tenancy  
Maoin Math Coitcheann Inbhir Narann – Gabhaltas Seann Nighe Jet Sràid a’  
Chala**

There had been circulated Joint Report No NC/06/23 by the Executive Chief Officer Communities and Place and Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure, Environment & Economy.

Following discussion, the Committee **AGREED** that the request be rejected.

The meeting concluded at 11.30am.

## The Highland Council

Minutes of Meeting of the **Lochaber Committee** held remotely on **Tuesday, 24 January, 2023 at 10.30 a.m.**

### Present:

Mr A Baldrey (remote)  
 Ms S Fanet  
 Mr J C Grafton (remote)  
 Mr A MacDonald

Mr T MacLennan (remote)  
 Ms L Siggers (remote)  
 Ms K Willis

### Officials in Attendance:

Mrs D Ferguson, Senior Ward Manager (Ross, Skye and Lochaber), Communities and Place

Mr R Porteous, Roads Operations Manager, Infrastructure, Environment & Economy

Ms F Cameron, Programme Manager Community Regeneration, Infrastructure, Environment & Economy

Ms M Gray, Project Officer Community Regeneration, Infrastructure, Environment & Economy

Mr J Henderson, Housing Investment Officer, Housing & Property Service

Mr D Wood, Principal Housing Officer, Housing & Property Service

Mr A MacInnes, Committee Officer, Performance and Governance Service

### Also in attendance:-

Mr M Colliar, Group Commander, Scottish Fire & Rescue Service

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

### Ms K Willis in the Chair

### BUSINESS

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

There were no apologies for absence.

#### 2. **Declarations of Interest** **Foilseachaidhean Com-pàirt**

Declaration of Interest, Item 7, Glencoe Folk Musuem application– Ms S Fanet

#### 3. **Scottish Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS) Local Committee Performance Report** **Aithisg Choileanaidh Comataidh Ionadail Seirbheis Smàlaidh agus Teasairginn na h-Alba**

There was circulated Report No LA/1/23 by the Local Senior Officer for Highland.

In discussion, it was highlighted that station availability still remained challenging in rural remote areas with significant societal changes. The Service

continued to proactively recruit and 5 new Officers would be dispersed to stations throughout the area and there were others in the recruitment process. National solutions were being sought to sustain an effective recruiting model.

Firefighters employment terms and conditions required for a certain number of firefighters to be available before they could attend an incident as there was also a need to protect firefighters safety. Due to the lack of resources in certain areas, the Service had implemented joint mobilisation protocols to address this issue. The priority would always be to protect communities, but firefighters could not be put at an unacceptable level of risk and the Service had a duty to keep firefighters safe. The answer to this issue was to recruit more firefighters, but recruitment was challenging and alternative recruitment models were being looked at to make a difference. Recruitment to the Service was very much a national problem. An undertaking was given to discuss at the Community Planning Partnership what The Highland Council could do to contribute to the promotion of the SFRS recruitment process.

In relation to muirburning season, landowners should be reporting muirburning to the SFRS. Deliberate wildfires would be reported to Police Scotland who would work with the SFRS to identify who was responsible and what action could be taken.

There was a ballot for industrial action within the SFRS and if this proceeded most wholtime firefighters would be on strike. There would need to be a review of resources should strike action be taken.

The Committee **NOTED**:

- i the Area Performance Report; and
- ii an undertaking was given to discuss at the Community Planning Partnership what The Highland Council could do to contribute to the promotion of the SFRS recruitment process.

#### **4. Area Roads Capital Programme 2023/24 Prògram Calpa Rathaidean Sgìreil 2023/24**

There was circulated Report No. LA/2/23 by the Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure, Environment and Economy.

It was advised that the local allocations capital budget for 2023/24 remained to be established, which will be calculated from the approved capital budget allocation, being adjusted for any acceleration or slippage in the previous financial year for each area allocation, and also analysis of the road condition survey results. Consequently the 2023/24 area capital roads programme was based on the previous year's budget. Should the approved 2023/24 budget differ from the 2022/23 budget then the programme would be adjusted as appropriate. It was recognised that variation to the programme can be expected, and these will be agreed with Members at ward business meetings to maintain a dynamic programme.

In terms of road length, Lochaber area was comparable with Caithness and Skye. However, in terms of the winter allocation the latter two areas received significantly more funding for winter maintenance than Lochaber. It was advised that every area of the Highlands had a different micro climate with some areas requiring more winter maintenance than others and some had more primary

routes, secondary routes than others and this was recognised in the budget allocation to areas. However, if more money required to be spent on winter maintenance in Lochaber that would be done and consequently the cyclical maintenance budget would be reduced.

It was highlighted that the JCT Pothole Pro was very productive and Members were welcome to see it in operation.

It was explained that water on roads caused significant damage and therefore drainage was very important.

It would be checked what agreements were in place with SSE and how they could be enforced to fund road improvements along the Invergarry road as a result of upgrading of power lines to Skye. Information on this would be shared with Councillor A Baldrey.

There had always been issues in Lochaber with landslips affecting roads and wet weather was the issue, but it was not known if the problem was getting worse by climate change. In terms of protecting the hillside above the Kilchoan Road, ways to target and prioritise sections of the road were being looked at within the resources available.

The Committee **APPROVED** the proposed 2023/24 Area Roads Capital Programme for Lochaber Area.

**5. Lochaber HRA Capital Programme 2022/23 Update and 2023-27 Programme**  
**Prògram Calpa Cunntas Teachd-a-steach Taigheadais Loch Abar 2022/23 agus Prògram 2023–27**

There was circulated Report No. LA/3/23 by the Executive Chief Officer Housing and Property.

It particular, there was a focus on energy efficiency and adaptation works on the housing stock within the capital programme. It was an ongoing process in making improvements to the housing stock and the Housing and Investment Officer would attend a future Ward Business Meeting to brief Members on the energy efficiency standard for social housing. There were guideline principles for prioritising work in the HRA Capital Programme within available resources. However, there was a move to focus on an asset management approach to works and the Service Lead (Housing Investment/Building Maintenance) would attend a Ward Business Meeting to brief Members on this.

In terms of new builds being clad with exterior insulation, this did not do much for the appearance of these houses and tenants should have an environment they were proud to live in. In particular, the Principal Repairs Officer would be

asked what works could be done to improve the appearance and maintenance of Council owned flats in Fort William High Street (Tweeddale).

Thereafter, the Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the update on the 2022-23 Lochaber HRA Capital Programme at section 5 of the report and Appendix 1;
- ii. **NOTED** the resources available to Lochaber at 6.7;
- iii. **AGREED** the proposed investment priorities in the HRA Capital Programme for Lochaber 2023-27 as set out in Appendix 2; and
- iv. **NOTED** that updates on the Housing Revenue Account Capital Programme will continue to be provided through ward briefings and at future Local Committees as requested by local Members, in addition to reporting to Housing and Property Committee.
- v **NOTED** that the Principal Repairs Officer would be asked what works could be done to improve the appearance and maintenance of Council owned flats in Fort William High Street (Tweeddale).

#### **6. Housing Revenue Account: Garage Rents 2023/2024 Cunntas Teachd-a-steach Taigheadais: Màil Gharaidsean 2023/2024**

There was circulated Report No. LA/4/23 by the Executive Chief Officer Housing and Property. The Committee were invited to agree a level of rent increase to apply to Lochaber Garages and Garage Sites.

It was recommended that a rent increase of 7% would enable garage repairs and improvements or to demolish garages should they not be fit for purpose. Where garages are being demolished and sites are being resurfaced to improve parking an undertaking was given to consider providing bike storage and solar roofs at these sites.

It was understood that some other Local Committees were recommending a 5% increase and the Committee were supportive of this. Consideration was also given to a slightly higher increase for non tenant garages, but the financial impact of this would be negligible and in fairness a consistent increase to both tenant and non tenant garages would be recommended.

The Committee:-

- i **AGREED** a 5% rent increase to apply to Lochaber Garages and Garage Sites.
- ii **NOTED** that in terms of sites where garages are being demolished and sites are being resurfaced to improve parking an undertaking was given to consider providing bike storage and solar roofs at these sites.

#### **7. Community Regeneration Fund Assessment of Applications Iarrtasan airson Maoin Ath-bheòthachaidh Coimhearsnachd**

There was circulated Report No LA/5/23 by the Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure, Environment and Economy.

There was an introduction to the report, which included changes to some applications. The total grant requests amounted to £616, 139.40 and available funding was £487,138.12. The Committee considered applications for

Community Regeneration Funding (CRF) and agreed as shown below. The Committee also requested that applicants whose request for funding had been rejected, be advised that it was still open to them to submit updated applications to a future round of CRF.

Kilmallie Shinty Club & Lochaber Rural Education Trust – New Mini Bus

Rejected

Lochaber Hope – New connections

Rejected

Agreed that in order to help progress the aims of this project, a meeting of the Fort William Community Action Group and relevant Partners be arranged to try and have the different groups work together on this.

Fort William Marina & Shoreline CIC – Feasibility Study for Loch Linnhe Development

Rejected

The project delivery team for this project would be invited to liaise with Councillor A MacDonald to see if the project could be tied in with the ambitions of Fort William 2040.

Isle of Canna Development Trust – Coroghan Barn Redevelopment

APPROVED – £25,000

Communities Housing Trust – Glengarry Affordable Housing & Woodland Crofts

APPROVED - £23,490

Urram SCIO – Electric community car share & transport service

APPROVED - £63,748

Morvern Heritage Society – Lochaline Sand Mine Heritage Trail

APPROVED - £24,601.40

Acharacle Community Company – Community Regeneration Project

APPROVED - £34,760

Isle of Eigg Heritage Trust– Old Surgery Affordable Homes for rent

APPROVED - £100,000

Caol Regeneration Company – Thomas Telford Corpach Marina

APPROVED - £115,000

**Declaration of Interest:** Ms S Fanet declared an interest in the following application as a volunteer at the Glencoe Folk Museum and took no part in the consideration of the application.

Glencoe Folk Museum – Capital and Activities Redevelopment

APPROVED - £50,000

Eigg Trading Ltd – Green Shed Business and Coastguard units

APPROVED - £50,000

The Committee **NOTED** that £600 remained unallocated and would be carried forward into the next round of CRF.

**8. Place Based Investment Funds – Reallocation of Funding Allocation  
Maoinean Tasgaidh Stèidhichte Air Àite – Ath-riarachadh Riarachadh  
Maoinne**

There was circulated Report No. LA/6/23 by the Executive Chief Officer Communities and Place.

The Committee **AGREED** that £5,000 is reallocated to the Lochaber Community Partnership to support the delivery of the objectives contained within the Caol Locality Plan.

**9. Appointment to Lochaber Local Access Forum  
Cur an Dreuchd gu Fòram Inntreigeadh Ionadail Loch Abar**

The Council had a statutory duty under Section 25 of the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003 to establish Local Access Forums for its area. There were currently six Local Access Forums in the Highland area which advise on matters in relation to the exercise of access rights, the existence of delineation of rights of way or the drawing up and adoption of the Core Path Plan. In addition, they also offer and give assistance to parties in terms of the resolution of any disputes in this respect.

The Committee was asked to appoint 1 Member to the Lochaber Local Access Forum.

The Committee **AGREED** to appoint Ms K Willis to the Lochaber Local Access Forum.

**10. Ward Discretionary Budget  
Buidseat Fo Ùghdarras Uàird**

The Committee **NOTED** that the following Ward Discretionary Fund applications have been approved since 1st April 2022.

Ward 11

Mallaig, Ardnamurchan & District Pipe Band – venue hire costs - £394.87

Headway Highland – Support for core organisation costs - £72

Highland Council – Cruise ship welcome plaques - £57.50

Mallaig Community Council - Mallaig Circular path improvements - £5,000  
 Rotary Club of Lochaber – contribution to Christmas event - £1,000  
 Fort William Festive Fund – Contribution to High Street Christmas lighting scheme 2022 - £1,000  
 Caol Community Council – IT hardware for Community Council meetings - £685  
 West Highland Community Rail Partnership – identification of Traffic Management Solutions - £1,250

Ward 21

Mallaig, Ardnamurchan & District Pipe Band – venue hire costs - £394.87  
 Headway Highland – Support for core organisation costs - £72  
 Highland Council – Cruise ship welcome plaques - £57.50  
 Highland Council – Deer warning signs, Kinlochleven - £205.93  
 Rotary Club of Lochaber – contribution to Christmas event 2022 - £1,000  
 Fort William Festive Fund – Contribution to High Street Christmas lighting scheme 2022 - £2,000  
 Kinlochleven Primary School Parent Council – trip to pantomime - £250  
 Ardgour Community Council – IT hardware for Community Council meetings - £78.43  
 Duror and Kentallen Community Council – IT hardware for Community Council meetings - £540  
 West Highland Community Rail Partnership – identification of Traffic Management Solutions - £1,250

**11. Minutes  
 Geàrr-chunntas**

There was circulated for information, Minutes of Meeting of the Lochaber Committee held on 7 November, 2022 which were approved by the Council on 8 December, 2022, the terms of which were **NOTED**.

The meeting ended at 12.25 p.m.

## The Highland Council

Minutes of Meeting of the **Sutherland County Committee** held in the Chamber, Council Offices, Drumbuie, Golspie on Tuesday 24 January 2023 at 10.30 am.

### Present:

Mr M Baird	Mr J McGillivray
Mr R Gale (Chair)	Mr H Morrison (Teams)
Ms M Hutchison (Teams)	Ms L Niven

### In attendance:

Ms F Duncan, Executive Chief Officer, Health and Social Care  
 Mr P Tomalin, Ward Manager  
 Ms M Grant, Principal Housing Officer  
 Mr C Sharp, Repairs Manager  
 Ms P Betts, Project Officer (Community Regeneration)  
 Miss M Murray, Senior Committee Officer

### Also in attendance:

Chief Inspector S Macdonald, Police Scotland  
 Inspector C Murray, Police Scotland  
 Ms W Kelt, Adult and Youth Services Officer, High Life Highland  
 Ms C Nichols, Chief Officer, Youth Highland  
 Mr P Faccenda, Focus North Partnership Manager

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

### Mr R Gale in the Chair

### Business

#### 1. Apologies for Absence Leisgeulan

There were no apologies for absence.

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

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

Item 8: Mr J McGillivray  
 Item 9: Mr J McGillivray

#### 3. Police – Area Performance Summary Poileas – Geàrr-chunntas air Coileanadh Sgìreil

There had been circulated Report No SCC/01/23 by the North Area Commander, Police Scotland.

During discussion, the following issues were raised:-

- appreciation was expressed to Chief Inspector Macdonald for the thorough report and the work he and his officers did in Sutherland, including his leadership of the Sutherland Community Partnership;
- the implementation of technology such as bodycams was welcomed. However, the impact of budget cuts was recognised;
- some of the high percentages in the report could be misleading, and it was important to remember that the numbers were low;
- the positive change in respect of incidences of sexual crime was welcomed; and
- information was sought, and provided, on the delivery of the “Driving Ambition” road safety initiative for young drivers; ongoing activity to target the supply of drugs; how drivers without insurance were identified; the provision of defibrillators in Police vehicles; and the importance of the Council retaining the Access Ranger posts which had been in place for the past couple of years.

The Committee **NOTED** the progress made against the objectives set within the Highland Local Policing Plan 2020-2023, for the period covering 1 April 2021 – 31 March 2022.

#### 4. **High Life Highland – Presentation** **High Life na Gàidhealtachd – Taisbeanadh**

Wilma Kelt, Adult and Youth Services Officer, High Life Highland, gave a presentation on High Life Highland Youth Services in Kinlochbervie, Farr, Ullapool (Assynt), Golspie and Dornoch. Detailed information was provided on staffing, challenges, positives, good news stories, funding, partners, achievement and 1:1 work. Statistics were also provided in respect of engagements, learning hours and programmed activities, and attention was drawn to the Youth Development Facebook page where Youth Development Officers posted updates and information.

During discussion, the following issues were raised:-

- information was sought, and provided, on the barriers to the recruitment of staff; the opening hours of the “Big Blue Box” portacabin in Kinlochbervie; learning hours; and, in relation to the youth activities taking place in Kinlochbervie and Farr, the proposed transport arrangements for young people in outlying communities such as Tongue, Bettyhill, Scourie and Durness;
- the Young Leaders initiative was commended;
- Mr J McGillivray requested contact details for the Youth Development Officer in Dornoch;
- the youth activity taking place in Lochinver was welcomed. However, there was still no opportunity for pupils in Assynt to mix with their wider peer group in Ullapool due to the lack of transport after school hours. Similarly, Assynt pupils were not able to take part in sports training sessions and other extracurricular activities. The Chair added that it was well recognised that transport was an issue throughout Sutherland, and indeed throughout Highland, and efforts were being made to address it.

The Committee otherwise **NOTED** the presentation.

**5. Youth Work in Sutherland – Presentation**  
**Obair Òigridh ann an Cataibh – Taisbeanadh**

Clair Nichols, Chief Officer, Youth Highland, gave a presentation during which it was explained that Youth Highland supported a network of voluntary and third sector organisations to work with young people to deliver youth work outcomes in community settings. Details were provided of Youth Highland's vision, values and membership, including the clubs currently supported in Sutherland. Information was also provided on the establishment and impact of The Voluntary Youth Network, area youth hubs evidencing good practice, aligning to regional and national priorities; the funding landscape, potential youth work opportunities in Sutherland; and proposed actions.

During discussion, the following issues were raised:-

- the informative presentation was welcomed;
- closer collaboration between High Life Highland and the third sector would be beneficial;
- information was sought, and provided, on staffing, particularly the balance of paid staff and volunteers; and
- recruitment of staff was an issue across the board and was linked to the wider issue of depopulation. If investment in communities and, more importantly, young people, did not take place, depopulation would continue to increase.

The Committee otherwise **NOTED** the presentation.

**6. Focus North Partnership - Presentation**  
**Com-pàirteachas Fòcas a' Chinn a Tuath – Taisbeanadh**

Peter Faccenda, Focus North Partnership Manager, gave a presentation on the Focus North Partnership, formerly the Caithness and Sutherland Regeneration Partnership. Information was provided on the evolution of the Partnership, the new approach and rationale, the reasons behind the new identity, the Focus North Strategic Operational Policy 2023-2026 and the Focus North Partnership Charter.

A paper had also been circulated in connection with this item seeking the Committee's support for the new approach for the Partnership.

During discussion, the following issues were raised:-

- the focus on energy, particularly hydrogen production, was welcomed;
- in relation to the decommissioning of Dounreay, information was sought, and provided, as to whether there was a target date for final closure. It was added that Dounreay were still offering high-quality jobs and apprenticeships and it was hoped the work of the Partnership would continue that drive;
- it was necessary to grasp the opportunities that existed in terms of high technology jobs;
- the work of the Partnership could lead the way in a number of different areas;
- information was sought, and provided, as to any potential spin-offs from Opportunity Cromarty Firth and whether there was any way forward in relation to the small modular reactors developed by Rolls-Royce;

- the decommissioning of Dounreay could potentially take longer than the number of years it had been operational;
- on the point being raised, further information was provided on the Focus North Conference which it was hoped Members would be able to attend; and
- the importance of collaborative working was emphasised.

The Committee:-

- NOTED** the presentation;
- NOTED** the recent review and rebranding of the Focus North Partnership; and
- AGREED** to support the Focus North Masterplan and structure, and the Council's role in the Partnership.

## 7. **Housing Revenue Account: Garage Rents 2023/2024** **Cunntas Teachd-a-steach Taigheadais: Màil Gharaidsean 2023/24**

There had been circulated Report No SCC/02/23 by the Executive Chief Officer, Housing and Property.

During discussion, concern was expressed that a number of garages and garage sites were still void. In addition, Members had received anecdotal reports of garages being in a poor state of repair and an update was sought, and provided, in that regard.

In relation to the level of rent increase to be applied to garages and garage sites, the Chair commented that he was conscious of the cost of living crisis. Whilst he recognised that the rate of inflation was currently approximately 10%, he did not wish to place any additional pressures on households. He therefore proposed that a 4% increase be applied. Other Members expressed support for the recommended increase of 7%. However, the majority supported the Chair's proposal.

The Committee **AGREED** that a 4% rent increase be applied to Sutherland garages and garage sites.

## 8. **Community Regeneration Fund – Application Approval** **Maoineachadh Ath-bheòthachadh Coimhearsnachd – Aonta Iarrais**

**Declaration of Interest: Mr J McGillivray declared an interest in this item as a Director of Dornoch Area Community Interest Company.**

There had been circulated Report No SCC/03/23 by the Executive Chief Officer, Communities and Place.

In introducing the report, Paula Betts, Project Officer (Community Regeneration), highlighted that paragraph 2.1(ii) of the report should refer to the Community Regeneration Fund, not the Highland Coastal Communities Fund. In addition, it was explained that, within the umbrella term of the Community Regeneration Fund, the Community Regeneration team also administered the community-led Local Development Fund on behalf of the Highland Strategic Local Action Group (LAG). The LAG had agreed the final grant award from this fund, which represented additional investment of £326,008.86 in projects in Sutherland. This had reduced the total grant request from the local funds for a number of projects, details of which were provided.

The Committee was asked to consider all applications presented for funding and agree whether to approve, defer or reject the application. An approval of funding should detail the amount approved and outline any conditions of funding that Members wished to attach to the approval over and above the required technical conditions. A deferral would allow an applicant to resubmit the current application at a future date with updated information or for the project to be approved subject to further funding becoming available. A rejection would mean that the application would not proceed and any future application to the fund should be brought forward initially as a new expression of interest.

In response to a question, it was confirmed that, should all the applications be approved, there would be £69,995.65 remaining in the area budget. The Chair commented that all the projects were viable and worthy of support and proposed that the applications be approved en masse.

Thanks having been expressed to the Project Officer for her efforts, the Committee **APPROVED** all of the applications presented for a funding award from the Community Regeneration Fund as follows:-

<b>Applicant</b>	<b>Project</b>	<b>Grant awarded</b>
Community Care Assynt Ltd	Arts & Crafts Wellbeing Sessions	£4,866.00
The Highland Council	Achmelvich Beach Car Park and Toilets	£246,678.00
Lochinver Primary School Parent Council	Outdoor Play Equipment Project	£54,000.00
Helmsdale & District Development Fund	Helmsdale Play Space	£70,000.00
The Dornoch Area Community Interest Company	Multi Use Games Area (MUGA)	£63,986.00
Community Care Assynt	Core Management	£16,500.00
Culrain & District Hall Committee	Hall extension, refurb and disability facilities	£45,120.61
Community Care Assynt Ltd	Warm Hub	£4,856.55
Melness Crofters Estate	Affordable Housing in Melness	£18,900.00
Dornoch Area CIC	Community Transport Project	£4,800.00
Farr North Community Development Trust	Farr Goes Community Transport	£36,273.13
Dornoch Firth Group	Cares Counselling Project	£8,778.00
Assynt Foundation	Upgrading and resurfacing of single track road to improve access	£37,345.42
Brora Development Trust	Visitor Information Point	£13,467.00
Kyle of Sutherland Hub Ltd	The Hubs – community resource building	£43,200.00
Brora Development Trust	Town Centre Improvements	£8,800.00
Go Golspie	Fountain Road Hall Improvement Project	£21,042.00
<b>Total</b>		<b>£698,612.58</b>

9. **Dornoch Common Good Fund: Annual Report 2021/22, Proposed Budget 2023/24 and Quarter Monitoring Statement 2022/23**  
**Aithisg Bhliadhnail 2021/22, Buidseat ga Mholadh airson 2023/24 agus Aithris Sgrùdaidh Cairteil 2022/23**

**Declaration of Interest: Mr J McGillivray declared an interest in this item as a Director of Dornoch Area Community Interest Company.**

There had been circulated Report No SCC/04/23 by the Executive Chief Officer, Communities and Place and the Head of Corporate Finance.

The Chair commented that it was necessary to take the Common Good Fund's liabilities into consideration when making any decisions on spend, and to ensure that any projects funded were sustainable and provided legacy impacts. He emphasised the importance of Members' role as Trustees of the Common Good Fund, and that any decisions taken had to be in the best interests of Dornoch as a whole.

The Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the Dornoch Common Good Fund Annual Report and Accounts for 2021/22;
- ii. **NOTED** the position of the Dornoch Common Good Fund, as shown in the Q3 monitoring statement against budget for 2022/23;
- iii. **AGREED** the Dornoch Common Good Fund Annual Budget for 2023/24; and
- iv. **APPROVED** £50,000 for DACIC Project Curlew Phase 2 – Multi Use Games Area.

10. **Minutes**  
**Geàrr-chunntas**

There had been circulated, and were **NOTED**, Minutes of the Sutherland County Committee held on 7 November 2022, which had been approved by the Council on 8 December 2022.

The meeting concluded at 1.50 pm.

## The Highland Council

Minutes of Meeting of the **Housing and Property Committee** held in the Council Chamber, Council Headquarters, Glenurquhart Road, Inverness on **Thursday 26 January 2023** at 10.30 am.

### Present:

Mr B Boyd	Mr R Mackintosh
Mr R Bremer	Ms A MacLean
Mrs G Campbell-Sinclair	Mrs B McAllister
Mr L Fraser	Ms J McEwan
Mr A Graham	Mr C Munro
Mr S Kennedy (substitute)	Ms Morven Reid (substitute)
Mrs I Mackenzie	Mr K Rosie

### Non-Members also present:

Mr M Baird	Mr G McKenzie
Mr C Birt	Ms K McLean
Ms S Fanet	Mr T McLennan
Mr R Gale	Mr D Macpherson
Mr K Gowans	Mr J McGillivray
Mr A Jarvie	Mr P Oldham
Mrs B Jarvie	Mr D Millar
Mr P Logue	

### Also in Attendance:

Mr A Dick, Tenant Representative  
Ms L Richardson, Tenant Representative

### Officials in Attendance:

Mr M Rodgers, Executive Chief Officer Housing and Property  
Mr D Goldie, Head of Housing and Building Maintenance, Housing and Property  
Mr F MacDonald, Head of Property and Facilities Management, Housing and Property  
Mr B Cameron, Service Lead - Policy and Performance, Housing and Property  
Mr R Campbell, Estates Strategy Manager, Housing and Property  
Mrs L Dunn, Joint Democratic Services Manager, Performance and Governance  
Mrs O Marsh, Committee Officer, Performance and Governance

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

**Mrs G Campbell-Sinclair in the Chair**

## BUSINESS

### 1. Apologies for Absence Leisgeulan

Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of Mrs S Atkin, Mr I Brown, Mrs M Paterson, Mr A Rhind and Mr A Sinclair.

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

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

Item 6: Mr L Fraser

**3. Housing Revenue Account Estimates 2023/24  
Tuairmsean Teachd-a-steach HRA 2023/24**

There is circulated Report No HP/**01**/23 by the Executive Chief Officer Housing and Property.

The Chair and several other Members spoke in favour of a 4% rent increase, citing the consultation with Council tenants on a 3%, 5% or 7% rise, which had returned a preference for a 3% rise. The importance of taking tenants' views into consideration was emphasised and, with 5.25% being the 'flat cash' budget on repairs and maintenance, it was considered that a 4% rise represented an acceptable compromise between ensuring adequate income to undertake statutory repairs and maintenance, whilst being sympathetic, during the coming financial year, to the cost of living crisis and energy bill increases being faced by residents.

Other Members spoke in favour of a higher rise in rent for the following reasons:

- even a 7% rise did not come close to the current rate of inflation;
- a 5.25% rise was required to maintain current service levels, and anything less than that would require the use of reserves and/or the cessation of non-essential repairs and maintenance. This would lead to a backlog of repairs that would be difficult to manage in future;
- it was a false economy and ultimately detrimental to tenants to only raise rents by 4%, as this would result in a shortfall of £708k for repairs and maintenance;
- it was pointed out that a 7% rise would result in an average rent increase of only £5 per week; and
- it was unfair to expect people with health conditions and disabilities to continue to endure poor conditions due to lack of investment in their homes.

The tenant representative indicated a preference for a 7% rent increase, citing the importance of investing in insulation and other improvements to lower fuel bills and future-proof housing against issues such as mould. It was suggested that any rent increase might be offset by a reduction in fuel bills through investment in energy efficiency initiatives.

Other issues raised during discussion included the following:

- information was sought and provided on progress with the backlog of maintenance that had resulted from Covid lockdowns;
- information was sought and provided on the types of maintenance and repairs that would have to be reduced or ceased if the rent increase was lower than 5.25%;
- the average rent increase across other Scottish Local Authorities was around 6.1%;

- the challenges in setting a fair and balanced level of rent increase were acknowledged by all and those in favour of a 4% increase pointed out that this was for one year only, due to the current economic challenges facing tenants;
- concern was expressed at the level of voids in the housing stock, with particular reference to Caithness, and it was hoped a solution could be found to make better use of the housing stock, including selling properties that were not being used;
- increases in garage rents varied across the Highlands and this was because the setting of garage rents was delegated to Area Committees;
- a brief summary was provided of external funding being sought to undertake energy efficiency initiatives and other improvements to the housing stock and to tackle climate change; and
- assurance was sought and provided that future consideration was being given to the strategic housing investment programme, including the long term implications of the borrowing requirements. This was due to be considered at the next meeting of the Committee.

Thereafter, the Committee :-

- NOTED** that section 8 and Appendix 1 of the report set out a range of rent increase options and their impact on the Housing Revenue Account budget for 2023/24. In order to respond to Member concerns around the cost of living crisis and take on board the feedback received through tenant consultation, a 4% rent increase was possible, although this would involve a reduction of £0.708m in the housing repairs and maintenance budget, and would impact negatively on the Council's ability to fund ongoing repairs and maintenance and capacity for future capital investment;
- AGREED** a 4% increase for council house rents for 2023/24 resulting in an increase in the average weekly Council house rent from £79.97 to £83.17 (£3.20 per week);
- AGREED** that the percentage increase (4%) be applied to all residential HRA rents and service charges, to Gypsy/Traveller site pitches and to non-HRA rents for leased properties; and
- AGREED** that a review of the current HRA Capital Plan was undertaken this year to assess affordability and the level of future rent increases required to fund future investment.

**4. Housing Revenue Account (HRA) and Non-HRA Revenue Monitoring Statement to 31 December 2022  
Aithris Sgrùdaidh Buidseat Cunntas Teachd-a-steach Taigheadais agus Neo-thaigheadais gu 31 An Dubhlachd 2022**

There is circulated Report No HP/02/23 by the Executive Chief Officer Housing and Property.

During discussion, Members raised the following main points:-

- it was queried whether the need for a 'reason to reside' was impacting on the number of people presenting as homeless, and assurance was sought on how the Council was dealing with a range of homelessness issues, such as landlords selling properties and ending leases, and the provision of homeless

accommodation in council houses that required repair and / or furnishing. It was acknowledged that homelessness issues varied across the Highlands;

- attention was drawn to the level of rental voids, particularly in Caithness, and this was being discussed with the Housing service outwith the meeting;
- in response to a query on the reported overspend on repairs and whether this would create a backlog going into 2023/24, it was explained that a decision had been made in November 2022 to stop undertaking non-essential repairs, and this would be reflected in the year-end budget outturn. The position on repairs was being closely monitored and reviewed, and any overspend would have to be met from Housing Revenue Account reserves, with further controls put into place for 2023/24. The external cost pressures the Council was facing were summarised and it was suggested that increasing the Council's internal team might be more economical than relying on external contractors;
- the use of the term 'environmental' was queried and it was explained that in the context of repairs this generally referred to estate-related issues, such as fencing or pathways, and not to the wider environment or climate change; and
- as a point of order, the report recommended approval of the budget position, when it should be for noting.

The Committee **NOTED** the budget position on the Housing Revenue Account and non-Housing Revenue Account 2022/23 for the period to 31 December 2022.

## **5. Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Capital Monitoring Report to 31 December 2022**

### **Aithisg Sgrùdaidh Calpa Cunntas Teachd-a-steach Taigheadais gu 31 An Dubhlachd 2022**

There is circulated Report No HP/03/23 by the Executive Chief Officer Housing and Property.

During discussion, Members raised the following main points:-

- it was confirmed that capital projects, identified as slippage, would be carried forward into the 2023/24 programme and any funding implications would be carried forward with them. Members would have the opportunity to review the year-end report for comments and approval;
- further information was sought and provided regarding the process to deal with capital installation works that had not been undertaken as the tenant had opted out and how this impacted the Council's commitments such as improving energy efficiencies in properties or meeting climate change targets;
- the 280 new Council house builds was welcomed and further information was sought in regard to this including their geographical location, costs involved, and current progress status;
- clarification was sought and provided regarding the project description 'healthy, safe and secure'. The Service Lead - Policy and Performance also advised that a brief description of the project headings as set out in Appendix 1 to the report could be included in future monitoring reports; and
- it was highlighted that there was provision within the Capital Programme for an element of ward spend for environmental improvement works and Members might want to consider how this could be best utilised at an area level. In Caithness, tenants had been consulted on how the budget should be used with their preference being for door and window improvements.

Thereafter, the Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the budget position on the Housing Revenue Account Capital Programme Monitoring Report 2022/23 for the period to 31 December 2022
- ii. **AGREED** that details of the 280 new Council house builds including their geographical location, costs involved, and current progress status be circulated to Members; and
- iii. **NOTED** that additional detail relating to project headings would be provided in future reports.

**6. Property & Facilities Management Services  
Revenue Budget Monitoring Statement Q3 to 31 December 2022 Aithisg Sgrùdaidh Teachd-a-steach Sheirbheisean Rianachd Cuid-seilbh & Ghoireasan gu 31 An Dubhlachd 2022**

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

There is circulated Report No HP/04/23 by the Executive Chief Officer Housing and Property.

During discussion, Members raised the following main points:-

- appreciation was conveyed to officers for the informative report;
- clarification was sought and provided regarding the high cost of materials mentioned in the report such as timber and the likelihood of reducing, as the market price had appeared to have substantially reduced in price;
- it was queried if the overall High Life Highland (HLH) budget had been calculated to take into account its own energy saving measures. In addition, information was sought and provided whether Inverness Leisure Centre was benefiting from the Archimedes screw energy generator to supplement the running of the facility;
- further information was sought and provided on the reason staff vacancies were impacting on the fee income, which was derived from the delivery of asset rationalisation projects, and causing a shortfall;
- in regard to Catering, a number of responses were provided to queries including whether the report took into account school meals; whether or not there had been an uptake in pupils buying school meals when they reached a certain age; if unused school meals were put to waste or if a better use could be found; and how many Members had paid for their lunch provision whilst attending meetings at Council headquarters. In addition, an explanation was sought and provided in relation to the ceased free school meals for pupil supervisors, and whether this had impacted on them volunteering to supervise pupils during lunch breaks;
- regarding the vacant HLH properties at Ardconnel Terrace, Inverness, it was queried what the plan was for these buildings, and were there other similar vacant properties elsewhere; and

- groups and organisations that rented properties from HLH or the Council had confirmed they had suffered financially due to covid lockdowns and were struggling to sustain rental costs, in this regard a financial breakdown of these rentals would be helpful for future discussion.

Thereafter, the Committee **NOTED**:

- i. that based on the best available information to date, a service budget gap of £2.610m to the end of 2022/23 was presently forecast. This was an increasing budget gap since the Q1 monitoring report where a budget gap of £1.261m was being projected;
- ii. that the budget gap might change positively or negatively depending on the application of expenditure and recruitment controls, filling fee earning posts in an extremely challenging job market, adjusting services to meet previously agreed budget savings; in-year income recovery, identifying new income and procurement opportunities;
- iii. the progress update provided in relation to budget savings delivery; and
- iv. that further adjustments would be made in future quarterly reporting to reflect the updated apportionment of costs across the new Service structure.

## **7. Property Capital Monitoring Statement and Progress Update Aithris Sgrùdaidh Calpa Seilbhe agus Cunntas às Ùr air Adhartas**

There is circulated Report No HP/**05**/23 by the Executive Chief Officer Housing and Property.

During discussion, Members raised the following main points:-

- the recommendation at 2.13 of the report regarding the £2M school estate investment was welcomed;
- assurance was sought and provided that all other Highland schools had an appropriate inspection regime to ensure maintenance was kept up to date;
- commendation and thanks were expressed for recent dynamic and robust interactions between officers and community stakeholders regarding a school on the Isle of Skye;
- the need for innovative solutions and the importance of stakeholder engagement was emphasised. Confirmation was provided that the stakeholder groups were regularly updated on progress of the major school projects;
- clarification was sought and provided regarding page 38 of the report under the heading, Strategic Asset Management, Energy Management. In this regard it was queried why this budget expenditure appeared to be progressing slower than anticipated;
- Members expressed appreciation that they could timeously approve expenditure for essential repairs to Thurso High School;
- the level of slippage (£22.393m) was high, but it was acknowledged that it was difficult to keep projects progressing given the current unprecedented external challenges;
- assurance was sought and provided that planning applications for Charleston Academy and Culloden Academy would be submitted as expeditiously as possible;
- regarding 6.2 of the report, Property Surveys, information was sought and provided when completion of these surveys was anticipated;

- whilst the overall depot rationalisation project work was moving forward, it was requested that smaller prevailing depot issues be considered for investment to improve some working conditions for staff; and
- the Chair conveyed thanks to Officers for their hard work in producing the quality reports for Members.

Thereafter, the Committee **NOTED**:

- i. the position for the third quarter of the 2022/23 financial year, and the estimated year-end position;
- ii. the progress made with the projects referred to in the report;
- iii. the progress on the structural investigations at Thurso High School and **APPROVED** the allocation of £2M from the School Estate Improvement Programme capital budget heading for the installation of modular classroom accommodation, all as outlined in Paragraphs 4.5 and 4.6 of the report;
- iv. the progress on the new building for Ness Castle Primary School in Inverness and the verbal update provided at the Committee meeting; and
- v. that an announcement on the outcome of the bidding process for Phase 3 of the Scottish Government's Learning Estate Investment Programme was expected early in 2023 and the verbal update provided at the Committee meeting.

The meeting was closed at 1.15pm.

## The Highland Council

Minutes of Meeting of the **Dingwall and Seaforth Area Committee** held in Committee Room 1, Council Offices, Dingwall on 30 January 2023 at 10.30 am.

### Present:

Mr S Kennedy  
Mr G MacKenzie

Mrs A MacLean

### In attendance:

Ms D Agnew, Ward Manager (Black Isle, Dingwall and Seaforth), Communities and Place  
Ms J Wileman, Assistant Ward Manager, Communities and Place  
Ms F Cameron, Programme Manager, Infrastructure, Environment and Economy  
Mr C Sharp, Repairs Manager, Housing and Property  
Mr J Mitchell, Housing Manger, Housing and Property  
Ms C MacIver, Community Support Co-ordinator, Communities and Place  
Miss J MacLennan, Joint Democratic Services Manager, Performance and Governance

### Also in attendance:

Inspector Richard Ross, Area Inspector, Police Scotland

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

### Mr G MacKenzie in the Chair

### Business

#### 1. Apologies for Absence Leisgeulans

There was an apology for absence from Mrs M Paterson.

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

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

Item 4: Mrs A MacLean.

#### 3. Police – Area Performance Summary Poilis – Geàrr-chunntas Dèanadais Sgìreil

There had been circulated Report No DSA/1/23 by the Area Commander (North Highland Area Command).

During the discussion the following issues were raised:-

- clarification was sought, and provided, regarding the protocol followed when a young person didn't return to a children's home at the expected time. It was

explained that a risk assessment was made of each case and sometimes it was the case that the young person was simply late in returning;

- data was requested as to the age profile and nature of vulnerable people who went missing. Whilst Inspector Ross would be happy to provide this, he did confirm the majority of missing persons were young people;
- the recent drink/drug driving campaign was commended and information was requested on what future plans were proposed to enforce and educate. In this regard, it was explained those testing positive to either drink/driving tests were taken to Burnett Road Police Station;
- new testing equipment that police officers could now use at the roadside would result in an increase in detection rates;
- with regard to County Lines, it was important to interact with schools to inform young people what to look out for;
- an explanation as to the monitoring process for CCTV used in incidents of vandalism was requested, and provided. The Council itself suffered from vandalism, particularly in the Ward in relation to public toilets, and this was unsustainable. It was important to recognise that the perpetrators were not necessarily young people;
- information was requested, and provided, as to police staffing levels in the area; and
- Community Councils had expressed frustration with the level of interaction with Police Scotland and Inspector Ross agreed to take this away to investigate.

Having scrutinised the report, the Committee **NOTED** progress made against the objectives set within the Highland Local Policing Plan 2020-2023 for the period covering 1 April 2022 – 31 December 2022.

#### **4. Area Community Regeneration Fund – Assessment of Applications Maoineachadh Ath-nuadhachadh Coimhearsnachd – Measadh Iarrtasan**

**Transparency Statement: Mrs A MacLean made a Transparency Statement in respect of this item as having written a letter of support for the Peffery Way Project to the Scottish Government. However, having applied the objective test, she did not consider that she had an interest to declare.**

There had been circulated Report No DSA/2/23 dated 16 January 2023 by the Executive Chief Officer – Infrastructure, Environment and Economy.

During the discussion the following issues were raised:-

- in response to a specific question, it was explained that the Maryburgh Amenities Company had received funding of £14,000 from Community Led Development monies and therefore the amount requested from the Community Regeneration Fund was £14,057;
- confirmation was sought, and received, that any unspent allocation from this year's Dingwall and Seaforth Community Regeneration Fund would be carried over to the next financial year. Furthermore, next year's allocation, once agreed by the Economy and Infrastructure Committee, would be added to the unspent allocation;

- the Peffery Way project was well supported by the local community; and
- it was questioned if the vehicle and tools purchased through the Clean and Green initiative could be used by the newly established community group which had now taken over control of the wooded area in Maryburgh.

The Committee **AGREED** funding be awarded from the Area Community Regeneration Fund as follows:-

- Maryburgh Amenities Company – Community Hall Upgrade - £14,057; and
- Peffery Way Association – Peffery Way – Dingwall – Mill Street end section - £29,500.

## 5. **Area Roads Capital Programme Report 2023/24** **Aithisg Adhartais Prògram Calpa Rathaidean 2023/24**

There had been circulated Report No DSA/3/23 dated 15 December 2022 by the Executive Chief Officer – Infrastructure, Environment and Economy.

During the discussion the following issues were raised:-

- the condition of the road leading to the camping and caravan park, adjacent to the Global Energy Football Stadium, was in a poor state of repair. As Dingwall Common Good received money from the camping and caravan park, it was queried if some of the Common Good money could augment the Roads Capital Programme to address this;
- if the Roads Capital Programme could be broken down as far as a Ross and Cromarty level, it was questioned why this could be not broken down to Local Committee level as well;
- projects agreed from the previous year were still outstanding although it was accepted that this was in part due to other works necessitating a redirection of traffic; and
- it was disappointing that there was no officer to present the report and this needed to be raised with the relevant ECO.

The Committee **APPROVED** the proposed 2023/24 Area Roads Capital Programme for the Dingwall and Seaforth Area Maintenance Programme for the Dingwall and Seaforth Area.

## 6. **Dingwall and Seaforth Ward Discretionary budget applications approved since last meeting** **Iarrtasan buidseat fo Ùghdarras Uàrd Inbhir Pheofharain agus Shìophort air an aontachadh choinneamh mu dheireadh**

The Committee **NOTED** that the following Dingwall and Seaforth Ward Discretionary Budget applications had been approved since its last meeting:

- Conon Bridge Amenities Association - Christmas Meals - £500
- Conon Bridge Lunch Club - Christmas Lunch - £300
- Maryburgh Amenities Company - Christmas Lunch - £450
- Maryburgh Amenities Company - Maryburgh Gala Bunting - £300

v. Dingwall Fire Brigade Community Group - Over 60's Christmas Meal - £300

**7. Dingwall Common Good Fund - 2021/22 Annual Audited Accounts and Final Monitoring, 2022/23 Quarter Three Monitoring Report and Proposed Budget for 2023/24**

**Maoin Maith Coitcheann Inbhir Pheofharain – Cunntasan Sgrùdaichte Bliadhnaile agus Sgrùdadh Deireannach 2021/22, Aithisg Sgrùdaidh Cairteal Trì 2022/23 agus Buidseat ga Mholadh airson 2023/24**

There had been circulated Report No DSA/4/23 dated 20 January 2023 by the Executive Chief Officer - Communities and Place/Head of Corporate Finance and Commercialism.

During the discussion the following issues were raised:-

- it was queried if there was a cap of what could be spent. In response, expenditure was a decision for Members and Area Committee for large projects. However it was not recommended to spend more than annual income received in one year rather to keep increase the reserves to protect the Common Good assets if necessary;
- clarification was sought, and provided, as to what properties generated rents to the Dingwall Common Good; and
- information was sought, and provided, as to the progress of the improvement works to Dingwall Town House. In this regard, it was questioned what would happen in the event that the project exceeded budget. However, it was confirmed that there was still budget available however, in the event it proved necessary, there was capital allocation from the Highland Council.

The Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the Dingwall Common Good Fund Annual Report for 2021/22;
- ii. **NOTED** and scrutinised the position of Dingwall Common Good Fund as shown in the 2022/23 Quarter Three monitoring statement; and
- iii. **APPROVED** the proposed budget for 2023/24.

**8. Housing Revenue Account: Garage Rents 2023/2024  
Cunntas Teachd-a-steach Taigheadais: Mal GaraIDS 2023/24**

There is circulated Report No DSA/5/23 dated 24 January 2023 by the Executive Chief Officer - Housing and Property.

During the discussion the following issues were raised:-

- when setting a level for garage rents, whilst wanting to keep increases to a minimum, it was important that the overall budget was not detrimentally affected and that repairs could take place;
- it was important to establish how many garages were in the Ward and what condition they were in and, the allocation that there was in the Housing Revenue Account budget for garage improvements;

- many of the garages, some of which could not accommodate a car, were now being used for storage and perhaps a different approach was required;
- with a proposal that a 5% increase be applied an assurance was sought, and provided, that the income from the increase, would be ringfenced for the Dingwall and Seaforth Ward and would not reduce any funding already in place for the garages; and
- Members would welcome a tour of garages in the Dingwall and Seaforth Ward.

The Committee **AGREED** a rent level increase of 5% for garage and garage sites held on the Housing Revenue Account for 2023/2024.

**9. Minutes**  
**Geàrr-chunntas**

There was circulated for **NOTING** Minutes of Meeting of the Dingwall and Seaforth Committee held on 14 November 2022 which were approved by the Council on 8 December 2022.

The meeting concluded at 11.35 am.

## The Highland Council

**Minutes of Meeting of the Isle of Skye and Raasay Committee (Comataidh an Eilein Sgitheanaich agus Ratharsair)** held remotely on **Monday, 30 January, 2023 at 10.30 am.**

**Present:**

Mr J Finlayson  
Mr D Millar

Mr C Munro  
Mr R Stewart

**Officials in attendance:**

Mr A Gunn, Executive Chief Officer, Communities and Place  
Mr W MacKinnon, Ward Manager, Communities and Place  
Mr A Bruce, Service Delivery Manager, Resources & Finance  
Mr G Macdonald, Roads Operations Manager, Infrastructure, Environment & Economy  
Mr G Smith, Service Lead – Infrastructure, Environment & Economy  
Ms J Bruce, Principal Housing Officer, Housing & Property  
Mr J Henderson, Housing Investment Officer, Housing & Property  
Ms F Cameron, Programme Manager Community Regeneration, Infrastructure, Environment & Economy  
Ms M Gray, Project Officer Community Regeneration, Infrastructure, Environment & Economy  
Mr A MacInnes, Committee Officer, Performance & Governance

**Also in Attendance:**

Mr M Colliar, Group Commander, Scottish Fire and Rescue Service

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

**1. Apologies for Absence  
Leisgeulan**

There were no apologies for absence.

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

Transparency Statements: Item 9 – Mr D Millar and Mr C Munro

*In accordance with Standing Order 9, with the consent of the meeting, item 10 on the agenda was taken at this point.*

*Urgent Item of Business – the following report was taken as an urgent item of business due to the timescale in which to distribute the Islands Emergency Cost of Crisis funding.*

**Item 10.****The Islands Emergency Cost Crisis Fund 2022/23  
Maoin Staing Cosgais Èiginn nan Eilean 2022/23**

There was circulated Report No. SR/6/23 by the Executive Chief Officer Communities & Place in relation to the Scottish Government providing the Highland Council with grant funding to help alleviate the cost crisis in our island communities. The report set out recommendations for distribution of the share of funding for Skye & Raasay.

Members welcomed the report, the extra funding to help island communities and were fully supportive of the recommendations.

The Committee:-

i **NOTED** that the Council has received Islands Emergency Cost Crisis funding for 2022/23 to help alleviate the impacts of the cost crisis for island communities.

ii. **AGREED** that this funding be used to automatically make non-recurring cost crisis payments of £155 per eligible household by 28 February 2023 where the Council holds current bank details, in accordance with the eligibility criteria set out in section 4 of the report.

**3. Minutes  
Geàrr-chunntas**

There had been circulated for information, Minutes of Meeting of the Isle of Skye and Raasay Committee (Comataidh an Eilein Sgitheanaich agus Ratharsair) held on 31 October, 2022, which were approved at the Highland Council meeting held on 8 December, 2022, the terms of which were **NOTED**.

**4. Scottish Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS) Local Committee Performance Report  
Aithisg Choileanaidh Comataidh Ionadail Seirbheis Smàlaidh agus Teasairginn na h-Alba**

There was circulated Report No SR/1/23 by the Local Senior Officer for Highland.

In relation to station availability of all the fire stations in Highland, a significant number of these were below the establishment the Service would like due to the challenges that continued to be faced with recruitment. The Isle of Skye had in particular been very challenging to recruit staff and the Service was being proactive to try and increase new recruits joining the Service. To address staffing shortages a joint mobilisation policy with other areas had been launched and moving staff around to provide cover where needed at stations. It was highlighted that up to 12 new recruits would be joining stations in the area which was great news and would make a big difference to the staffing establishment for the area. A different operating model for the Portree fire station was being considered as well as a new multi agency building. There were also plans to have a new station in Uig.

There were ongoing conversations within the Service on different operating models and they included, for example, the option of a wholetime station on Skye

with the opportunity to give firefighters careers. A development event for Officers was being held and part of this would be on how to deal with wildfires. In terms of the length of time firefighters could spend dealing with wildfires, there was a need for crew rotation and the need to keep firefighters safe. There was currently a ballot for industrial action with the Service and the outcome of this would be known soon and the resources would require to be managed to deal with incidents such as wildfires.

In terms of road traffic incidents in the area, the majority were likely to be tourists or people without the knowledge to drive on roads in rural areas. However, the majority of these occurred at low speed and injuries were not too significant. It was found that locals or business people in a hurry that tended to make errors at high speed with more significant consequences. The Service worked closely with Police Scotland and partner agencies to educate the public on safe driving.

The Committee **NOTED** the SFRS performance report.

## **5. Area Roads Capital Programme 2023/24 Prògram Calpa Rathaidean Sgìreil 2023/24**

There was circulated Report No. SR/2/23 by the Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure, Environment and Economy which detailed the proposed 2023/24 Area Roads Capital Programme for Isle of Skye and Raasay Area.

The Chair acknowledged that there was anxiety and frustration in the community over the state of the roads on Skye, Raasay and across Highland. It was recognised however that there were limited resources available to undertake road maintenance. Local Members would work hard to try and provide additional resources for roads in this area as it was the top priority for the Skye/Raasay area. Members appreciated and supported the work of the roads team.

The poor state of roads was impacting on the community and the tourist economy and there was a need for the Council to re-evaluate the funding put towards roads maintenance to ensure that this area received a fair share.

It was highlighted that the local allocations of capital budget for 2023/24 remained to be established and would be calculated from the approved service capital budget allocation being adjusted for any acceleration or slippage in the previous financial year for each area allocation and also analysis of the road condition survey results. The baseline road allocation for this area was £490k. By way of context it was advised that the annual road condition survey showed that there had been a considerable deterioration in the road network over the last 10 years. In order to maintain roads in a steady state with no improvement it was estimated that the Council would require to spend £26m per year and it was estimated that Skye/Raasay would require to spend £2.6m per year just to maintain its roads in a steady state (the current budget was £490k).

It was requested that the road maintenance planned work schedule from now until the end of April, 2023 and the programme of routes for the Jet Patcher would be shared with Members so that they share this information with the public. There would be surface dressing on roads this year and this was in the programme. The Pot Hole Pro would also be used. Road maintenance was prioritised in terms of safety and hierarchy of the network.

The Committee **APPROVED**:-

i the proposed 2023/24 Area Roads Capital Programme for the Isle of Skye and Raasay Area;

ii the remaining £44k from earmarked reserves from the Skye and Raasay area share of local car parking income for 2021/22 to road maintenance; and

iii **NOTED** that the road maintenance planned work schedule from now until the end of April, 2023 and the programme of routes for the Jet Patcher would be shared with Members.

**6. Isle of Skye and Raasay HRA Capital Programme 2023/27 & 2022-23 update  
Prògram Calpa Cunntas Teachd-a-steach Taigheadais an Eilein Sgitheanaich  
is Ratharsair 2023/27**

There was circulated Report No. SR/3/23 by the Executive Chief Officer Housing and Property.

It was highlighted that there was a focus on energy efficiency and adaptation works on the housing stock within the capital programme. It was requested that a breakdown on expected demand for the various elements of the capital programme and the process for prioritisation of energy efficiency elements of the programme would be shared with members at a Ward Business meeting. Work would continue on local delivery and partnership working to produce better economies of scale, in order to make the best use of the resources available within the capital programme.

The Committee:

i **NOTED** the update on the 2022-23 Isle of Skye and Raasay HRA Capital Programme at section 5 of the report.

ii. **NOTED** the resources available to Isle of Skye and Raasay at 6.7.

iii. **AGREED** the proposed investment priorities in the HRA Capital Programme for Isle of Skye and Raasay 2023-27 as set out in Appendix 1.

iv. **NOTED** that updates on the Housing Revenue Account Capital Programme will continue to be provided through ward briefings and at future Local Committees as requested by local Members, in addition to reporting to Housing and Property Committee.

v **NOTED** that a breakdown on expected demand for the various elements of the capital programme and the process for prioritisation of energy efficiency elements of the programme would be shared with members at a Ward Business meeting.

**7. Housing Revenue Account: Garage Rents 2023/24**

There was circulated Report No. SR/4/23 by the Executive Chief Officer Housing and Property which provided information on garage rents for Skye & Raasay and invited the Committee to set rent levels for garages held on the Housing Revenue Account for 2023/24.

It was recommended that a 7% increase be applied to the 5 garages on Skye/Raasay which amounted to a 46 pence weekly increase for a Council tenant and 57 pence weekly increase for a non tenant. The current rents were

considerably below the Highland wide average rent for a garage from the Council. Money from garage rents were ring fenced for repairs to garages

The Committee **AGREED** a 7% rent increase to apply to Skye & Raasay Garages.

## 8. **Uig Harbour Redevelopment Cunntas às Ùr mu Ath-leasachadh Cala Ùige**

There was a presentation by the Service Lead Infrastructure on the Uig Harbour Redevelopment. The Committee were provided an overview of the works being undertaken, construction progress, scale of works and dates for the closure of the ferry terminal. Currently all works were proceeding well and the project was due for completion by April, 2024.

In discussion, it was advised that the dredging material of the seabed was not suitable for re-use and it would be disposed of at sea and licences were in place for this. The works would continue when the ferry came back into service in March, 2023. The piling works were progressing well despite several obstructions being encountered on the seabed. The tender for the new terminal building had gone out last year, but due to affordability, this part of the project would be re-tendered with the aim of completion by April, 2024.

The work of staff on this project was recognised and commended by Members as was the work undertaken by Councillor C Munro. The community engagement on the project was also acknowledged.

The Committee **NOTED** the update on Uig Harbour Redevelopment.

## 9. **Community Regeneration Fund (CRF) Assessment of Applications**

**Transparency Statement:- Mr D Millar made a Transparency Statement in respect of the applications relating to Cuillin FM/Radio Skye as he was a volunteer to broadcast a show on Radio Skye which he broadcast from his home. Mr Millar had no other connection to Radio Skye and having applied the objective test he did not consider that he had an interest to declare.**

**Transparency Statement: Mr C Munro made a Transparency Statement in respect of the Skye Dance application, as a family member participated in Skye Dance events; and the Ionad Thronairnis – Guthan na Tìre (Voices of the Land) application as he had participated in a festival and he received a fee for taking part in that festival. However, Mr Munro wished to record a connection to these applications but having applied the objective test he did not consider that he had an interest to declare.**

There was circulated Report No. SR/5/23 by the Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure, Environment & Economy.

There was an introduction to the report, which included changes to some applications. The Committee were invited to consider 16 applications for CRF funding. The revised total grant requests amounted to £495,255 and available funding was £440,795.

The Committee considered applications for Community Regeneration Funding (CRF) and agreed as shown below. In total 16 applications were approved amounting to £443,244 leaving a balance of £7,697 being carried forward to the next round of CRF funding.

Glendale Community Hall Association – Hall Flood Defence

APPROVED £10,146.22 to be funded from the Islands Emergency Fund

Cuillin FM/Radio Skye – Journalist Pilot Programme Extension

APPROVED £14,081

Broadford & Strath Community Company – Community Co-ordinator & Development

APPROVED £10,250, subject to technical condition that specialist consultant support fees require to be agreed before they are incurred to ensure eligibility.

Ionad Thronairnis – Guthan na Tire (Voices of the Land)

APPROVED £30,000

Broadford & Strath Community Company – Skye Event Space

APPROVED £50,000 subject to conditions being met relating to planning, match funding and land acquisition.

Cuillin FM trading as Radio Skye – Radio Skye Accommodation Pods

APPROVED £15,000, subject to conditions being met relating to lease of land, planning permission and match funding.

Skye Iconic Sites Project – Quiraing Loop Path Reinforcement

APPROVED £90,000

SkyeDance – Building connection & community through dance

APPROVED £25,939

Skye Connect – Skye Cycle Network – Development Stage 2

APPROVED £16,500 with the condition that a benchmarking exercise be undertaken on the salary of the post. It was requested that updates on progress with the project be shared with Members.

Uig Community Hall Association – Environmental & Accessibility improvements

APPROVED £9,000

Hebridean Diving Services – Coastal Defence

APPROVED £35,058 subject to a constituted group led by the community being formed for this project and match funding being in place.

Sleat Community Trust – Overhauling Sleat Renewables Wood

APPROVED £11,220

Uig Community Trust – Uig Regeneration Projects

APPROVED £22,500, subject to a benchmarking exercise with Highland & Islands Enterprise being undertaken on the salary of the Local Development Officer post, which depending on the outcome, may result in a reduced grant award. Updates on progress with projects should also be provided to Members.

Portree & Braes Community Trust – Home Farm Hub

APPROVED £64,138.66, subject to conditions on match funding; a benchmarking exercise being undertaken on the salary of the Project Officer post; and eligibility of costs.

Portree and Braes CT – Finance & Admin Officer

APPROVED £18,412, subject to the condition that information on the outcomes of the project and the plan for the Trust to achieve financial sustainability be shared with Members.

Portree & Braes CT – Matheson Place Playpark

APPROVED £21,000

The meeting ended at 12.50 p.m.

**The Highland Council**

Minutes of Meeting of the **Black Isle Committee** held remotely via Microsoft Teams on Tuesday 31 January 2023 at 10.30 am.

**Present:**

Ms S Atkin  
Ms L Johnston  
Ms M MacCallum

**In attendance:**

Ms D Agnew, Ward Manager (Black Isle, Dingwall and Seaforth), Communities and Place  
Mr I Moncrieff, Roads Operations Manager, Infrastructure, Environment and Economy  
Ms F Cameron, Programme Manager, Infrastructure, Environment and Economy  
Mr J Mitchell, Interim Housing Manager, Housing and Property  
Mrs T Scott, Principal Planner, Planning Infrastructure, Environment and Economy  
Mr A Coyle, Corporate Communications and Engagement Officer, Performance and Governance  
Mrs O Marsh, Committee Officer, Performance and Governance

**Also in attendance:**

Inspector R Ross, Police Scotland

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

**Ms L Johnston in the Chair****Business****1. Apologies for Absence  
Leisgeulan**

There were no apologies for absence.

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

There were no declarations of interest.

**3. Police – Area Performance Report  
Poilis – Geàrr-chunntas Dèanadais Sgìreil**

There had been circulated Report No BI/01/23 dated 21 January 2023 by the North Area Commander.

During discussion, Members raised the following main points:-

- thanks were conveyed for the hard work spent producing the report;

- it was queried if a protocol was in place for looked after children if they went missing, similar to the Herbert protocol for persons with dementia. In this regard information was sought, and provided, on what were the main causes for looked after children going missing on the Black Isle, and what age group had been particularly affected;
- it was queried if the main issue on the Black Isle roads was drink or drug driving;
- in response to a query it was confirmed that antisocial crimes statistics only included reported crimes, and detected crimes;
- it was questioned why there had been a spike of missing adult cases, and if COVID or the cost of living crisis had impacted people in this regard; and
- information was sought on how prolific county lines was impacting the Black Isle and if young and vulnerable persons had been specifically impacted. In this regard it was confirmed that concerns or reports could be made to the Police in person, telephone, Crimestoppers, email or the internet.

The Committee **NOTED** the progress made against the objectives set within the Highland Local Policing Plan 2020-2023 Year 2, attached as Annex A to this report, for the period covering 01 April 2022 – 31 December 2022.

#### **ADDITIONAL URGENT ITEM.**

At this point in the meeting, and in line with Standing Order 8, it was advised that the Chair had agreed that the following Item 10 should be considered as an urgent item of business so that an increase could be agreed prior to the start of financial year 2023/24:-

#### **Item 10. Housing Revenue Account: Garage Rents 2023/2024 Cunntas Teachd-a-steach Taigheadais: Mál Garaids 2023/2024**

There had been circulated Report No BI/6/23 by the Executive Chief Officer Housing and Property.

During discussion, Members raised the following main points:-

- garages were repaired when tenants request this via the housing repairs process, however a more strategic review of investment of garages would be important to ensure the stock was at a good level;
- it was confirmed that the Black Isle area had 7 vacant garages. However, some were in the process of being signed up while others required repairs and maintenance work; and
- it was felt that the middle rent increase option of 5% was reasonable in order to maintain the garages in a suitable condition, but not overburden tenants whilst already being affected by an increase in the cost of living;

The Committee **AGREED** a 5% rent increase to apply to Black Isle Garages

#### **4. Appointment - Cromarty Court House Trust Cur an Dreuchd – Urras Taigh Cùirte Chromba**

The Committee **AGREED** to appoint Ms M MacCallum to the Board of Cromarty Court House Trust.

**5. Black Isle Ward Discretionary budget applications approved since 15 November 2022**  
**Iarrtasan Buidseit fo Ùghdarras Uàird an Eilein Duibh air an Aontachadh bho 15 Samhain 2022**

The Committee **NOTED** that the following Black Isle Ward Discretionary Budget application had been approved since 15 November 2022:

- Singing For Fun Ross-shire £150

**6. Area Roads Capital Programme 2023/24**  
**Prògram Calpa Rathaidean Sgìreil 2023/24**

There had been circulated Report No BI/02/23 dated 4 January 2023 by the Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure, Environment & Economy.

In terms of the Capital Programme 2023/24 it was queried if there was scope to include additional works to roads that might be adversely affected during the upcoming year. In this regard it was confirmed that an update would be provided at a Ward Business Meeting if additional funds became available.

Members recognised that whilst residents had reported many roads repairs the available budget only allowed for priority roads projects to commence at present and additional works might be undertaken if further resources became available.

The Committee **APPROVED** the proposed 2023/24 Area Roads Capital Programme for Black Isle Area.

**7. Common Good Funds**  
**Maoin Maith Choitchinn**

**a. Cromarty Common Good Fund - 2021/22 Annual Audited Accounts and Final Monitoring, 2022/23 Quarter 3 Monitoring Report and Proposed Budget for 2023/24**  
**Maoin Math Coitcheann Inbhir Pheofharain – Cunntasan Sgrùdaichte Bliadhnaile agus Sgrùdadh Deireannach 2021/22, Aithisg Sgrùdaidh Cairteal Trì 2022/23 agus Buidseat ga Mholadh airson 2023/24**

There had been circulated joint Report No BI/03/23 dated 20 January 2023 by the Executive Chief Officer Communities and Place and the Head of Corporate Finance and Commercialism.

The Committee:-

- NOTED** the Cromarty Common Good Fund Annual Report for 2021/22;
- NOTED** the position of Cromarty Common Good Fund as shown in the 2022/23 Quarter 3 monitoring statement; and
- APPROVED** the proposed budget for 2023/24.

**b. Fortrose and Rosemarkie Common Good Fund – 2021/22 Annual Audited Accounts and Final Monitoring, 2022/23 Quarter 3 Monitoring Report and Proposed Budget for 2023/24**  
**Maoin Math Coitcheann na Cananaich agus Ros Maircnidh – Cunntasan Sgrùdaichte Bliadhnaile agus Sgrùdadh Deireannach 2021/22, Aithisg Sgrùdaidh Cairteal Trì 2022/23 agus Buidseat ga Mholadh airson 2023/24**

There had been circulated joint Report No BI/04/23 dated 20 January 2023 by the Executive Chief Officer Communities and Place and the Head of Corporate Finance and Commercialism.

Members suggested that a meeting be arranged with Fortrose Community Council to discuss improvements to the Fortrose town hall.

The Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the Fortrose and Rosemarkie Common Good Fund Annual Report for 2021/22;
- ii. **NOTED** and scrutinised the position of Fortrose and Rosemarkie Common Good Fund as shown in the 2022/23 Quarter 3 monitoring statement; and
- iii. **APPROVED** the proposed budget for 2023/24.

**8. Community Regeneration Fund – Assessment of Applications**  
**Maoin Ath-bheòthachadh Coimhearsnachd**

There had been circulated Report No BI/05/23 dated 16 January 2023 by the Executive Chief Officer, Infrastructure, Environment & Economy.

During discussion, Members raised the following main points:-

- Members recognised the worthiness of the projects but acknowledged that funds were limited and the need to ensure funding was maximised;
- it was queried what process a group needed to complete to become constituted and if this process was deemed complex;
- whilst acknowledging that the Black Isle Music project was a fantastic initiative, it was felt that it would be important to be a constituted group to fund the scheme appropriately;
- Members fully support the Avoch Toilet project given the relatively low grant request and the need to ensure it is fully funded in order for works to be progressed; and
- as the sum amount requested by the remaining 3 projects was a £1018.54 overspend projection, an equal split deduction would be made to these approvals to meet the available area allocation.

The Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** all applications presented for funding; and
- ii. **AGREED** that funding be awarded from the Community Regeneration Fund

as follows:

- Black Isle Music – **Deferred**
- Toilets Avoch – **Approved** - £2,000.00
- Culbokie Village Hub – **Approved** - £29,625.49
- Avoch Boatshed – **Approved** - £34,460.49
- Ferintosh Hall – **Approved** - £38,550.03

**9. Minutes**  
**Geàrr-chunntas**

The Committee **NOTED** the Minutes of Meeting of the Black Isle Committee held on 15 November 2022 which were approved by the Council on 8 December 2022.

The Meeting ended at 11:50am

## The Highland Council

Minutes of Meeting of the **Economy and Infrastructure Committee** held in the Council Chamber, Council Headquarters, Glenurquhart Road, Inverness on Thursday, 2 February 2023 at 10.30 am.

### Present:

Mr C Aitken	Mr P Logue
Mr M Baird	Mr W MacKay (Remote)
Mr I Brown	Ms J McEwan
Mr M Cameron	Mr H Morrison (Remote)
Mr A Christie (Substitute)	Ms L Niven
Mr K Gowans	Mr K Rosie (Remote)
Mr M Green	Mr R Stewart (Remote)
Mr R Jones (Remote)	Ms K Willis

### Non-Members also present:

Dr C Birt (Remote)	Mr R MacKintosh
Mr R Bremner (Remote)	Mrs A McLean
Mr J Bruce	Mr T MacLennan
Ms T Collier (Remote)	Mr D Macpherson (Remote)
Ms S Fanet	Mr J McGillivray (Remote)
Mr R Gale (Remote)	Mr D Millar (Remote)
Ms M Hutchison (Remote)	Mr C Munro (Remote)
Ms E Knox (Remote)	Mr P Oldham (Remote)
Mr G MacKenzie (Remote)	

### Officials in Attendance:

Mr M MacLeod, Acting Depute Chief Executive and Executive Chief Officer  
Infrastructure, Environment and Economy  
Mr A Maguire, Head of Development and Regeneration  
Ms T Urry, Head of Roads and Infrastructure  
Mr A McCann, Economy and Regeneration Manager  
Mr D Chisholm, Tourism & Inward Investment Team Leader  
Mr A Puls, Environment Team Leader  
Ms N Wallace, Service Lead, Environment, Development and Active Travel  
Ms E MacIver, Principal Engineer  
Mr C Baxter, Senior Engineer  
Mr T Stott, Principal Planner  
Mr D Cowie, Principal Planner  
Mr D Summers, Principal Transport Officer  
Ms J Cromarty, Project Manager Highland Bus Partnership  
Mr N Osborne, Climate Change Manager, Performance and Governance  
Mr A MacLeod, Policy Officer, Performance and Governance  
Mr K Forbes, Property Manager (Estates Management)  
Mr G Stuart, Forestry Officer  
Mr N Young, Transportation Officer  
Miss J MacLennan, Joint Democratic Services Manager, Performance & Governance  
Mrs O Marsh, Committee Officer, Performance & Governance

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

Mr K Gowans in the Chair

## Business

### 1. Apologies for Absence Leisgeulan

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

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

The Committee **NOTED** the following Declaration of Interest:-

Item 10: Mr M Green

and Transparency Statements:-

Item 8: Mr A Christie

Item 10: Mr H Morrison

Item 12: Ms S Fanet

Item 16: Mr A Christie

Item 17: Mr A Christie

### 3. Good News Naidheachdan Matha

The Chair informed Members of a number of items of good news as follows:-

- the Council's in-house bus pilot project had commenced operations on 4 January 2023;
- Invercoe Bridge, Lochaber, had undergone a complete bridge replacement, funded by the Scottish Government's Local Bridge Maintenance Fund and the Council's Capital Programme and the new bridge had opened to traffic in December 2022;
- the Scottish Government had awarded the Council £2.51m from its Regeneration Capital Grant Fund programme for three community-led projects in Knoydart, Tain and John O'Groats;
- the Community Regeneration Team had been working closely with prospective applicants to bring forward Expressions of Interest and completed applications for Community Regeneration Funding. It was expected that, by the end of March, some £5m would be awarded to over 100 projects, and thanks were expressed to Fiona Cameron, Programme Manager, and her small team for their work in helping communities to help themselves by identifying and delivering local regeneration projects; and

- Inverness and Cromarty Firth ports had been successful in securing Green Freeport status.

In relation to the latter, the Chair went on to state that the Green Freeport covered an extensive area in the Cromarty Firth and Inverness and meant that Highland would have a vital role in the country's transition to net zero. It had been brought about by people with different interests working collaboratively with a shared vision and it was now necessary to ensure it translated into shared success. The Council Leader had written to the Secretary of State for Scotland to welcome the news and the Council looked forward to continuing to work with the consortium to maximise the multi-generational benefits this was expected to bring for Highland communities.

It was important to acknowledge that this success was the result of the work of many people within the Council over a long period of time, including former Council Leader - Margaret Davidson, Councillor Alasdair Christie, the Convener - Councillor Bill Lobban, and the current Council Leader - Councillor Raymond Bremner. He also thanked officers for their extraordinary contribution throughout the protracted process, particularly the Chief Executive, the Executive Chief Officer, Infrastructure, Environment and Economy, the Head of Development and Regeneration and the Development Plans Manager.

Members welcomed the Chair's inclusive remarks. In addition, it was commented that Members were receiving frequent queries from constituents as to what a Green Freeport was and it was suggested it would be helpful to add some explanatory information in a prominent position on the Council's website.

The Committee otherwise **NOTED** the good news.

#### **4. Revenue and Performance Monitoring Quarter 3 to 31 December 2022 Sgrùdadh Teachd a-steach agus Coileanadh Cairteal 3 gu 31 Dùbhlachd 2022**

There had been circulated Report No. ECI/1/2023 dated 16 January 2023 by the Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure, Environment and Economy.

During discussion, Members raised the following main points:-

- in relation to lost income, information was sought, and provided, on the areas of greatest variance and what could be done to recover the situation;
- with regard to the Corran Ferry, the age of the vessels and the money being spent on repairs highlighted the importance of replacement ferries being included in the Capital Programme;
- it having been queried whether there was a plan to recruit to the vacant posts in Planning, Environment and Building Standards, it was confirmed that advertisements had just gone out for four additional Planners utilising the increased income from planning fees. In addition, information was sought, and provided, as to whether there was any correlation between a backlog in the planning team and the lack of building warrant fee income;

- a number of constituents had commented to Members that winter maintenance was noticeably worse than in previous years and a response was sought, and provided, in that regard. The Chair added that discussions were ongoing as to how the service could be improved. However, winter maintenance vehicles could only be in one place at a time and he expressed gratitude to the drivers who worked unsociable hours in extremely challenging conditions;
- planning performance was relatively good given the pressure the service was under, there having been a huge increase in the number of planning applications in recent years in addition to the impact of Covid. The recruitment of additional Planners was welcomed and Members were confident this would lead to improved performance in the next year or so; and
- concern was expressed regarding underspends relating to staff vacancies and it was queried whether the money could be re-allocated to road maintenance, particular reference being made to the poor state of the roads in Caithness.

The Committee **NOTED**:-

- i. the more detailed reporting of gross income and gross expenditure to improve scrutiny of net budgets as set out in Appendices 1-3 of the report;
- ii. the revenue monitoring position for the period to 31 December 2022;
- iii. net spend at the end of Quarter 3 totalled £22.727m;
- iv. based on the best available information to date, a service budget gap of £2.706m was forecast to end of 2022/23;
- v. many areas of the Service relied on income to pay for services, and this continued to improve;
- vi. the budget gap might 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. scrutinised the Directorate's performance information.

#### **5. Capital Monitoring Quarter 3 2022/23** **Sgrùdadh Calpa Cairteal 3 2022/23**

There had been circulated Report No. ECI/2/2023 dated 18 January 2023 by the Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure, Environment and Economy.

The Committee **NOTED**:-

- i. the financial position as at 31 December 2022; and
- ii. the estimated year end forecast.

## 6. Speed Limit Policy Update Cunntas às Ùr mu Chasg Astair

There had been circulated Report No. ECI/03/2023 dated 5 January 2023 by the Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure, Environment and Economy.

During discussion, Members raised the following main points:-

- whilst the report was welcomed, the real issue was not the designation of more 20mph zones but what was going to be done in terms of enforcement and to change the culture. Many drivers were still speeding in existing 20mph zones, putting pedestrians and cyclists at risk, and information was sought on proposed enforcement techniques and what discussions had taken place with the Police. The Chair concurred with the points raised, commenting that it was not only a matter of enforcement but of education. He confirmed that discussions would take place with the Police and that a multi-agency approach was essential to address the challenges associated with implementing 20mph zones;
- information was sought as to what lessons were being learned from other local authorities that had implemented 20mph zones, specifically The City of Edinburgh Council;
- culture change had to start somewhere and the Speed Limit Policy was welcomed as a starting point and would save lives;
- support was expressed for the proposed policy aims, bearing in mind some of the driver behaviour Members had witnessed. However, there were also good conscientious drivers who enjoyed the pleasure of motoring;
- the more slowly a vehicle travelled the less energy it carried hence there would be less damage in a collision. In addition, stopping distances were shorter at lower speeds and driver vision wider;
- the Police did not have the resources to increase their monitoring of speeds;
- having 20mph signs on the road itself was helpful;
- it was necessary to put more traffic calming measures in place. However, they could be an issue for emergency vehicles. In addition, whilst the desire to see lower speeds in housing estates and around schools was recognised, measures such as speed bumps were costly to install and had consequences for local residents in terms of noise and light disturbance and it was necessary to look at alternatives;
- it was understood Police Scotland had advised the Council the Speed Limit Policy was unenforceable and unworkable, in which case implementing it was a costly exercise for something that was unlikely to achieve the desired outcomes. It having been queried whether the advice from Police Scotland would be published, the Head of Roads and Infrastructure confirmed that she was not aware of any such advice having been received but she undertook to look into the matter;
- there was not a “one size fits all” solution, and the need for discussions with Local Members and Community Councils as to the best way forward for individual localities was emphasised. The Chair concurred, adding that site-specific solutions should be discussed at Area Committees;

- when building new housing schemes, it was necessary to take account of places for children to play safely whilst allowing traffic to move;
- an additional recommendation was proposed, namely, that a report be presented to the next meeting on additional actions and interventions that could be initiated to change culture and improve compliance. The Chair confirmed that he was happy to accept the proposed addition;
- concern was expressed that implementing the policy would lead to increased journey times which would in turn reduce productivity and make it more difficult for individuals and businesses in rural communities to access to key services. It was asked that, in discussions at Area Committees, there be a strong emphasis on the economic impact on the more fragile and remote communities in Highland; and
- the current situation in some Highland towns, such as Fort William, was confusing due to the myriad of different speed limit zones and the need for a simple recognised principle of 20mph in urban areas was emphasised.

The Committee:-

- APPROVED** the Speed Limit Policy as contained in Appendix B of the report;
- NOTED** that after the policy was approved, the “Speed Limits Manual” would be finalised and distributed, including to the Roads Redesign Working Group; and
- AGREED** that a report be presented to the next meeting on additional actions and interventions that could be initiated to change culture and improve compliance.

#### 7. **Infrastructure, Environment & Economy Workforce Planning 2022–2025** **Planadh Feachd-obrach Bun-structair, Àrainneachd & Eaconamaidh 2022–2025**

There had been circulated Report No. ECI/04/2023 dated 9 January 2023 by the Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure, Environment and Economy.

During discussion, Members commended the proactive approach to succession planning, utilising the Modern and Graduate Apprenticeship Scheme and the Council’s Graduate Intern Programme.

The Committee otherwise **NOTED** the Infrastructure, Environment & Economy Service Workforce Plan for 2022–2025.

#### 8. **Inner Moray Firth Proposed Local Development Plan 2** **Plana Leasachaidh Ionadail 2 ga Mholadh airson Linne Mhoireibh A-staigh**

**Transparency Statement: Mr A Christie made a Transparency Statement in respect of this item as a Non-Executive Director of NHS Highland. However, having applied the objective test, he did not consider that he had an interest to declare.**

There had been circulated Report No. ECI/05/2023 dated 7 January 2023 by the Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure, Environment and Economy.

During discussion, thanks were expressed to officers for the huge amount of work that had gone into the Development Plan over a considerable period, and the time and effort afforded to Community Councils and community groups.

In relation to INS18: Knocknagael, a field/green space separating two housing estates that was used for play and leisure activities, the recommendation in the Plan was to build 100 houses on the site. However, there was an active community that wanted a Community Asset Transfer and a community group wanted to establish a community growing space, encouraging people to have food larders in the area. It seemed sad, when the city of Inverness was expanding so fast and the government wanted people to live within a few minutes of green space, to build on the last area of green space in an urban ward and it was suggested it was unnecessary, there being plenty of brownfield sites around Inverness that could be utilised.

Mr A Christie, seconded by Mr C Aitken, **MOVED** that INS18 be designated as community land and an agricultural site, which was its previous status prior to the Inner Moray Firth Development Plan recommendations.

However, the Clerk questioned the competency of the motion, explaining that she had taken legal advice and site-specific comments were a matter for Area Committees. If Mr Christie had wanted to challenge the decision of the City of Inverness Area Committee the appropriate course of action would have been a Notice of Amendment.

Members having questioned the logic of the governance arrangements, the Chair emphasised that the Committee was being asked to consider the strategic aspects of the Plan and that, to be as local as possible, powers had been delegated to Area Committees to make decisions on the local aspects.

During further discussion, the following points were raised:-

- Members welcomed the Development Plan and emphasised its importance in terms of setting out what communities wanted, what the Scottish Government wanted, the Council's vision moving forward, planning, signalling to developers and businesses what the Council wanted to work on with them, and encouraging people to invest in the Highlands;
- there was a lot of good work taking place and it was necessary to celebrate it;
- it was questioned what the next steps would be in terms of going back out to communities, how communities could get more involved in what was happening in their area and how the Council and other statutory agencies such as NHS Highland engaged. It was added that one of the good things to come out of National Planning Framework 4 was that health boards had to start engaging more with the planning system;
- Members looked forward to seeing how things developed over the next couple of years, particularly in terms of green transport;

- having a strategic direction would aid decision-making at Planning Applications Committees;
- it was welcomed that localism had been recognised in the development of the Plan and the work of Area Committees on the local aspects was commended; and
- clarification was sought, and provided, as to the policy position in respect of nature-based solutions;

The Committee:-

- AGREED** the recommended Council response to strategic issues relevant to the Plan area raised in representations received on the Proposed Plan as set out in Appendix 1 of the report ;
- NOTED** the issues raised in representations as they related to place-specific matters and **NOTED** the local/City Committee agreed response to these issues as set out in Appendix 2 of the report;
- AGREED** to authorise officers to undertake the statutory and other procedures required to submit the Plan to Scottish Ministers and to progress the Plan through its examination up to but excluding the Plan's adoption; and
- AGREED** to authorise the Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure, Environment & Economy, in consultation with the Chair of this Committee, to make any necessary Habitats Regulations Appraisal, factual or other non-material changes to Appendix 1 of the report prior to its submission to Scottish Government.

## 9. Developer Contributions Tabhartasan Luchd-leasachaidh

There had been circulated Report No. ECI/06/2023 dated December 2022 by the Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure, Environment and Economy.

During discussion, Members raised the following main points:-

- there were challenges associated with the Council's Capital Programme, mainly due to prices for goods and materials increasing in line with inflation, yet the same inflationary increases could not be applied to developer contributions. That being the case, it was questioned how the Council was ever going to be able to fund the schools needed in the city of Inverness, and at what point would it be necessary to think about not granting planning permission for new housing developments because it was unaffordable to build the infrastructure and schools needed. Reference was made to the issues affecting existing Inverness schools in terms of overcrowding, increasing numbers of modular units and temporary classrooms, and lack of dining and toilet capacity, and feedback was sought, and provided, on the issues raised;
- developers built houses but developer contributions helped the Council to build communities. The review of developer contributions was welcomed and it was hoped it would lead to more realistic contributions going forward and an increased dialogue with developers;

- it was welcomed that it was proposed to increase communication and closer working with community groups and it was hoped this would result in access to a wider range of community facilities that were more attuned to local needs and aspirations; and
- clarification was sought, and provided, as to whether developer contributions to roads infrastructure and public transport were also under review.

The Committee:-

- NOTED** the findings of the benchmarking review of developer contributions in Highland at section 4 and Appendix 1 of the report;
- AGREED** the protocol for identifying developer contributions at Appendix 2 of the report;
- AGREED** the Terms of Reference for the Developer Contributions Action Group at Appendix 3 of the report;
- AGREED** the steps to coordinate infrastructure delivery through the Developer Contributions Action Group and the Capital Programme Board; and
- AGREED** the full list of proposed actions and next steps in Section 6 of the report.

#### **10. Local Visitor Levy – Current Progress and Next Steps Cis Luchd-tadhail Ionadail – Adhartas Làithreach agus Ath Cheumannan**

**Declaration of Interest: Mr M Green declared an interest in this as an owner of a holiday rental property and, in accordance with paragraph 5.6 of the revised Code of Conduct, they left the meeting for this item.**

**Transparency Statement: Mr H Morrison made a Transparency Statement in respect of this item as a hotelier. However, having applied the objective test, he did not consider that he had an interest to declare.**

There had been circulated Report No. ECI/07/2023 dated 9 January 2023 by the Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure, Environment and Economy.

The Chair emphasised that the report was about the legislative process for the Local Visitor Levy Bill (the Bill), not the merits or otherwise of introducing a Local Visitor Levy in Highland.

During discussion, Members raised the following main points:-

- one of the areas missing, from a strategic perspective, was the methodology by which a visitor levy, if introduced, would be collected and accounted for and it was suggested officers at CoSLA needed to consider that as well as what any proceeds might be spent on or ringfenced for. Information was sought as to what could be done to feed in in that regard;
- whilst the principle of a visitor levy was acceptable, a lot of discussion needed to take place at Ward and Area Committee level;
- Skye was one of the top destinations for tourists in Scotland and many people in the tourist industry were concerned as to how a visitor levy would

- impact on their business. Like the short-term let licences that many businesses now had to apply for, it was seen as another burden to be faced;
- there was not a lot of time to submit comments and observations before the Bill went through the final process and it was queried how it could be ensured that the Act would allow some flexibility to suit the businesses of Highland, and Skye and Raasay in particular. It was necessary to get some information out to businesses as to what the effects would be in 2026 and reassurance was sought as to the envisioned way forward;
  - as well as roads and car parks, tourists needed buses, young people with employability skills to work in the industry, cultural events, access to healthcare and active travel opportunities and it was hoped there would be as much flexibility as possible when it came to allocating the funds generated by a visitor levy and that the local authority and local areas would have a say in what the funds contributed to; and
  - whilst it was recognised that the implementation of a visitor levy would call on resources, the prospect of between £5m and £10m being generated annually and reinvested to enhance the visitor experience in Highland was to be welcomed and Members looked forward to future reports as matters progressed.

The Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the legislative process for the Local Visitor Levy Bill, the likely timescales for its passage through Parliament and implications for its introduction in Highland; and
- ii. **AGREED** the Council's proposed next steps, which included an offer to provide verbal and written evidence to Parliamentary Committee(s).

#### 11. Free Bus Travel for Persons Aged Under 22 Siubhal Bus An-asgaidh Dhaibhsan Fo Aois 22

There had been circulated Report No. ECI/08/2023 dated 9 January 2023 by the Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure, Environment and Economy.

During discussion, Members raised the following main points:-

- officers were thanked for the timely report and the hard work that went into it and for promoting the scheme;
- in Highland the uptake of under 22s using the scheme was lower than the national average. In 2022 the uptake had risen from 28% in June to 41% in November. Members hoped this trend would continue;
- it was felt that the Council should engage with bus operator Stagecoach in an effort to increase bus services in Highland to allow more uptake of this scheme;
- Members were encouraged to take opportunities such as at PTA (parent-teacher association) meetings and community groups to raise awareness and increase uptake; and
- Transform Scotland website was cited as a helpful source of promotion to encourage bus use. In this regard the existing hashtag was highlighted #lovemybus;

The Committee **NOTED**:-

- i. the actions already taken to promote the scheme; and
- ii. the further actions as described in the report.

**12. Electric Vehicle (EV) Infrastructure Network – Tariff Review  
Lìonra Bun-structair Charbadan Dealain – Ath-sgrùdadh Prìse**

**Transparency Statement: Ms S Fanet made a Transparency Statement in respect of this item as an owner of an electric vehicle. However, having applied the objective test, she did not consider that he had an interest to declare.**

There had been circulated Report No. ECI/09/2023 dated 20 January 2023 by the Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure, Environment and Economy.

Prior to the commencement of debate the Chair explained that it was proposed to amend recommendation iv to strengthen the governance structure arrangements whereby any variation of the existing rate (either up or down) would be authorised by the Executive Chief Officer Investment, Environment and Economy in consultation with the Chairs of the Economy and Infrastructure and Climate Change Committees on the basis of achieving full cost recovery.

During discussion, Members raised the following main points:-

- the Climate Change Committee had considered the price comparison between electric and traditionally powered vehicles and it was felt that the proposed tariff for journey chargers of 86p would be a step-change in the Council's approach to electrify transport. However, it was understood that this tariff had been reduced following discussions with Transport Scotland and this was to be welcomed;
- the report set out the difference of the cost of journeys between electric a petrol/diesel journey, as amended, and claimed electric powered journeys were cheaper but this was misleading;
- the proposed tariff would be the highest of any local authority in Scotland and it was important Highland Council was competitive in comparison with them;
- some of the risk assessments regarding Option 2 presented to the Climate Change Committee were missing from this report; and
- the Climate Change Committee had made a clear recommendation that this matter be referred back there for consideration, not to be determined at the Economy and Infrastructure Committee today, and this called into question the level of importance the Council assigned the Climate Change Committee.

Thereafter, Mr K Gowans, seconded by Mr I Brown, **MOVED** the recommendations as amended.

As an **AMENDMENT** Mr P Logue, seconded by Ms K Willis, moved that the Committee agrees to respect recommendation 8.iii of Highland Council's Climate Change Committee meeting of 3 November 2022 with the effect that this report be

brought to the next Climate Change Committee for its due consideration.

On a vote being taken, the **MOTION** received 8 votes and the **AMENDMENT** received 8 votes, with no abstentions, the votes having been cast as follows:-

### **For the Motion**

Mr I Brown, Mr M Cameron, Mr K Gowans, Mr M Green, Mr R Jones, Mr W MacKay, Mr H Morrison and Mr K Rosie

### **For the Amendment**

Mr C Aitkin, Mr M Baird, Mr A Christie, Mr P Logue, Ms J McEwan, Ms L Niven, Mr R Stewart and Ms K Willis.

There being an equality of votes, the Chair exercised his casting vote in favour of the **MOTION**, which was therefore carried.

### **Decision**

The Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** that Highland Council EV charge points currently had had a tariff in place since 1 June 2021;
- ii. **NOTED** the budget pressure the current tariff rate placed on the Council;
- iii. **NOTED** the business justification as laid out in the paper;
- iv. **NOTED** progress on the Pathfinder project in section 4.7 of the report, to investigate commercialisation options for the EV network;
- v. **APPROVED** a tariff increase based on the recommendation detailed in section 7 and within Appendix 1 of the report, as of 1 March 2023 in order to:-
  - alleviate existing revenue pressure and reflect increased operating costs;
  - ensure vital income to maintain low carbon transport connectivity assets for, and to, our city and rural communities;
  - provide resource to maintain management of EV Infrastructure (section 6.1 of the report); and
  - ensure charges remained in line with rising operational costs; and
  - **APPROVED** the governance for tariff review. Any variation of the existing rate (either up or down) must be authorised by the Executive Chief Officer – Infrastructure, Economy and Environment in consultation with the Chairs and Vice Chairs of the Economy and Infrastructure and Climate, Change Committees.

### **13. Active Travel Prioritisation and Funding Bids Prìomhachasan agus Tagraidhean Maoineachaidh Siubhail Ghnìomhach**

There had been circulated Report No. ECI/10/2023 dated 9 January 2023 by the Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure, Environment and Economy.

During discussion, Members raised the following main points:-

- in terms of promoting active travel, it was felt that Caithness did not have the sufficient infrastructure or bus services to offer people;
- assurance was sought that pedestrianisation of Queensgate, Union Street and Post Office Avenue did not go ahead, including any closing of Church Street, until full consultation had been undertaken with the business communities, Business Improvement Districts (BID) and the wider public of Inverness;
- the Drummond Road project requirement was questioned as 85% of pupils of this special school required full transportation assistance to get to and from the school;
- concern was raised regarding the Castle Road and Castle Street pedestrianisation projects especially as previous restrictions had been removed. In this regard these projects required much more consultation and scrutiny;
- it was requested that route 25 - Munlochry to Avoch be revised as Black Isle communities needed partnership with Highland Council to progress with this project;
- funding provided from the Scottish Government was welcomed to allow the Council to progress active travel projects;
- it was queried if the Policy would identify revenue funding to ensure routine maintenance could be carried out to new pathways or routes;
- assurance was provided that there would be as many briefings to Members as required for projects and that consultation would take place with the public, Members and local businesses; and
- Members amended the second recommendation to remove the word 'prioritisation' as full consultation had not yet taken place, and to add 'including the development of a clear and inclusive consultation strategy'.

The Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the evidence-led approach used to set out how to prioritise the delivery of Active Travel infrastructure across Highland; and
- ii. **AGREED** that officers proceed with the delivery of this network, following the processes explained in sections 5 and 6 of the report including the development of a clear and inclusive consultation strategy.

#### **14. Tree Management Strategy** **Ro-innleachd Stiùireadh Chraobh**

There had been circulated Report No. ECI/11/2023 dated 18 January 2023 by the Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure, Environment and Economy.

During discussion, Members raised the following main points:-

- whilst Members welcomed the report, it was felt that the report was superficial and light in terms of the Council being a 'good neighbour' and actively managing its tree stock - such as trees planted in inappropriate

- locations, potential storm damage risk to properties, overshadowing properties, root damage to grass lawns etc;
- it was suggested that the report be deferred until further consultation with a wider remit of Members had taken place;
  - it was felt that the Council had not undertaken routine maintenance of trees in the past;
  - Members also felt there should be more emphasis of mature tree preservation and allowance for leaving deadwood as part of the ecosystem within the tree management strategy as this would help the Council to meet its carbon net zero and biodiversity targets;
  - it was suggested that the report incorporate ways to utilise windblown trees rather than leave them to rot away;
  - it would be important to ensure that only appropriate tree specimens were planted moving forward and that the Council had adequate numbers of trained staff to implement the strategy;
  - advice on dealing with diseased trees should form part of the strategy; and
  - further information was requested regarding the Queens Green Canopy initiative.

The Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the contents of the updated Tree Management Strategy; and
- ii. **APPROVED** the Strategy and the policies contained within it; and
- iii. **AGREED** to bring the amended report to the next Economy and Infrastructure Committee following further consultation with Members regarding being good neighbours, detailing tree maintenance protocols and preservation measures for mature trees and dead wood.

**15. National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4) and the Highland Development Plan Scheme 2023**  
**Dealbhaidh Nàiseanta 4 agus Sgeama Plana Leasachaidh na Gàidhealtachd 2023**

There had been circulated Report No. ECI/12/2023 dated 6 January 2023 by the Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure, Environment and Economy.

During discussion, Members raised the following main points:-

- Members emphasised this report was a live document that would be reviewed annually;
- it was queried how the Council apply the Policy to planning decision making, especially in cases where local communities had provided specific input after consultation;
- clarification was sought, and provided, on how community planning partners engagement levels were monitored; and
- in terms of the Local Place Plans, it was queried what would happen if communities did not have the capacity to develop a plan.

The Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the summary of NPF4 in section 5 of the report, in particular its status, now and once adopted and published, as part of the Development Plan for decision making;
- ii. **NOTED** the high-level mapping of NPF4 policies against planning policy in Highland's Local Development Plans as outlined in Appendix 1 of the report and that this would form the basis for further work;
- iii. **AGREED** the Council's approach to carrying out new duties and functions set out for Development Planning as outlined in Section 6 of the report, including a proposed consultation on how the Council communicated and consulted upon development plans;
- iv. **AGREED** the Development Plan Scheme/Newsletter at Appendix 2 of the report which included the Participation Statement and the invitation to prepare Local Place Plans; and
- v. **NOTED** that the full implications of the new Development Plan regulations, and the more detailed steps for preparing a new Highland Local Development Plan, would be reported to Committee as soon as practicable.

**16. Bus Partnership Fund (BPF) and Bus Service Improvement Partnership (BSIP) Update**  
**Cunntas às Ùr mu Mhaoin Com-pàirteachas Bus agus Com-pàirteachas Leasachaidh Seirbheis Bus**

**Transparency Statement: Mr A Christie made a Transparency Statement in respect of this item as a Non-executive director of NHS Highland. However, having applied the objective test, he did not consider that he had an interest to declare.**

There had been circulated Report No. ECI/13/2023 dated 19 December 2022 by the Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure, Environment and Economy.

During discussion, Members raised the following main points:-

- Members welcomed the ongoing hard work in Lochaber regarding the two new bus link projects and the Raigmore Bus Gate project;
- it was advised that public consultation for 'Your views on Public Transport in Lochaber' was available online with a deadline of 6 February 2023; and
- it was confirmed that the consultation meeting held at the Spectrum Centre regarding the Millburn Corridor was extremely well attended. Compliments and positive feedback had been expressed by BID and the public. In this regard Members thanked Officers for their hard work.

The Committee **NOTED**:-

- i. the work carried out to date under the BPF Projects; and
- ii. that officers would progress with work on a draft BSIP, in consultation with the Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure, Environment & Economy, in

consultation with the Chair and Vice Chair and the Economy and Infrastructure Committee spokesperson for the Opposition Group as agreed at the meeting of the Economy and Infrastructure Committee of 5 May 2021 where it had been agreed to delegate powers to this group.

**17. Highland Council Water Safety Policy**  
**Poileasaidh Sàbhailteachd Uisge Chomhairle na Gàidhealtachd**

**Transparency Statement: Mr A Christie made a Transparency Statement in respect of this item as a Non-executive director of NHS Highland. However, having applied the objective test, he did not consider that he had an interest to declare.**

There had been circulated Report No. ECI/14/2023 dated 10 January 2023 by the Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure, Environment and Economy.

The Committee **AGREED** the Policy, acknowledged the ongoing work that was taking place and supported the course of action proposed around having a dedicated page on Highland Council's website to cover water safety issues

**18. UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF)**  
**Maoin Soirbheachas Co-roinnte na RA**

There had been circulated Report No. ECI/15/2023 dated 18 January 2023 by the Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure, Environment and Economy.

During discussion, Members raised the following main points:-

- a list of geographical areas at the top of the risk register was requested as these would require to be closely monitored. In this regard it was also queried what project delivery mechanism was in place to ensure adequate progress and success;
- information was sought, and provided, regarding the Council's contribution of funds towards the Lochaber UCI Mountain Bike World Cup; and
- in order to update community councils, it was queried if a timeline for commencing had been agreed.

The Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the successful approval of the UKSPF Investment Plan submitted and formal allocation of funding from the UK Government for 2022/23 and indicative allocations for 2023/24 and 2024/25;
- ii. **AGREED** the UKSPF Delivery Plan as set out in Appendix 1 of the report, including the 2022/23 prioritised spend and decision-making structures; and
- iii. **AGREED** that the City Region Deal Member Monitoring Group remit be extended to include the UKSPF and that UKSPF Programme Delivery Reports be presented to the Economy and Infrastructure Committee on a six-monthly basis.

**19. Species Champion Initiative  
Iomairt Curaidh nan Gnèithean**

There had been circulated Report No. ECI/16/2023 dated 14 December 2022 by the Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure, Environment and Economy.

The Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the contents of the report; and
- ii. **APPROVED** the list of Species Champions with the following additions:- Mr M Baird – Honey Bee; Ms S Fanet – Common Eel Grass; Mr M Green – Solitary Bee; Mr R MacKintosh – Red Grouse; Ms J McEwan – Hedgehog; Ms L Niven – Killer Whale.

**20. Appointments to Boards and Other Bodies  
Cur an Dreuchd gu Bùird agus Buidhnean Eile**

The Committee **AGREED** the following:-

- Harbours Management Board – Mr H Morrison to replace Ms S Atkin
- Highland Strategic Local Advisory Group of the Community Regeneration Fund - Mr R Jones to replace Mr I Brown.

**21. Minutes  
Geàrr-chunntas**

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

- i. North PAC – 18 October 2022;
- ii. South PAC – 1 November 2022;

and, **APPROVED** the following Minutes:-

- iii. Harbours Management Board - 9 December 2022;
- iv. City Region Deal Monitoring Group - 18 January 2023.

**22. Exclusion of the Public  
Às-dùnadh a' Phobaill**

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 items on the grounds that they involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Part 1 of Schedule 7A of the Act, the relevant paragraphs being shown in the reports.

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

There had been circulated to Members only Report No. ECI/17/2023 dated 14 December 2022 by the Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure, Environment and Economy.

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

**24. Land and Property**  
**Fearann agus Cuid-seilbhe**

There had been circulated to Members only Report No. ECI/18/2023 dated 10 January 2023 by the Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure, Environment and Economy.

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

The meeting ended at 2.45 pm

## The Highland Council

Minutes of Meeting of the **Badenoch and Strathspey Area Committee** held in the Courtroom, Grantown Courthouse, Grantown-on-Spey/remotely on Monday 6 February 2023 at 10.30 am.

### Present:

Mrs M Cockburn  
Mr R Jones

Mr B Lobban

### In attendance:

Mr L Hannah, Ward Manager, Communities and Place  
Mr R Porteous, Roads Operations Manager, Infrastructure, Environment and Economy  
Mr R MacLeod, Service Lead Housing Investment/Building Maintenance, Housing & Property  
Ms F MacBain, Senior Committee Officer, Performance and Governance  
Ms R Ross, Committee Officer, Performance and Governance

### Also in attendance:

Inspector C Johnstone, Area Commander, Police Scotland  
Mr C Simpson, Head of Visitor Services & Active Travel, Cairngorms National Park  
Mr M Ferguson, Director of Planning & Place, Cairngorms National Park

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

**Mr B Lobban in the Chair items 1 – 3, Mr R Jones in the Chair items 4-10**

## BUSINESS

### 1. Apologies for Absence Leisgeulan

Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of Mr J Bruce.

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

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

Item 8 (in relation to Cairngorm Mountain Trust) – Mr B Lobban  
Item 8 (in relation to Kingussie Camanachd Club) – Mr R Jones

### 3. Appointment of Chair and Vice Chair Suidheachadh Dreuchd Chathraiche agus Iar-Chathraiche

It had been agreed at the meeting held on 29 August 2022, that the Mr Lobban would be Chair for a limited period of time and thereafter, Mr R Jones would take over the position.

The Committee **NOTED** that Mr Jones would take over as Chair with immediate effect.

#### 4. **Police Area Performance Report** **Poileas – Geàrr-chunntas air Coileanadh Sgìreil**

There had been circulated Report No BSAC/01/23 by the Area Commander.

During discussion, the following main points were raised:-

- information was sought and provided on the demographic of people convicted of drink and drug driving offences;
- it was questioned whether more education was needed to raise awareness of the problem of driving under the influence of prescription drugs;
- concern was expressed at the prevalence of motor bikes and scramblers in Grantown Woods, on the Speyside Way and on the Dava Way, some of which appeared to have lessened and others would be investigated;
- it was queried whether the reduction in number of offences was down to better behaviour or lack of resources for detection;
- it was queried whether difficulty to gaining intelligence about who was involved in drugs issues had led to the decrease in drug related offenses recorded;
- it was commented that there was less community policing than communities would like and that local people not knowing their local police officers could make it more difficult to gather intelligence;
- in response to a request, Inspector Johnstone offered to report back on whether the post of Harm Prevention Officer had been extended;
- information was sought and provided on bike thefts and thefts from bike shops, which was thought had been zero in the previous 6 months;
- in response to a question about the increased number of sexual crimes it was suggested this might be in part due to national campaigns to make it easier for victims to report offences; and
- the police were thanked for their support during the Camanachd Cup and Final Fling.

The Committee **NOTED** the progress made against the objectives set within the Highland Local Policing Plan 2020 – 2023 Year 2, attached as Annex A to the report, for the period covering 1 April 2021 to 31 March 2022.

#### 5. **Cairngorms 2030 (Heritage Horizons) Projects** **Pròiseactan (Heritage Horizons) a' Mhonaidh Ruaidh 2030**

There was a presentation given by the Head of Visitor Services and Active Travel, Cairngorms National Park Authority.

During discussion, the following main points were raised:-

- it was suggested that since the project would be making use of council infrastructure, greater collaboration with Members would be preferable. Definition of roles and responsibilities in relation to joint working was key;
- it was clarified that no plans had yet been finalised and that communities and Community Councils had been involved to gather information on what the public would like to see from the project. The development stage would be starting in the following weeks and efforts would be made to involve Members in this;
- it was suggested that consideration be given to Member representation on the wider strategic transport group for the Park;

- the importance of providing affordable and accessible activities for locals and visitors was emphasised; and
- the involvement of schools in the project was welcomed.

The Committee:-

- NOTED** the presentation; and
- AGREED** a meeting be arranged between the CNPA and Council Officers, to identify opportunities for partnership working and collaboration between CNPA and HC in respect of Active Travel projects in Badenoch & Strathspey

## 6. **Area Roads Capital Programme 2023/24** **Prògram Calpa Rathaidean Sgìreil 2023/24**

There had been circulated Report No BSAC/02/23 by the Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure, Environment & Economy.

During discussion, the following main points were raised:-

- the differences between inlay, overlay and surface dressing were explained;
- it was clarified that a contingency budget would be decided once the final budget allocation was known;
- in response to a question about filling potholes, it was clarified that temporary repairs were often needed in the winter due to weather conditions; and
- it was clarified that there was one dedicated road inspector shared between Nairn and Badenoch and Strathspey.

The Committee:

- APPROVED** the proposed 2023/24 Area Roads Capital Programme for Badenoch and Strathspey Area; and
- AGREED** to provide a Frequently Asked Questions document to Members to help them explain road maintenance processes to members of the public.

## 7. **Housing Capital Programme 2023-27** **Prògram Calpa Taigheadais 2023-27**

There had been circulated Report No BSAC/03/23 by the Executive Chief Officer Housing and Property.

In response to a comment about providing education and guidance for the most vulnerable tenants, it was confirmed that that Ally Energy had been engaged to provide tenants with guidance about energy and bills.

The Committee:-

- NOTED** the update on the 2022-23 Badenoch and Strathspey HRA Capital Programme at section 5 of the report;
- NOTED** the resources available to Badenoch and Strathspey at 6.7;

- iii. **AGREED** the proposed investment priorities in the HRA Capital Programme for Badenoch and Strathspey 2023-27 as set out in Appendix 1; and
- iv. **NOTED** that updates on the Housing Revenue Account Capital Programme would continue to be provided through ward briefings and at future Local Committees as requested by local Members, in addition to reporting to Housing and Property Committee.

**8. Badenoch & Strathspey Repurposing COVID-19 Fund and Place Based Investment Fund Proposals**  
**Maoin Ath-adhbharachaidh COVID-19 Bhàideanach is Shrath Spè agus Molaidhean Maoin Tasgaidh Stèidhichte air Àite**

**Declarations of Interest: Mr B Lobban declared an interest as a Director of Cairngorm Mountain Trust and Mr R Jones declared an interest as a committee member for Kingussie Camanachd Club. They left the meeting during the discussion of these applications.**

There had been circulated Report No BSAC/04/23 by the Executive Chief Officer Communities and Place.

- Repurposed COVID Funds - Cairngorm Mountain Trust - Badenoch & Strathspey School Skiing 2023 - £4,068

As Councillor Lobban had declared an interest and left the meeting, the meeting was inquorate and no decision could be taken.

- Place Based Investment Funds - Kingussie Camanachd Club - Market Stance Playing Field Upgrade Phase 2 - £10,000

As Councillor Jones had declared an interest and left the meeting, the meeting was inquorate and no decision could be taken.

The Committee:-

**AGREED** the repurposing of the COVID-19 fund as follows:-

- i. Laggan Forest Trust - Cycling Participation Programme Newtonmore, Kingussie & Alvie Primary School Children - £2,500;
- ii. Voluntary Action in Badenoch & Strathspey (VABS) – Volunteering Fayre - £2,790; and
- iii. Cairngorms Orchestra – COVID resilience - £1,956.

**AGREED** the place based funding allocations as follows:-

- iv. Am Fasgadh Regeneration Company - Indian Contingent Force K6 Memorial Phase 2 - £14,200
- v. Aviemore & Glenmore Community Trust (AGCT) – Aviemore Ice rink Development - £4,968; and
- vi. Abernethy Bowling Club - Nethy Bridge Bowling Green - £6,000 with the option of an additional £2,000 if the Club's application for funding from the Sports Council was unsuccessful.

**AGREED** that the following applications be deferred to a special meeting of the Committee on a date to be confirmed:-

- vii. Place Based Investment Funds  
Kingussie Camanachd Club - Market Stance Playing Field Upgrade  
Phase 2 - £10,000; and
- viii. Repurposed COVID Funds  
Cairngorm Mountain Trust - Badenoch & Strathspey School Skiing  
2023 - £4,068

**9. Grantown on Spey Common Good Fund –General Update and Proposed Budget 2023/24**  
**Maoin Math Coitcheann Bhaile nan Granndach – Cunntas Coitcheann às Ùr agus Buidseat ga Mholadh airson 2023/24**

There had been circulated Report No BSAC/05/23 by the Executive Chief Officer Communities and Place.

In response to a suggestion that a mandatory payment for pitch/stall holders using the Common Good land at Grantown Square would be preferable to an 'Invitation to pay' scheme, it was clarified that a change of use would be needed in order to do this.

The Committee **AGREED**:-

- i. the Grantown on Spey Common Good Fund Statement of Accounts for 2021/22 (Appendix 1);
- ii. the 'Invitation to Pay' short term ground let proposals in respect of Grantown Square for a trial period of 12 months (Appendix 2);
- iii. the Grantown on Spey Common Good Fund budget for 2023/24 detailed within the report (Appendix 3); and
- iv. to begin the statutory consultation process for a change of use of Common Good Fund land at Grantown Square, on the introduction of mandatory charges in respect of short term lets for pitch/stall holders.

**10. Minutes**  
**Geàrr-chunntas**

There had been circulated and **NOTED** Minutes of Meeting of the Badenoch and Strathspey Area Committee held on 7 November 2022 which were approved by the Council on 8 December 2022.

The meeting ended at 12.45pm.

**The Highland Council  
Caithness Committee**

**Minutes of Meeting of the Caithness Committee held REMOTELY on Monday 6  
February 2023 at 10.00am.**

**Present:**

Mr R Bremner  
Mr R Gunn  
Mr A Jarvie  
Mr W Mackay

Ms J McEwan  
Mr M Reiss  
Mr K Rosie

**Officials in attendance:**

Ms H Ross, Senior Ward Manager, Communities and Place  
Mr M Sutherland, Ward Manager, Communities and Place  
Ms J Sutherland, Roads Operations Manager, Infrastructure, Environment and  
Economy  
Ms S Lamb, Project Officer (Community Regeneration), Infrastructure, Environment  
and Economy  
Ms D Swanson, Project Officer (Wick PSO), Infrastructure, Environment and Economy  
Mr J Henderson, Policy Assistant, Housing & Property  
Ms M Ross, Principal Housing Officer, Housing & Property  
Ms S Murdoch, Common Good Fund Officer, Performance and Governance  
Ms J Maclennan, Principal Administrator, Performance and Governance

**Also in attendance:**

Inspector S Mezals, Police Scotland  
Sergeant R Ross, Police Scotland  
Station Commander P Farrell, Scottish Fire and Rescue Service  
Mr P Faccenda, Focus North

**Mr R Gunn in the Chair**

**1. Apologies for Absence  
Leisgeulan**

An apology for absence was intimated on behalf of Mr S Mackie.

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

Items 6 & 9: Mr R Bremner (Transparency Statements)  
Item 7: Mr K Rosie and Mr M Reiss (Declarations of Interest)

**3. Minutes  
Geàrr-chunntas**

There was circulated for noting Minutes of the Caithness Committee held on 22 August 2022, which were approved by the Council on 22 September 2022.

#### 4. **Police – Area Performance Summary** **Poileas – Geàrr-chunntas air Coileanadh Sgìreil**

There had been circulated Report No CC/01/23 by the North Area Commander.

In discussion, Members raised the following main points:-

- Police Scotland were thanked for the excellent work undertaken by officers in Caithness and the overall reduction in crime in the area was welcomed;
- clarification was sought and provided that the Police were not aware of any increase in road traffic collisions in Caithness due to the condition of the roads;
- concern at the difficulties experienced in contacting the Service by telephone. It was confirmed any specific issues Members had would be investigated. Reference was also made to the 'contact us' section on Police Scotland's website as an additional means of reporting issues;
- the drain on Police resources due to the increase in the number of 'concern for persons' calls and having to undertake duties that were not within their remit;
- concern at continuing issues with driver behaviour in the area and an update was sought and provided on the ongoing action to reduce the number of road traffic offences;
- the contribution of local Police officers to the work of the Caithness Drug and Alcohol Partnership was acknowledged. and it was hoped the current level of Police support would continue to help deliver effective education and prevention measures;
- the need to review staffing levels and opening hours at Police stations in Caithness, particularly in towns. It was confirmed there was an ongoing national review of local command areas and further information would be sought on the opportunity for Members to feed into the review. Members comments would also be fed back to the Service's Management Team;
- it would be helpful for the Police to attend community council meetings in the area in person while acknowledging the pressures the Service was under in terms of its resources; and
- a continued effective relationship in terms of Police Scotland's attendance at the quarterly meetings of the Association of Caithness Community Councils provided a good compromise.

The Committee **NOTED** the progress made against the objectives set within the Highland Local Policing Plan 2020-2023 Year 2, attached as Annex A to this report, for the period covering 01 April 2021 - 31 December 2021.

#### 5. **Scottish Fire and Rescue Local Performance Report** **Aithisg Dèanadais Ionadail Seirbheis Smàlaidh is Teasairginn na h-Alba**

There had been circulated Report No CC/02/23 by the Local Senior Officer for Highland.

In discussion, Members raised the following main points:-

- the Committee's condolences be conveyed to the family and colleagues of Scottish Fire and Rescue Service's firefighter Barry Martin. His loss served as a tragic reminder of the dangers firefighters faced in the course of their duties;

- the Service be thanked for all the excellent work undertaken in Caithness;
- the positive update on recruitment, staffing levels and availability at Thurso was encouraging and was welcomed; and
- an update was sought and provided on the uptake in relation to the interlinked fire alarms in the area and the advice and assistance the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service could provide to the public.

The Committee **NOTED** the Area Performance Report.

## 6. **Focus North Partnership - Presentation** **Com-pàirteachas Fòcas a' Chinn a Tuath – Taisbeanadh**

**Mr R Bremner made a Transparency Statement in respect of this item in his capacity as Chair of the Focus North Partnership and Chair of the Wick John O'Groats Airport Consultative Committee. However, having applied the objective test, he did not consider that he had an interest to declare.**

There was a short presentation by Peter Faccenda, Focus North Partnership Manager. A paper was circulated in connection with this item.

In discussion, Members raised the following main points:-

- the review and rebranding of the Focus North Partnership and the opportunities highlighted in the presentation be endorsed as being a positive change of direction and approach;
- the scale and level of imminent development in the area was exciting and added validity to the opportunity for Caithness to be a leader in the transformation to a low carbon and circular economy;
- there was an opportunity to define and develop what was meant by community benefit and improve the opportunities and leverage in relation to renewable energies including through the changes to the National Planning Framework;
- the importance of improving and expanding relationships with external stakeholders;
- confirmation was sought and provided that Partnership was focused on the opportunities through the onshore wind sector. It was suggested that a piece of work was required to better understand that sector and the opportunities to attract significant investment and create employment;
- confirmation was sought that the Partnership was connected into Opportunity Cromarty Firth and the significant opportunities and benefits to the area this would bring; and
- reference to the fluidity of the position and ongoing work in relation to the Wick Public Service Obligation and the need for a pragmatic approach to be taken.

The Committee:

- NOTED** the recent review and rebranding of the Focus North Partnership; and
- AGREED** to support the Focus North Masterplan and structure, and the Council's role in the Partnership

## 7. Community Regeneration Funding – Assessment of Applications Maoineachadh Ath-nuadhachadh Coimhearsnachd – Measadh Iarrtasan

### Declaration of Interest:-

Mr K Rosie declared an interest in part of this item as a member of Reay Golf Club. He took no part in the discussion or determination of the application for funding submitted by Reay Golf Club.

Mr M Reiss declared an interest in part of this item as a Director of the Caithness Mental Health Support Group. He took no part in the discussion or determination of the application for funding submitted by the Caithness Mental Health Support Group.

There had been circulated Report No CC/03/23 by the Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure, Environment and Economy.

A verbal update was provided to Members in relation to project HCCF221 – Wick Toilets for an uplift of funding due to cost increases creating a shortfall in the funds available to deliver the project. Thereafter, it was confirmed that the total value of grant requests was £565,612 and the total available funding was £552,010.

During discussion, it was confirmed that applicants were asked for costs to be based on recent accurate quotes and this was assessed under the value for money criteria. Officers and Members were commended on the work and equitable approach being taken in relation to the applications and the relevant criteria. The variety of applications received was highlighted and the range of groups involved commended on the amount of work to be undertaken. It was suggested that applicants who may be unsuccessful be encouraged to re-apply to the next round of funding with more supporting evidence.

Following discussion on each application, the Committee:-

- i **APPROVED** all of the applications, with the exception of Projects 1034 (Thurso Community Cafe) and 1073 (Reay Golf Club), subject to conditions; and
- ii **AGREED** the remaining balance of area funds be allocated as an uplift of funding to project HCCF221 – Wick Toilets.

## 8. Area Roads Capital Programme 2023/24 Prògram Calpa Rathaidean Sgìreil 2023/24

There had been circulated Report No CC/04/23 by the Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure, Environment and Economy.

In discussion, Members raised the following main points:-

- the report set out a planned maintenance list and not all of the roads listed required maintenance at this time. Due to freeze/thaw conditions some roads had become a higher priority;
- clarification was sought and provided that day to day routine cyclical maintenance such as pot hole repairs was carried out under the revenue budget. Larger structural repairs such as such as overlay, inlay and surface dressing were carried out under the capital budget;

- an explanation was sought and provided that the priority list of schemes within the Capital Programme was essentially informed through a regular inspection regime by engineers, the Council's roads hierarchy and Road Condition Survey;
- the key issue was that the available capital funding for the repair and maintenance of roads in Caithness was inadequate. Fundamental change and more political leadership was required within the Council to address this issue;
- the above included the need for significant redesign in terms of how funding was spent to make a meaningful difference to roads in the area in line with the Council's priorities and the need for focused lobbying activity with both the UK and Scottish Governments;
- it was suggested the actual number of roads that required repair was more extensive than those detailed in the report and the costs significantly higher than reported.
- a significant number of those projects which could be funded this year were not on last year's Programme. This indicated the roads were deteriorating much faster than they could be repaired.;
- an update was sought and provided on the current position with recruitment within the Roads Team in Caithness on the ongoing activity being undertaken to fill vacancies;
- clarification was sought and provided that pot hole repairs were informed by roads inspections, Member and public reporting and in some cases pot hole repair works was reactionary;
- there were many roads in Wick that were not fit for purpose resulting in road safety concerns with delays in the repair of potholes;
- an update was sought and provided on the recent deployment of the Pothole Pro and hot-box in Caithness and on the challenges of undertaking repairs in poor weather conditions in the winter months;
- the Area Roads Manager and her staff be commended on the production of the priority list of schemes within the funding available and looking forward to the works being carried out. The Roads Team also be commended on the excellent work undertaken in the area;
- it was generally accepted the position with roads was due to a historic lack of investment including in equipment and machinery. There was a need to focus on finding solutions including through the redesign of services;
- as part of the roads redesign process and to improve communication, it was planned to post fact sheets and more information on roads on the Council's website;
- the significant increase in HGVs on minor roads due to large scale developments such onshore wind farms had significantly impacted on Caithness roads. It should be condition of planning permission that the road was upgraded prior to development commencing; and
- concern at the direction of travel for roads in Caithness if additional funding was not forthcoming. The Council should therefore write to the Scottish Government highlighting the urgent need for additional capital roads investment, particularly in Caithness.

Thereafter, and following further discussion the Committee:-

- i **APPROVED** the proposed prioritised Area Roads Capital Programme for Caithness Area; and

- \* ii recognising the neutrality of the Council Leader, **AGREED to RECOMMEND** that the Council write to the Scottish Government highlighting the urgent need for additional Highland capital roads investment, but particularly in Caithness.

## 9. Wick Public Services Obligation Comain Seirbheisean Poblach Inbhir Ùige

**Mr R Bremner made a Transparency Statement in respect of this item in his capacity as a Chair of the Wick John O’Groats Airport Consultative Committee. However, having applied the objective test, he did not consider that he had an interest to declare.**

There had been circulated Report No CC/05/23 by the Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure, Environment and Economy.

In discussion, Members raised the following main points:-

- the importance of the Council and partners giving assurances to the public that they were doing all they possibly could to help maintain the Public Services Obligation (PSO). Partners continued to strive to ensure prices and the pricing model were not preclusive with any issues arising being highlighted to Eastern Airways;
- the need to be pragmatic and realistic in terms of ensuring the PSO was sustainable and to review all the options for flights and retain a positive outlook. If the services were not used by businesses and the public they could be lost;
- confirmation was sought and provided that a specific issue relating to the price of an advance booking in October 2023 would be investigated;
- the drop in the return of business travel following the pandemic was not unexpected given the shift to remote hybrid working;
- the opportunities to undertake more marketing of air services with a focus on the availability of easy access to the leisure market in Aberdeen, for example through leaflet drops. It was confirmed that the areas that would be promoted over the next few months were around leisure including day/weekend trips, visiting friends and relatives and onward travel. Any further suggestions from Members on this issue would be welcome.

The Committee **NOTED** the report.

## 10. HRA Capital Programme 2022-23 Update and 2023-27 Programme Fios às Ur mu Phrògram Calpa Cunntas Teachd A-steach Taigheadais 2022-23 agus Prògram 2023-27

There had been circulated Report No CC/06/23 by the Executive Chief Officer Housing and Property.

In discussion, Members raised the following main points:-

- officers be thanked for the report and on the consultation undertaken with Members in relation to the Programme, recognising the constraints on the budget;

- the key priority identified within the Programme of investing in energy efficiency works in the housing stock be welcomed; and
- further discussion be held at the monthly housing meetings between Members and officers in relation to housing maintenance and the flexibility for using the environmental budget to reflect tenants' priorities. In addition, and in light of the current cost of living crisis, consideration be given to further consultation being undertaken with tenants to determine whether priorities had changed.

The Committee:-

- NOTED** the update on the 2022-23 Caithness HRA Capital Programme at section 5 of the report;
- NOTED** the resources available to Caithness at paragraph 6.7 of the report;
- AGREED** the proposed investment priorities in the HRA Capital Programme for Caithness 2023-27 as set out in Appendix 1 to the report; and
- NOTED** that updates on the Housing Revenue Account Capital Programme would continue to be provided through ward briefings and at future Local Committees as requested by local Members, in addition to reporting to Housing and Property Committee.

**11. Wick Common Good Fund Annual Report 2021/22, Quarter 3 Monitoring Statement 2022/23 and Proposed Budget 2023/24  
Maoin Math Coitcheann Inbhir Ùige**

There had been circulated Report No CC/07/23 by the Executive Chief Officer Communities and Place.

In discussion, Members raised the following main points:-

- the need for further discussions on the opportunities to maximise income from all Common Good assets for the benefit of the Fund including invitation to pay car parks and Wick Town Hall and to develop a detailed programme in this regard;
- it should be clarified that any income generated from the above assets was allocated directly to the Common Good Fund in the first instance and thereafter any liabilities applied; and
- all those involved be commended on the re-establishment of the Wick Common Good Fund.

The Committee:-

- NOTED** the Wick Common Good Fund Annual Report and Accounts for 2021/22;
- NOTED** the position of the Wick Common Good Fund, as shown in the Q3 2022/23 monitoring statement against budget; and
- AGREED** the position of the Wick Common Good Fund, as shown in the Q3 2022/23 monitoring statement against budget;

**12. Housing Revenue Account: Garage Rents 2023/2024**

There had been circulated Report No CC/08/23 by the Executive Chief Officer Housing and Property.

In discussion, Members raised the following main points:-

- garages in many areas of Caithness were in a poor state of repair and there was a high level of voids and therefore the need for additional significant investment the garage estate in in the area;
- a 7% rent increase in garage rents be approved on the basis this was both reasonable and affordable;
- noting that a review of garages and garage sites was being undertaken by the Housing Development Team with all options being considered including demolition of garages if they were beyond economic repair; and
- the opportunity to review the approach to garage rent increases next year to include consultation with tenants and consideration of the economic factors.

The Committee **AGREED** that a 7% rent increase to apply to Caithness Garages and Garage Sites.

**The meeting ended at 3.40pm.**

## The Highland Council

Minutes of Meeting of the **Health, Social Care and Wellbeing Committee** held in the **Council Chamber, Glenurquhart Road, Inverness** on Wednesday 9 November 2022 at 10.30am.

### Present:

Mr C Aitken (remote)	Mrs I Mackenzie
Dr C Birt	Mrs A MacLean
Mrs M Cockburn	Ms K MacLean
Mr D Fraser	Mr T MacLennan
Mr R Gunn	Mrs M Paterson
Mrs B Jarvie	Ms M Reid
Ms L Johnston	Mrs T Robertson
Mr S Kennedy	Mrs L Saggars
Ms L Kraft	

### Non Members also present:

Mr M Baird (remote)	Mr J McGillivray (remote)
Mr B Boyd (remote)	Mr P Oldham (remote)
Ms S Fanet (remote)	Mr K Rosie (remote)
Ms J McEwan (remote)	

### Also in Attendance (non-voting members):

Dr T Allison, Director of Public Health, NHS Highland  
 Ms L Bussell, Director of Nursing, NHS Highland  
 Ms J Douglas, Care and Learning Alliance

### Participating Officials:

Ms F Duncan, Executive Chief Officer Health and Social Care and Chief Social Work Officer  
 Ms F Malcolm, Head of Integration Adult Social Care, Health and Social Care  
 Mr I Kyle, Lead for Improvement and Performance, Health and Social Care  
 Ms J Park, Strategic Lead Child's Health  
 Ms M McIntyre, Head of Social Work  
 Ms J Hutchinson, Strategic Lead (Care and Support), Health and Social Care  
 Mrs L Dunn, Principal Administrator, Performance and Governance  
 Ms F MacBain, Senior Committee Officer, Performance and Governance

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

### Mr D Fraser in the Chair

#### Preliminaries

The Chair offered condolences on behalf of the Committee to the husband, family and friends of Jane Davey, Principal Solicitor, who had recently passed away following a road accident.

Louise Bussell was welcomed to her first meeting of the Committee in her new role as Nurse Director, NHS Highland.

**1. Apologies for Absence  
Leisgeulan**

There were none.

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

There were no Declarations of Interest and the Committee **NOTED** the following Transparency Statement:

Item 8 – Mr T MacLennan

**3. Service Achievements  
Coileanaidhean Seirbheis**

The Committee **NOTED** the following achievements:

- Butler Trust Awards – Jim Elder, Child Placement Officer
- Whole Family Welfare Fund – Kinship Carers Grant
- Home to Highland Care Experience Education Team - Boat Building Project
- Preceptorship Programme for School Nurses and Health Visitors

**4. Adult Social Care, Mental Health Officer Service and Criminal Justice Service  
Cùram Sòisealta Inbheach, Seirbheis Oifigear Slàinte Intinn agus Seirbheis Ceartas Eucorach**

A pre-recorded presentation was given by Gavin Sell, Head of Programmes (Adult Social Care) on Adult Social Care and Care Homes. Following this, a further presentation and verbal update was provided by the Executive Chief Officer Health and Social Care on Adult Social Care, the Mental Health Officer Service, and the Criminal Justice Service.

During discussion, the following issues were raised:

- the challenges of an ageing population had been forecast for decades and information was sought on plans to tackle the problems and rising costs. It was suggested efforts should be made to ensure the Scottish Government invested further in this age group, with particular emphasis on community based services. A summary was provided of the role of officers tasked with trying to increase community care for elderly and others, and this would be a key feature in the Strategic Plan;
- staff in the care sector were underpaid and under-valued, and should be given more training and career opportunities;
- consideration should be given to the creation of ‘age-friendly’ communities, and to improved cross-service and partnership working, including with the independent and third sector. This tied in with the importance of respite and day care, and the need to build infrastructure and facilities along with housing;
- local public transport was another key issue in keeping families close, although it was appreciated this was not an issue for this Committee;

- it was important the Council and NHS Highland were timely when paying independent care home invoices to ensure they did not exacerbate any cashflow issues during challenging financial times;
- for residents' wellbeing, it was important care homes were homely and interesting. The role of the Care Inspectorate in maintaining the required standards in care homes was summarised;
- it was noted that the average length of stay in a care home was 708 days which suggested residents were not recovering, however this might be due to people who remained in relatively good health being able to stay in their own homes for longer;
- workforce shortage for care at home was also a challenge;
- assurance was sought and provided that the third sector had a significant involvement in the work of the Highland Council – NHS Highland Joint Monitoring Committee;
- it was understood that a care home required around 40 beds to make it cost effective, which was challenging in remote and rural areas, especially for private care homes which were aiming to be profitable;
- reference was made to the Safe as Houses scheme which helped elderly and vulnerable people; and
- the joint work being undertaken to tackle the issues raised was welcomed.

The Committee **NOTED** the presentation and updates.

#### **5. Appointment to Adult Protection Committee Cur an Dreuchd gu Comataidh Dìon Inbheach**

- \* The Committee **AGREED** to appoint Mr B Boyd to serve on the Adult Protection Committee.

#### **6. Service and Partnership Reviews and Evaluations Ath-sgrùdaidhean agus Luachaidhean Seirbheis is Com-pàirteachais**

There had been circulated Report No HCW/**01**/23 by the Executive Chief Officer Health and Social Care.

During discussion, the following issues were raised:

- it was disappointing that the Care Inspectorate report on Services for Children and Young People at Risk of Harm in Highland gave an overall outcome of Adequate, and it was felt this required improvement, for which regular updates would be sought;
- information was sought and provided on a variety of issues in the report, including the following:
  - several reviews had taken place over the previous two years, including on Residential Childcare, after which a presentation had been given and assurance given to Members that a further opportunity to ask questions would be provided, but this had not yet happened;
  - other reviews included, in 2021, a review of Children's Services, and in 2022, a review of Services for Children and Young People at Risk of Harm. The importance of Member scrutiny and criticism following such reviews was emphasised;
  - reference was made to the variety of partners who played a key role in assisting with the delivery of services to communities and it was

- occasionally challenging to understand where responsibilities for specific issues lay;
- attention was drawn to the list of recommendations that were included in the review reports and it was queried how these were being monitored and reported, with particular reference to police reporting of young people missing from care settings;
  - it was queried whether reference in the report to ‘information sharing and collaborative decision making being effective at keeping children and young people safe when concerns were first raised’ related to the Community Planning Partnership or the third sector;
  - it was suggested that some of the areas for improvement identified in the report were vague and required information on quality and implementation;
  - the precise nature of collaboration between the Council and the third sector was questioned;
  - it was queried how many people from each organisation were involved with the reported partnership group, which included partners from the Highland Council, NHS Highland, the third sector, Police Scotland and the Highland Child Protection Committee;
  - it was queried which organisations were involved in children and young people’s views being considered for service planning, for which there was currently no overarching participation framework to ensure this was consistent. This work was being progressed through the Integrated Children’s Services Planning Board (ICSPB), led by a representative from the third sector;
  - more detail on the improvement work was sought;
- Members welcomed the issues raised in the Care Inspectorate report being a standing item for the Committee, given the improvements required, and Members voiced support for the improvement journey. A summary was provided of the improvement plan, which was being developed;
  - concern was expressed at the numbers of young people in care going missing on a regular basis;
  - it was queried whether the reduction in respite care for vulnerable children reflected a general reduction in respite care;
  - Members expressed disappointment at the quality of the Care Inspectorate report, and felt that it contained anecdotal and unmeasured data;
  - the positive role of the third sector was welcomed, as was the robust engagement strategy. The link to a new e-module training on child protection would be circulated to the Committee;
  - in relation to child protection, attention was drawn to the national whistleblowing officer petition that was being considered by the Scottish Parliament;
  - attention was drawn to reference in the report to concern as to the extent to which children and young people’s safety and wellbeing might have on occasion been compromised by a failure to identify and respond to some concerns;
  - information was sought on improvement activity planned to address Highland reportedly having better responses to younger children than older. This would be detailed in the plan which was being finalised; and
  - the Executive Chief Officer explained that the next report to the Committee would help to demonstrate how to move forward and make the necessary changes.

The Committee:

- i. **NOTED** the key findings and recommendations of the evaluations undertaken;

- ii. **NOTED** the decisions and actions taken to improve outcomes for children, young people and families outlined within the report; and
- iii. **AGREED** to circulate information to the committee on the national whistleblowing officer petition that was being considered by the Scottish Parliament.

## 7. Families 1<sup>st</sup> Strategy Ro-innleachd Teaghlaichean an Toiseach

There had been circulated Report No HCW/02/23 by the Executive Chief Officer Health and Social Care.

During discussion, the following issues were raised:

- Members welcomed the report and acknowledged that change was essential, though challenging;
- the multiagency approach was important, in particular to ensure awareness of emerging new concerns, such as recent reports of malnutrition elsewhere in Scotland;
- support to keep families together and in their communities wherever possible was vital;
- information was sought and provided on how outcomes would be measured, especially those being worked on in partnership, and how work on this was being undertaken with the third sector and other partners. Some organisations were already undertaking work in this area, so communication with them, and with other services within the Council, was essential;
- further information was sought and provided on how the £1m of funding from the Health and Prosperity Strategy would be utilised;
- attention was drawn to the important cross-over with other committees such as Education;
- in response to queries about how to ensure issues raised were listened to, and outcomes measured and reported back to the Committee, the partnership approach and the role of the Community Planning Board and the third sector were summarised. Senior leaders would have a clear vision and support for the workforce, taking into account the underlying links to poverty and the need to progress a trauma-informed approach;
- in response to a query about shortages of foster carers in Highland, it was explained this was a national challenge. The Council had a statutory duty to provide immediate foster care when required and if there was no capacity in Highland, this would be purchased elsewhere, which was costly. Reference was made to the aspiration in The Promise to make certain types of foster care obsolete, and to the need to have sufficient staff in place able to undertake foster care assessments before embarking on a recruitment campaign. It was suggested foster care payments should be increased;
- reference was made to the risks detailed in the report of not approving the Families 1<sup>st</sup> Strategy;
- in addition to the aim of keeping children and young people in a family environment wherever possible, activities such as youth clubs could provide a valuable temporary safe space, with such activities often being undertaken by the third sector and charities. It was disappointing that the increasing cost of hiring halls was forcing some clubs etc to close;
- attention was drawn to the importance of kinship care and the need to ensure processes to facilitate this were not unduly delayed;

- it was hoped the funding would be recurrent; and
- the value of early intervention was emphasised, as was the importance of linking with Education through, for example, school nurses.

The Committee **NOTED** and **APPROVED** the Families 1<sup>st</sup> Strategy to enable to achieve improved outcomes for children and their families.

**8. Revenue Budget and Performance Monitoring - Quarter 3 Monitoring for 2022/23**

**Sgrùdadh Buidseat Teachd-a-steach agus Coileanaidh – Sgrùdadh Cairteil 3 airson 2022/23**

**Transparency Statement: Mr T MacLennan declared a connection to this item as a Board member of Lochaber Care and Repair but, having applied the objective test, did not consider that he had an interest to declare.**

There had been circulated Report No HCW/03/23 by the Executive Chief Officer Health and Social Care.

During discussion, the following issues were raised:

- the value to society of Care and Repair, and other similar schemes, was highlighted, and a summary provided of the types of projects undertaken, many of which could be instrumental in helping to keep elderly people in their own homes for longer, for example grab rails, dementia clocks and other adaptations, which were more cost effective than admitting someone into a care home. It was confirmed that a review was being undertaken, which included handyman schemes and telecare, with NHS Highland as the lead agency along with housing associations;
- the need to ensure maintenance and refurbishment budgets were fully committed before the financial year-end was highlighted and a summary was provided of the types of work being undertaken;
- it was queried whether the staff vacancies in the Families Team was a risk to service delivery, and attention was drawn to the national challenges recruiting social workers, which was a risk, and the efforts being made to address the situation;
- the report did not give information on the number of organisations affected by the third sector contracts review of priorities and delivery and reduction in payment;
- it was often more meaningful to show actual numbers of people affected by issues rather than percentages in reports; and
- the importance of the work undertaken by the Violence Against Women partnership and by Women’s Aid was highlighted, and this would be further discussed at Item 10.

The Committee **NOTED** the:

- i. forecast revenue position as at Quarter 3 of the 2022/23 financial year and the narrative in relation to the underspend in Children’s Services;
- ii. progress update provided in relation to budget savings delivery; and
- iii. detail provided in relation to performance indicators.

**9. Health and Social Care Workforce Plan 2022-2025  
Plana Feachd-obrach Slàinte is Cùraim Shòisealta 2022-2025**

There had been circulated Report No HCW/04/23 by the Executive Chief Officer Health and Social Care.

During discussion, the following issues were raised:

- information was sought and provided on work being undertaken locally to recruit social workers, including giving consideration to addressing accommodation challenges in the Highlands;
- with a significant number of people taking early retirement, consideration should be given to measures to encourage people to stay in work for longer, such as flexible working hours and undertaking exit interviews to source information and commonalities. Only 13% of the Health and Social Care workforce was male so efforts should be made to actively promote the sector to males;
- the overlap between various sectors such as Health & Social Care and Education was highlighted, with reference to the previous amalgamation of Care and Learning; and
- issues to consider to help alleviate recruitment challenges included offering flexible or tailored working hours, giving people time off to study, or retraining people who had retired but were interested in returning to work, and being consistent and fair in those approaches.

The Committee **NOTED** the Health and Social Care Service Workforce Plan 2022 – 2025.

**10. Minutes  
Geàrr-chunntas**

The following Minutes were **NOTED**:-

**i. Highland Child Protection Committee held on 18 August 2023;**

In relation to Item 10i, and with reference to the ‘Adequate’ grading in the Care Inspectorate report on children at risk of harm, as detailed at Item 6 on this agenda, concern was expressed at the number of apologies for the meeting and assurance was provided that the meeting had been quorate and were usually well attended by all stakeholders.

**ii. Highland Violence Against Women Partnership Group held on 9 August 2022.**

In relation to item 10ii, reference was made to the Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) Steering Group report and the high risks detailed. Information was sought on progress with the partnership work, attendance at these meetings by Council representatives, and progress with outstanding actions, including the need for administrative resources. The governance process for MARAC was summarised and the Committee **AGREED** to provide Mrs A MacLean with information on progress with outstanding actions from the MARAC Steering Group, as detailed in the minutes.

**Closing Remarks**

The Chair thanked Members for the quality of debate and officers and partners for their work. He reminded the meeting that it was Children's Mental Health Week.

The meeting ended at 2.50pm

## The Highland Council

Minutes of Meeting of the **Special Meeting of the Badenoch and Strathspey Area Committee** held remotely on Monday 13 February 2023 at 12 noon.

### Present:

Mr J Bruce  
Mrs M Cockburn

Mr R Jones  
Mr B Lobban

### In attendance:

Mr L Hannah, Ward Manager, Communities and Place  
Mr A MacInnes, Committee Officer, Performance & Governance

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

**Mr R Jones in the Chair (items 1 – 3.a)**

### BUSINESS

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

There were no apologies for absence.

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

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

Item 3.a (in relation to Cairngorm Mountain Trust) - Councillor B Lobban  
Item 3.b (in relation to Kingussie Camanhd Club) – Councillor R Jones

#### 3. **Badenoch & Strathspey Repurposing COVID-19 Fund and Place Based Investment Fund Proposals Maoin Ath-adhbharachaidh COVID-19 Bhàideanach is Shrath Spè agus Molaidhean Maoin Tasgaidh Stèidhichte air Àite**

**Declarations of Interest: Mr B Lobban declared a interest as a Director of Cairngorm Mountain Trust and Mr R Jones declared an interest as a committee member for Kingussie Camanhd Club. They left the meeting during the discussion of these applications.**

#### 3.a **Repurposing COVID-19 Fund**

There was circulated Report No BSAC/06/23 by the Executive Chief Officer Communities and Place.

The Committee **AGREED** the repurposing of COVID-19 funds towards Cairngorm Mountain Trust - Badenoch & Strathspey School Skiing 2023 - £4,068.

**Interim Chair**

**Mr B Lobban was unanimously appointed as Interim Chair for the following item**

**3.b Repurposing Place Based Investment Fund Proposals**

There was circulated Report No BSAC/07/23 by the Executive Chief Officer Communities and Place.

The Committee **AGREED** the allocation of Ward 20 Place Based Investment Funds towards Kingussie Camanachd Club - Market Stance Playing Field Upgrade Phase 2 - £10,000.

The meeting ended at 12.15 p.m.

## The Highland Council

Minutes of Meeting of the **City of Inverness Area Committee** held in the Council Chamber, Council Headquarters, Glenurquhart Road, Inverness on Monday 13 February 2023 at 10.00 am.

### Present:

Mr C Aitken	Mr D Gregg
Mr C Ballance	Mrs J Hendry
Mr B Boyd	Mrs I MacKenzie
Mr I Brown	Mr A MacKintosh
Mr M Cameron	Mr R MacKintosh
Mrs G Campbell-Sinclair	Ms K MacLean
Mr A Christie	Mr D Macpherson
Mr D Fraser	Mrs B McAllister
Mr K Gowans	Mrs M Reid
Mr A Graham	Mrs T Robertson

### Officials in Attendance:

Mr A Gunn, Executive Chief Officer, Communities and Place  
 Ms A Clark, Head of Community Support and Engagement, Communities and Place  
 Ms T Urry, Head of Roads and Infrastructure  
 Mrs S McKandie, Interim Head of Revenues and Business Support  
 Mr D Haas, Inverness City Area Manager, Communities and Place  
 Mr M Greig, Ward Manager, Communities and Place  
 Mr M MacKay, Ward Manager, Communities and Place  
 Mr K Forbes, Property Manager (Estates Management)  
 Mr J Taylor, Roads Operations Manager, Infrastructure, Environment and Economy  
 Mr S Grant, Senior Engineer, Infrastructure, Environment and Economy  
 Ms A Wasko, Principal Housing Officer, Housing and Property Service  
 Mrs L Dunn, Joint Democratic Services Manager, Performance and Governance  
 Ms F MacBain, Senior Committee Officer, Performance and Governance

### Also in Attendance:-

Chief Inspector J Hill, Area Commander (Inverness Area Command), Police Scotland

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

### Mr I Brown in the Chair

#### Preliminaries

Prior to the commencement of formal business, the Chair made the following announcements in relation to the New Year Honours List:-

- Dr Malcolm Monteith Steven, a founder and Trustee of the Puffin Hyrdotherapy Pool charity, had been awarded an MBE for his services to the community in the Highlands and Islands; and
- Lieutenant Colonel (Retired) Andrew Kent, Trauma and Orthopaedic Surgeon, Raigmore Hospital, Inverness, had been awarded an OBE for services to UK health support overseas, particularly in Ukraine and during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Committee **NOTED** the position and congratulated the recipients.

**1. Apologies for Absence  
Leisgeulan**

Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of Ms H Crawford, Ms E Knox and Mr A Sinclair.

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

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

Item 3: Mr A Christie and Mr D Gregg

Item 8.d: Mr A Christie, Mr D Gregg and Mr K Gowans

**3. Police – Area Performance Report  
Poileas – Geàrr-aithisg Coileanadh Sgìreil**

**Transparency Statements: The undernoted Members declared connections to this item but, having applied the objective test and reviewed their position in relation to the item and any personal connection, they did not consider they had an interest to declare:-**

**Mr A Christie – as a Non-Executive Director of NHS Highland**

**Mr D Gregg – as an employee of NHS Highland**

There had been circulated Report No. CIA/1/23 dated 3 February 2023 by the Inverness Area Commander.

During discussion, the following issues were raised and responded to:-

- it was queried whether the number of Police officers assigned to schools could be increased;
- reference was made to the low turnout at some “Coffee with a Cop” events, and it was suggested that Community Beat Officer attendance at Community Council meetings, which were well attended, would be more beneficial. It was also suggested that consideration be given to evening “Coffee with a Cop” events to accommodate those who worked during the day;
- there were high rates of crime detection in Highland as a result of the interaction between local Police and the public, and the importance of continuing to connect with communities was emphasised;
- concern having been expressed regarding the length of time taken to answer 101 calls, Chief Inspector Hill confirmed that she had asked an officer from the relevant division to come to a future Members’ Briefing to provide an opportunity for Members to raise concerns directly;
- it was important to recognise that the Police had finite resources and were trying to make the best use of what was available;
- public meetings did not always make the best use of time, and information was sought as to the format of the proposed engagement sessions;
- the Inverness Community Council Forum, which had been active prior to the pandemic, might be a useful platform for engaging with Community Councils. The Inverness City Area Manager concurred that this was an avenue worth exploring and undertook to liaise with Chief Inspector Hill in that regard;

- concern was expressed regarding anti-social behaviour by young people, and information was sought as to the message that was going out to young people about such behaviour and the platform for the voice of the older people who were being targeted;
- Community Beats Teams were commended for their helpful and supportive manner when responding to incidents;
- it would be useful to provide statistics for 2017/18 and 2018/19, pre-Covid, for the purposes of comparison;
- the figures appeared to indicate that a number of crimes had increased significantly, particularly carrying an offensive weapon, and further information was sought in that regard;
- many issues that Community Councils wanted to discuss could be addressed by any experienced Police officer, not just Community Beat Officers;
- in relation to theft by shoplifting, it would be useful to see a breakdown of what was being stolen – e.g. high value items to buy drugs, or food, milk etc in order to survive the cost of living crisis;
- in relation to the proposed expansion of 20mph zones, it was questioned how the Police were going to enforce the speed limit and educate people given their limited resources;
- drivers failing to stop at red lights at the Kingsmills junction had caused distress to residents, and thanks were expressed to Police officers for their response in that regard. It was added that residents had been asked to report licence plates when such incidents occurred, and it was queried what happened thereafter. Chief Inspector Hill undertook to revert to Members in that regard;
- thanks were expressed for the work on Operation Respect and the Harm Reduction Vehicle which helped to reduce the demands of Raigmore Hospital;
- Police officers carrying Naloxone would save lives and was welcomed;
- the rise in fraud was concerning, and it was queried what approaches were being adopted and whether the way the Police and Trading Standards worked together could be changed to improve detection rates;
- previous discussions had taken place about an online portal where dashcam and cycle camera footage could be uploaded to assist the Police in detecting crime, and an update was sought in that regard. It was added that the Bute House Agreement stated that Transport Scotland would work with Police Scotland on a pilot project to develop an online reporting system for anyone to upload camera footage of dangerous driving;
- it was questioned why some detection rates were more than 100%; and
- information was sought as to whether the Police paid for the use of office space within the Town House and what would happen when the building was vacated.

Thereafter, the Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the progress made against the objectives set within the Highland Local Policing Plan 2020-2023 Year 3, attached as Annex A to the report, for the period covering 1 April 2022 to 31 December 2022; and
- ii. **AGREED** that the Inverness City Area Manager explore the possibility of reinstating Inverness Community Council Forum and liaise with Chief Inspector Hill regarding Police attendance thereat.

#### 4. **Area Roads Capital Programme 2023/24** **Prògram Calpa Rathaidean na Sgìre 2023/24**

There had been circulated Report No. CIA/2/23 dated 25 January 2023 by the Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure, Environment & Economy.

During discussion the following main points were raised:-

- reference having been made to recent damage to Barn Church Road near the junction with the A96, it was confirmed that work had been and would continue to be undertaken in that area;
- information was sought, and provided, as to how Active Travel projects such as Academy Street and Riverside Way were coordinated with the Area Roads Capital Programme. In addition, it was suggested that consideration should be given to whether Active Travel projects should be reported to the City of Inverness Area Committee, not just as project proposals but as a Capital Programme;
- information was sought, and provided, regarding damage to roads by utility companies and whether the Council always had the resources to follow up and ensure any temporary repairs were made good. In addition, reference was made to instances of the Council not having been informed of utility works, and it was suggested there was a need for a joined-up app;
- concern was expressed that nearly 50% of the budget allocation for surface dressing was to be spent in Ward 12, which was not within the City of Inverness. The need for fairness and equity was emphasised, and it was suggested it was necessary to consider the formula used to allocate funding. It was added that it was perhaps time to think about having a City Committee rather than a City and Area Committee, and a wider debate was needed in that regard. The Chair emphasised that any proposed change to the formula or the Area Committee would be a matter for full Council;
- disappointment was expressed that only two short sections of road in Ward 19 were included in the Programme. Reference having been made to damage to road edges at tourist hotspots, it was confirmed that tourism funding had been awarded for Clava Cairns and it was a matter of getting a contractor to do the works;
- information was sought, and provided, as to whether the Council was proactive or reactive in terms of road repairs, and whether members of the public had any recourse when they damaged their vehicle only to be told they were the first person to report a pothole;
- it was queried whether maximum efficiency was being achieved and if there was sufficient manpower to deliver the Programme;
- Inverness was the most densely populated area of the Highlands therefore had the highest number of road users;
- it was queried how Members could make a case for road improvements in their ward;
- information was sought, and provided, regarding the number of Pothole Pro machines in operation;
- road repairs were an uphill battle in Highland due to the large geographical area;
- it was necessary to be more innovative and use new technology, and it was queried whether officers looked at what other local authorities were doing in that regard;
- the need to generate income was emphasised and, reference having been made to the significant number of tourist coaches that visited Highland, it was suggested that the Council should be considering a levy;
- Transport Scotland had machinery and manpower, and it was queried whether there was scope to coordinate projects and share resources;
- it was questioned whether the forthcoming improvements to Inshes junction were going to be sufficient;

- many businesses were being affected by the state of the roads and were asking Members what was going to be done;
- some constituents paid over £3k a year in Council Tax and were questioning what they were getting for that. Particular reference was made to the Crown area, which had an increasing number of potholes. Other Members added that paying more in Council Tax should not buy any kind of priority;
- it would be helpful to look at how the budget was allocated over a three or five-year period rather than on an annual basis;
- the issues with the roads in Highland were the result of a lack of investment over many years;
- it was disappointing that a £43m application to the Levelling Up Fund in respect of the NC500 had been refused by the UK Government as this could have freed up additional money that could have been utilised throughout Highland. It was added that having to compete against other local authorities for pots of money, spending valuable officer time on applications that went nowhere, was not acceptable and the need for consistent funding formulas from the Scottish and UK governments was emphasised;
- thanks were expressed to officers, who were doing the best they could with a limited budget, for their efforts and helpful approach when responding to Members' queries;
- the inclusion of Wade Road and Henderson Drive in the Programme was welcomed;
- clarification was sought, and provided, as to what residents should do if they were concerned about the condition of a particular road or pavement;
- there were defects on the A9 at the Raigmore interchange that had not been repaired by the Trunk Roads Authority, and it was queried how to ensure such issues were addressed; and
- a Special Meeting of the Committee or a Members' workshop was called for to discuss the A9 following the recent disappointing announcement that it would not be dualled. However, the Chair explained that this was a matter for the Full Council.

Thereafter, the Committee **APPROVED** the proposed 2023/24 Area Roads Capital Programme for the City of Inverness and Area.

#### **5. Housing Revenue Account: Garage Rents 2023/24 Cunntas Teachd-a-steach Taigheadais: Màil Gharaidsean 2023/24**

There had been circulated Report No CIA/3/23 dated 2 February 2023 by the Executive Chief Officer Housing and Property.

During discussion, Members raised the following main points:-

- the impact of garage rent increases on the HRA was marginal and proposing the rents be increased by 4%, the same level of increase that had been applied to Council house rents;
- an increase of 10% in garage rents would allow for more investment in their repair and maintenance;
- concern at the current level of voids for garages and the potential to advertise their availability to the public, reference being made to the higher cost of self-storage units;
- concern that the Committee was being asked to make a decision on this item when there was uncertainty on the actual number of voids;

- the need to reflect throughout future reports the actual rent that would be charged to non-Council tenants who paid a higher rent due to the application of VAT;
- the primary focus should be on bringing void garages back into use and on developing a strategy based on the actual footprint of Council garages and garage sites. This should include the potential to market them for alternative uses and on managing the garage estate to create vacant sites for housing development;
- the potential to contact those tenants not using their garages to invite them to give up their tenancy, noting there was a current waiting list for garages in the area;
- an explanation was sought around the fact the income from garage rents was well in excess of the area repairs budget. In response, it was suggested that the opportunities to increase the repairs budget was a matter for consideration by the Housing and Property Committee;
- confirmation was sought and provided on the historic reasons as to why Inverness garage rents were well below the Highland average. It was also noted rents were well below the Scottish average; and
- confirmation was sought and provided that information on the current level of outstanding repairs to garages would be provided to Members outwith the meeting.

Thereafter, Mr I Brown seconded by Mrs G Campbell-Sinclair **MOVED** that a 10% increase be applied to Inverness Garages and Garage Sites.

Mr A Graham seconded by Mr D Greig moved as an **AMENDMENT** that a 4% increase be applied to Inverness Garages and Garage Sites.

On a vote being taken, there were 11 votes for the motion, 7 for the amendment and 2 abstentions, and the **MOTION** was carried, the votes having been cast as follows:

**For the motion:**

Mr C Ballance, Mr B Boyd, Mr I Brown, Mr M Cameron, Mrs G Campbell-Sinclair, Mr D Fraser, Mr K Gowans, Mrs J Hendry, Mr R MacIntosh, Mrs K MacLean, Mrs M Reid

**For the amendment:**

Mr C Aitken, Mr A Christie, Mr A Graham, Mr D Gregg, Mr A MacIntosh, Mrs B McAllister, Mrs T Robertson,

**Abstentions:**

Mrs I MacKenzie, Mr D Macpherson

**Decision**

The Committee **AGREED** that a 10% increase be applied to Inverness Garages and Garage Sites.

**6. Inverness Wards Repurposing COVID-19 Fund  
Maoin Ath-adhbharachaidh COVID-19 Uàrdan Inbhir Nis**

There had been circulated Report No. CIA/4/23 dated 26 January 2023 by the Executive Chief Officer Communities and Place.

The Committee **AGREED** the repurposing of the following COVID-19 funds:

- **Ward 13 – Inverness West**

£6,285 from the Ward COVID-19 Fund to support Muirtown Growing Project

- **Ward 17 – Culloden & Ardersier**

£21,00 from the Ward COVID-19 Fund to support Ardroy Road, Croy - Playpark

**7. Ward 12 Aird & Loch Ness - Repurposing Place Based Investment Funding Allocation**

**Uàrd 12 na h-Àirde agus Loch Nis – Ag Ath-adhbharachadh Riarachadh Maoin eachadh Tasgaidh Stèidhichte air Àite**

There had been circulated Report No. CIA/5/23 dated 26 January 2023 by the Executive Chief Officer Communities and Place.

During discussion, it was clarified that the Community Led budget had been reallocated towards the Inverness/Kiltarlity public bus service due to the urgency of the situation.

The Committee **AGREED**:-

- to repurpose £46,800 of Place Based Investment Funds for Ward 12 to support the re-instatement, for 12 months, of the Inverness to Kiltarlity / Kiltarlity to Inverness early morning and evening public bus services; and
- the remaining unspent Place Based Investment Funds of £6,625, be allocated for play parks across the ward.

**8. Inverness Common Good Fund (ICGF)  
Maoin Math Coitcheann Inbhir Nis**

**a) Inverness Common Good Fund Annual Report 2021/22  
Aithisg Bhliadhnail Maoin Math Coitcheann Inbhir Nis 2021/22**

There had been circulated Joint Report No. CIA/6/23 dated 2 February 2023 by the Executive Chief Officer Communities and Place and Head of Corporate Governance.

The Committee **NOTED** the final monitoring report and Statement of Accounts for the Inverness Common Good Fund for the year ended 31 March 2022.

**b) Financial Monitoring  
Sgrùdadh Ionmhasail**

There had been circulated Joint Report No. CIA/7/23 dated 7 February 2023 by the Executive Chief Officer Communities and Place and Head of Corporate Finance.

The Committee **NOTED** the financial monitoring report to 31 December 2022 and the projected outturns detailed in Appendices 1 and 2 of the report and the impact on the Fund's reserves.

**c) Capital Projects Update Report  
Aithisg às Ur mu Phròiseactan Calpa**

There had been circulated Report No. CIA/8/23 dated 30 January 2023 by the Executive Chief Officer Housing & Property.

The Committee **NOTED** the:-

- i. current status of capital projects; and
- ii. adjustments being made to the allocations within the Victorian Market, Market Hall and Fish Market Refurbishment project.

**d) Grants Applications over £10,000  
Iarrtasan Tabhartais thar £10,000**

**Transparency Statements: The undernoted Members declared connections to this item but, having applied the objective test and reviewed their position in relation to the item and any personal connection, did not consider they had an interest to declare:-**

**Mr A Christie – as a Non-Executive Director of NHS Highland  
Mr D Gregg – as an employee of NHS Highland**

**Mr K Gowans declared a connection to the application by Inverness UHI as an employee of UHI. However, he had not been part of the application, which was for the student cohort and would be of no benefit to him personally, and therefore did not consider he had an interest to declare.**

There had been circulated Report No. CIA/9/23 dated 10 November 2022 by the Executive Chief Officer Communities and Place, and there had been circulated separately a copy of supporting documentation as Booklet A.

Applications were considered and determined as follows:

**1. Inverness College UHI - £44,600, requested**

During discussion, the following issues were raised:

- many students had been unable to work during the Covid crisis, therefore had fewer savings and many were struggling financially due to the cost of living crisis; and
- although Members felt this was a worthwhile project and should be supported, some Members felt the project should be open to members of the public in addition to students, to ensure common good funds were distributed fairly. It was not known if this would be possible with regard to security at the campus. It was clarified that the application was competent even if restricted to UHI students, and that there were not sufficient funds available to fulfil the full request of £44,600.

Mr C Ballance, seconded by Mrs G Campbell-Sinclair, **MOVED** to provide £22,300, which was 50% of the grant requested, for one year only, and to discuss with the applicant whether it was possible to extend the project to include members of the public.

Mr A Christie, seconded by Mrs T Robertson, moved as an **AMENDMENT** to provide £22,300, which was 50% of the grant requested, for one year only, subject to the applicant extending the project to include members of the public.

There were 12 votes for the motion and 8 for the amendment, and the **MOTION** was carried, the votes having been cast as follows:

**For the motion:** Mr C Balance, Mr B Boyd, Mr I Brown, Mr M Cameron, Mrs G Campbell-Sinclair, Mr D Fraser, Mr K Gowans, Mr D Gregg, Mrs J Hendry, Mr R MacKintosh, Mrs K MacLean, Mrs M Reid

**For the amendment:** Mr C Aitkin, Mr A Christie, Mr A Graham, Mrs I MacKenzie, Mr A MacKintosh, Mr D Macpherson, Mrs B McAllister, Mrs T Robertson

**Decision:**

The Committee **APPROVED** £22,300 for Inverness College UHI, which was 50% of the grant requested, for one year only, and **AGREED** to discuss with the applicant whether it was possible to extend the project to include members of the public

**2. Visit Inverness Loch Ness Ltd**

The Committee **APPROVED** a grant of £20,000.

**3. Merkinch Community Centre**

The Committee **APPROVED** a grant of £6,000.

**4. Inverness BID Applications**

The Inverness Common Good Fund Sub-Committee had made recommendations regarding the applications submitted by Inverness BID and these were considered as follows:

**4.1 The City of Inverness Annual Floral Displays 2023**

A reduced grant of £64,150 had been recommended by the Sub-Committee.

Some Members expressed concern at the reduction in grant and felt the full amount should be awarded to ensure the city remained smart and attractive to residents and visitors. Other Members pointed out that it was not in effect a reduction as the requested project included a number of additional Display Baskets. Noting that the Common Good Fund was likely to lose further income as a result of the Council office staff vacating the Town House, it was important to make savings where possible.

Mr A Graham, seconded by Mr A Christie, **MOVED** to approve a grant of £69,378, which was a further £5,228 from 2022/23 surplus on the Common Good Fund.

Mr C Balance, seconded by Mrs G Campbell-Sinclair, moved as an **AMENDMENT** to provide a reduced grant of £64,150 as recommended.

There were 7 votes for the motion and 12 for the amendment, and the **AMENDMENT** was carried, the votes having been cast as follows:

**For the motion:** Mr A Christie, Mr A Graham, Mrs I MacKenzie, Mr A MacKintosh, Mr D Macpherson, Mrs B McAllister, Mrs T Robertson.

**For the amendment:** Mr C Aitkin, Mr C Ballance, Mr B Boyd, Mr I Brown, Mrs G Campbell-Sinclair, Mr D Fraser, Mr K Gowans, Mr D Gregg, Mrs J Hendry, Mr R MacIntosh, Mrs K MacLean, Mrs M Reid.

**Decision:**

The Committee **APPROVED** a reduced grant of £64,150.

**4.2 Operation Respect Easter/Summer/Autumn 2023**

The Committee **APPROVED** a grant of **£11,596**

**4.3 Inverness Gull Project 2023**

The Sub-Committee had recommended refusal of the £12,839 grant.

Some Members pointed out that gulls in the city centre were a pest and liable to spread infection, noting the risk of cross infection of avian flu from birds to humans or other animals. The gull project had been successful for many years, with a cumulative effect which would be lost if the project ceased for a year, as proposed. It was acknowledged that the preservation of gulls was important but felt they should be discouraged from city centres as this was not their natural habitat, and they created mess and, at times, fear. It was pointed out that even if the project was approved, a licence would have to be sought from NatureScot prior to the commencement of any work.

Other Members referred to the impact of avian flu on the overall bird population, and the importance of allowing this protected species to recover in numbers for one year and thereafter recommence the gull project if deemed necessary.

Mr A Christie, seconded by Mrs I MacKenzie, **MOVED** to approve the application for £12,839.

Mrs Glynis Campbell-Sinclair, seconded by Mrs K MacLean, moved as an **AMENDMENT**, to refuse the application as recommended by the Sub-Committee.

There were 13 votes for the motion, 6 for the amendment, and one abstention, and the **MOTION** was carried, the votes having been cast as follows:

**For the motion:** Mr C Aitkin, Mr B Boyd, Mr I Brown, Mr A Christie, Mr D Fraser, Mr A Graham, Mr D Gregg, Mrs J Hendry, Mr A MacIntosh, Mrs I MacKenzie, Mr D Macpherson, Mrs B McAllister, Mrs T Robertson.

**For the amendment:** Mr C Ballance, Mr M Cameron, Mrs G Campbell-Sinclair, Mr K Gowans, Ms K MacLean, Mr R MacIntosh.

**Abstention:** Mrs M Reid

**Decision:**

The Committee **APPROVED** a grant of £12,839 for the Inverness Gull Project.

**4.4 Inverness Community Safety Partnership 2023**

The Committee **APPROVED** a grant of **£9,700**.

**4.5 Coach Friendly Project 2023**

The Committee **APPROVED** a grant of **£12,987**.

**e) ICGF Budget Setting for 2023/24 and Capital Programme  
Suidheachadh Buidseit Maoin Math Coitcheann Inbhir Nis airson 2023/24  
agus Prògram Calpa**

There had been circulated Report No. CIA/10/23 dated 1 February 2023 by the Executive Chief Officer Communities and Place and Head of Corporate Finance.

During discussion the following main points were raised:-

- some Members reported that the Red Hot Highland Fling, at Hogmanay 2022-23 had only been attended by 2,500-3,000 people and felt that, at a cost of £150k, did not represent a fair use of Common Good Funds, especially during a cost of living crisis. It was asked that any similar event in future be put to the full Committee for approval and the City Area Manager explained that the Committee had delegated powers to the Events and Festivals Working Group to decide on the events programme and that it was within the powers of the Committee to change this arrangement, should they so wish;
- other Members reported that up to 8,000 people had attended the Red Hot Highland Fling over the course of the evening, and spoke in favour of leaving the arrangements of events with the Working Group, noting that any member of the Committee was entitled to attend the meetings;
- it was suggested that attendance statistics for the Red Hot Highland Fling 2022-23 be made public;
- it was disappointing that during a climate emergency, a large bonfire was being burned for Guy Fawkes night;
- many events, such as the Botanics, had proved successful, popular, and well attended, and all events had brought economic benefit to the city, as well as pleasure for local residents, which was particularly relevant as part of covid recovery;
- in response to comments about hotels being booked out over Hogmanay, it was pointed out that many hotels put on their own entertainment for guests and it was not all down to the Red Hot Highland Fling;
- the debate about whether events should be ticketed or not, or chargeable or not, was ongoing, and sometimes events were ticketed for Health & Safety reasons, to avoid the danger of over-crowding. Ticketing events risked people taking free tickets but not using them;
- in relation to the Inverness Town House Car Park Income, there was a preference to operate the site as a permanent public car park;
- it was requested that progress with future planning for the Inverness Town House be reported back to the Committee;
- assurance was sought and provided that proposals for the 2023-24 winter payments would be presented to the Committee in June 2023. The welfare

team were thanked for their work in administering the 2022-23 winter payments successfully;

- in response to a question, it was explained that a budget allocation of £145k to the Victorian Market was to cover the cost of the service charge for empty units and this would reduce as the units were filled;
- it was hoped the marketing allocation for the Victorian Market would not be recurring given it was populated by private businesses and to avoid unfair competition for the businesses in the Eastgate centre;
- the value to the local economy of the Lochness marathon was pointed out and it was suggested they should be funded in some way;
- information was sought and provided on progress with the roll out of digital CCTV, which had been the subject of a recent Members' visit. The Common Good Fund provided funding but the project was being managed by the Council. Any reduction in funding would reduce the amount of time CCTV could be monitored; and
- the Events and Festivals team, including High Life Highland representatives, were thanked for their work on the events, including the Red Hot Highland Fling.

Mr I Brown, seconded by Mrs G Campbell-Sinclair **MOVED** the recommendations as detailed in the report.

Mr A Christie, seconded by Mr D Macpherson, moved as an **AMENDMENT** for the Events and Festivals Working Group to make recommendations to this Committee on an appropriate event for the 31 December 2023 prior to committing to delivering said event.

There were 11 votes for the motion and 9 for the amendment, and the **MOTION** was carried, the votes having been cast as follows:

**For the motion:** Mr C Ballance, Mr B Boyd, Mr I Brown, Mr M Cameron, Mrs G Campbell-Sinclair, Mr D Fraser, Mr K Gowans, Mrs J Hendry, Mrs K MacLean, Mr R MacIntosh, Mrs M Reid.

**For the amendment:** Mr C Aitkin, Mr A Christie, Mr A Graham, Mr D Gregg, Mr A MacIntosh, Mrs I MacKenzie, Mr D Macpherson, Mrs B McAllister, Mrs T Robertson.

**Decision:**

The Committee **AGREED:**

- i. the Common Good Fund budget for 2023/24 as detailed within the report and Appendices; and
- ii. Option 1 (Public Car Park) in relation to the Town House Car Park.

**9. Inverness Community Partnership  
Com-pàirteachas Coimhearsnachd Inbhir Nis**

The Committee **AGREED** that Mr Chris Ballance assume the position of Chair of the Inverness Community Partnership noting that this was with the consent of City Leader, Mr Ian Brown.

Mr Christie, while not objecting to Mr Ballance's appointment, added that it was disappointing the Administration had not nominated an Inverness-based Councillor for this organisation. He felt insufficient precedence was given to this group and its activities, and it was of concern that various meetings had been rescheduled. Consideration should be given to how the Committee could scrutinise and support the activities of this group to a greater extent. Mr Ballance explained two meetings had been postponed due to poor weather. Mr Brown added that although the meetings were well attended, this tended not to be by members of the public.

The Committee **NOTED** the position.

## 10. Minutes Geàrr-chunntas

The following Minutes had been circulated for noting or approval as appropriate:-

- i. Inverness Events and Festivals Working Group held on 18 November 2022 and 15 December 2022 - **APPROVED**;
- ii. City of Inverness Area Committee held on 24 November 2022 - **NOTED**;
- iii. Inverness East Sports Facilities Working Group held on 15 December 2022 - **APPROVED**; and
- iv. Inverness Common Good Fund Grants Sub-Committee held on 23 January 2023 - **APPROVED**.

## 11. 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 involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraphs 6 and 9 of Part 1 of Schedule 7A of the Act.

## 12. Inverness Common Good Fund – Sites and Premises Transaction Report Maoin Math Coitcheann Inbhir Nis – Aithisg Gnothachais Làraich is Thogalaichean

There had been circulated to Members only Joint Report No CIA/11/23 dated 1 February 2023 by the Head of Development and Regeneration and the Property Manager (Estates).

Following discussion, the Committee **NOTED** the recommendations as detailed in the report.

The meeting ended at 3.10pm.

## The Highland Council

Minutes of Meeting of the **Education Committee** held in the Council Chamber, Council Headquarters, Glenurquhart Road, Inverness on Wednesday 15 February 2023 at 10.35 am.

### Present:

Ms S Atkin	Ms M Hutchison (remote)
Mr A Christie	Ms L Johnston
Mrs M Cockburn	Ms L Kraft
Ms H Crawford	Mr P Logue (remote)
Ms S Fanet	Ms M MacCallum (remote)
Mr J Finlayson (Chair)	Mr D Millar (Vice Chair)
Mr J Grafton	Mrs P Munro (remote)
Mr D Gregg	Mrs M Reid

### Religious Representatives:

Ms S Lamont  
Mr I MacDonald (remote)  
Mr W Skene

### Youth Convener:

Ms C Munro

### Non-Members also present:

Mr M Baird (remote)	Mr R MacKintosh
Ms T Collier (remote)	Mr T MacLennan (remote)
Mr D Fraser (remote)	Mr J McGillivray (remote)
Mr W Mackay (remote)	Mr C Munro (remote)
Mr G MacKenzie (remote)	Mrs T Robertson (remote)
Mr A MacKintosh	

### In attendance:

Ms N Grant, Executive Chief Officer, Education and Learning  
Ms C Macklin, Head of Service, Primary Education  
Ms F Grant, Head of Service, Secondary Education  
Mr B Porter, Head of Education Resources  
Ms B Brown, Strategic Lead - Developing the Young Workforce  
Ms H Brown, Senior Manager Early Years  
Ms A Donald, Area Education and Learning Manager  
Ms A Jansson, Area Education and Learning Manager  
Ms A MacPherson, Workforce Planning and Staffing Manager  
Ms F Shearer, Area Education and Learning Manager  
Ms L Walker, Gaelic Development Manager  
Mr I Jackson, Education Officer  
Mr S Callander, Head Teacher, Drakies Primary School  
Ms F Henstridge, Teacher, Drakies Primary School  
Ms J MacRae, Head Teacher, Muirtown Primary School  
Ms B Fuller, Principal Teacher, Muirtown Primary School  
Ms F MacNab, Depute Head Teacher, Portree High School  
Ms J Douglas, Care and Learning Alliance (Third Sector)  
Ms S Fowler, Thriving Families (Third Sector)

Miss J MacLennan, Joint Democratic Services Manager  
Miss M Murray, Senior Committee Officer

**Also in attendance:**

Pupils from Muirtown Primary School  
Pupils from Portree High School

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

**Mr J Finlayson in the Chair**

**Business**

**1. Apologies for Absence  
Leisgeulan**

An apology for absence were intimated on behalf of Mrs I Campbell.

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

The Committee **NOTED** the following Declaration of Interest:-

Item 11: Mrs M Reid

and the following Transparency Statements:-

Item 6: Ms L Kraft and Mr D Millar

Item 9: Mr C Munro

**3. Good News/Outstanding Achievements  
Naidheachdan Matha/Coileanaidhean Air Leth**

The Chair highlighted that a presentation on Outstanding Achievements had been circulated to Members in advance of the meeting. Given the very full agenda, it was not intended to show the presentation at the Committee. However, the Head of Service, Primary Education, summarised the schools featured as follows:-

Aviemore Primary School  
St Joseph's Roman Catholic Primary School  
Poolewe Primary School  
Strathconon Primary School  
Ullapool Primary School  
Ardnamurchan High School  
Culloden Academy  
Glenurquhart High School  
Inverness Royal Academy  
Thurso High School  
Airport House in Wick  
St Clement's School

St Duthus School

Thanks were expressed to all the children and young people and staff for their contributions, and to the Digital Team for producing the presentation.

The Committee **NOTED** the presentation.

At this stage, the Chair explained that he intended to take items 4 and 5 one after another before taking Members questions and comments on both items.

The report on Improving Outcomes for Children and Young people brought positive news and showed the improvements that had been made in attainment over the last year as well as where the Council was in terms of its Journey to Excellence. As previously requested by Members, it also provided clarity in terms of what was being done to improve attainment and the engagement taking place with schools, Head Teachers and class teachers.

The presentation at item 5 built on the report and essentially showed policy in action in a school setting and what was currently happening following on from the Attainment Summits that had been held with Head Teachers as well as the work being carried out by Collaborative Leads working with Head Teachers and school staff.

#### **4. Improving Outcomes for Children and Young People A' Leasachadh Bhuilean do Chloinn is do Dhaoine Òga**

There had been circulated Report No EDU/1/23 dated 2 February 2023 by the Executive Chief Officer, Education and Learning.

#### **5. Presentation: Primary Attainment Taisbeanadh: Buileachadh Bun-sgoile**

Mr S Callander, Head Teacher, and Ms F Henstridge, Teacher, Drakies Primary School, gave a presentation on their Journey to Excellence using a shared data culture.

Discussion then took place on items 4 and 5, during which the following issues were raised:-

- the clear report and informative presentation were welcomed, and thanks were expressed to all staff involved for the hard work they had put into improving attainment in Highland. However, it was recognised that there was still a long way to go and there would always be room for improvement;
- information was sought, and provided, as to how outcomes were being measured to ensure there was continuous improvement and robust self-evaluation taking place in all schools, what feedback had been received following recent Attainment Summits and whether there was a collaborative system in place to allow Head Teachers and class teachers to support each other;
- it was good to see that the data being gathered was actively being used;
- the marked improvement in attainment, with Highland being the second most improved authority for P1, P4 and P7 literacy, was welcomed;
- it was questioned whether the significant increase in attainment was down to better marking and moderation or was a true increase in performance;
- the report referred to the intention to host an Education Summit in April 2023, and it was queried whether this was something Elected Members could be part of as it

could be an opportunity to help them understand the pressures in the education system and inform support for change. The Executive Chief Officer, Education and Learning, confirmed that an invitation to attend, either in person or via live streaming, would be extended to Education Committee Members;

- in relation to recording factors in pupils' lives that affected attainment, it was queried whether this included young carers. Many primary and secondary pupils were young carers, which had an impact on their home lives and therefore their ability to learn;
- an adaptive approach and putting the young person at the centre, with play being a key element, was important;
- further information was sought, and provided, on the stretch aim statistics in Appendix 2 of the report, the stretch aims for 2023/24 and when baseline measures in respect of wellbeing stretch aims would be confirmed;
- use of data by class teachers had been identified in school inspections as an area for development, and it was queried what was being learned, and applied across Highland, from best practice at Drakies Primary School;
- there was a huge amount of focus on improving attainment, which was fantastic to see. However, it was questioned whether it was sustainable, and the importance of not over-stressing class teachers was emphasised;
- whilst the improvements that had been made were to be acknowledged and celebrated, there was still a long way to go on the attainment journey and it was necessary to accelerate. Highland was still in the lower quartile and below the Scottish average, and the true gap was greater than indicated as Highland was pulling down the Scottish average;
- in some ways it was easier for Highland to improve than it was for those local authorities at the top of the attainment tables;
- the report highlighted that assessment and moderation remained a weakness and did not represent the true attainment of primary children, and it was questioned what assurance could be provided to Members in terms of the measures being put in place in that regard. The Chair explained that having a consistent approach to assessment and moderation formed part of what the Collaborative Leads were doing in terms of their engagement with schools, and this would make achieving the stretch aims much easier;
- many young people had to go to university outwith Highland as the courses they wanted to do were not available locally. There was evidence that people tended to stay where they graduated and, to encourage young people to stay in Highland, it was necessary to look at the whole education offering from primary to tertiary. In that regard, it was suggested it would be helpful to have a discussion, at a future meeting of the Committee or a Members' workshop, with UHI regarding further and higher education provision. The Chair confirmed that this could be taken forward;
- it was to be applauded that the biggest improvement had been in listening and talking and that Highland was above the national average in that regard. It was added that listening and talking were essential for the development of numeracy and the health and wellbeing of children, and Members had no doubt that further improvements would follow;
- it was questioned to what extent the 10% improvement in literacy was attributable to how assessment was now carried out, as that would inform how likely it was that the stretch aims would be achieved next year;
- Highland was more or less average in terms of areas of deprivation when compared to other local authorities yet trailed below average in literacy and numeracy, and it was questioned what other Councils were doing that Highland was not;

- the reference in the report to a curriculum rich in literacy and numeracy was welcomed, and it would be helpful to have a Members' workshop on what that looked like in practical terms. The Chair confirmed that could be arranged;
- information was sought, and provided, as to whether data was available on how much learning was lost each day/week due to teachers having to deal with behavioural issues in the classroom;
- tribute was paid to Speech and Language Therapists who had worked hard and collaboratively over the last few years embedding linguistic development and language acquisition into the early years curriculum;
- the recognition of the role of Early Learning and Childcare (ELC) in attainment was welcomed;
- children in Highland went to a wide range of ELC settings, not just Council provision, and it was important to ensure strong links with all ELC providers in terms of transitioning to P1 so all children had the same access; and
- the Chair commented that having school staff in the Chamber to bring the report to life had been important, and that would be his intention for future papers on attainment.

The Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** Achievement of Curriculum for Excellence Level data in reading, writing, listening and talking, literacy and numeracy for session 2021/22;
- ii. **NOTED** that the significant accelerated rate of progress had closed the gap with the national average;
- iii. **NOTED** that Highland was the 2<sup>nd</sup> most improved local authority for P1, P4, P7 literacy (10% increase) and numeracy (9% increase);
- iv. **NOTED** that Highland was one of only 3 local authorities to have improved literacy by 10% or more and one of only 6 local authorities to have improved numeracy by 5% or more;
- v. **NOTED** that primary attainment meetings would take place from February 2023 and targets for improvement would be agreed with all Headteachers and thereafter scrutinised on a regular basis;
- vi. **NOTED** that the Raising Attainment Action Plan agreed at the September 2022 Education Committee would be the key driver to maintaining these accelerated rates of progress, improving attainment and reducing the poverty-related attainment gap;
- vii. **AGREED** that consideration be given to a discussion, at a future meeting of the Committee or a Members' workshop, with UHI regarding further and higher education provision;
- viii. **AGREED** that a Members' workshop on what a curriculum rich in literacy and numeracy looked like in practical terms be arranged; and
- ix. **NOTED** the presentation in respect of item 5.

## 6. Supporting Learners A' Toirt Taic do Luchd-ionnsachaidh

**Transparency Statements:** The undernoted Members declared connections to this item but, having applied the objective test and reviewed their position in relation to the item and any personal connection, did not consider they had an interest to declare:-

**Ms L Kraft – on the basis that she had previously worked as a Speech and Language Therapist alongside ASN in schools and been involved in some of the improvement plans**

**Mr D Millar - on the basis that a relative was a Pupil Support Assistant**

There had been circulated Report No EDU/2/23 dated 2 February 2023 by the Executive Chief Officer, Education and Learning.

The Chair explained that, as those who were Councillors during the previous Council term would know, a review of Support for Learning and a journey of redesign and improvement had been ongoing for some time. This obviously continued, with engagement regularly happening with schools, Head Teachers and other key stakeholders to ensure clarity, consistency and equity prevailed across the main elements associated with the delivery and resourcing of Support for Learning. Today's report gave the latest update and provided a strategic direction of travel, and further update would come to the Committee as matters evolved in the future.

During a summary of the report, the Executive Chief Officer, Education and Learning, emphasised that there were no plans to reduce current staffing levels in schools. In relation to recommendation iii, the principles of distribution which had been benchmarked and discussed with Head Teachers were 40% of the school roll, 50% on school clothing and footwear grant, 5% allocated to rurality and 5% allocated to SIMD 1-3. In line with the Scottish Government Head Teacher empowerment agenda and in collaboration with Head Teachers, the proposed changes would put the power back into Head Teachers' hands and the decisions made would be closer to the classroom.

During discussion, the following issues were raised:-

- it was a massive undertaking to make such fundamental changes, and it was an important report;
- in relation to the proposed algorithm, concern was expressed that not everyone eligible for the clothing and footwear grant applied for it and therefore would not be included, and further information was sought, and provided, in that regard;
- on the point being raised, it was clarified that the top slice referred to in recommendation iii. was an additional sum of money that would be maintained for families that required additional resource that had not been planned for. The enhanced provision funding was separate and, for the coming year, there would be no change to service provision to allow officers to work through the legislation around the presumption of mainstreaming and ensure Highland was in line with national requirements. This did not include Special Schools, which had separate funding streams;
- further information was sought, and provided, as to why there were so many different interventions and provisions to meet the needs of young people and how the new admissions policy would support this need for diversity;
- if, as indicated in the report, 43% of young people in Highland had Additional Support Needs (ASN), the current system was not sustainable, and support was expressed for the principles of change such as more autonomy for Head Teachers and enhancing the role of Pupil Support Assistants;
- recommendation iii. in the report specified two years, and Members would feel more confident if it was a three-year process of change;

- in relation to the proposed algorithm, it was queried whether Head Teachers were confident that the 5% allocations in respect of rurality and SIMD 1-3 would not create huge disparities;
- the need for engagement with parents, pupils with ASN and stakeholders was emphasised;
- stability was key going forward and, with the reassurances provided by officers, support was expressed for the proposals;
- information was sought, and provided, as to how the staged intervention approach would work in the Highland context;
- concern was expressed regarding the lack of clarity in the report and that only today were Members hearing the percentages associated with the proposed algorithm. More information was needed before making a decision, including worked examples of what the algorithm would mean for a range of schools. Reference was made to small schools that the algorithm would not pick up yet as much as 50% of their roll had ASN, and it was not clear whether the algorithm would reduce or remove their support;
- the proposals would impact massively on the Council's stated aim of raising attainment;
- further information was sought on the level of consultation that had been carried out with Head Teachers and whether there was majority support from Head Teachers for the proposals;
- the proposals appeared to be a fundamental change based on an algorithm and a sweeping up mechanism for exceptional needs. In relation to the latter, it was queried what the process entailed and how high the benchmark of evidence required was;
- it having been queried whether ASN Teachers were being phased out and replaced with 1 Principal ASN Teacher per Associated School Group (ASG), it was reiterated that there would be no reduction in current staffing levels in schools;
- it was important to get ASN provision right and that Members understood what they were agreeing. More time was needed to get clarification on some of the points raised and, to enable the answers to be provided in detail in a report, it was suggested it was necessary to defer consideration of the matter to a Special Meeting of the Education Committee;
- the report indicated that the percentage of children with ASN in Highland was approximately 10% greater than the percentage nationally, and information was sought as to the reasons for that. In addition, if that was the case, it was questioned whether Highland would ever be able to close the attainment gap;
- the reassurance that there would be no reduction in staffing was welcomed, and it was queried whether staffing levels were now back up to pre-Covid levels;
- on the point being raised, it was confirmed that there would be a significant reduction in bureaucracy as the requirement to produce a large Child's Plan would not be linked to the allocation of resource to schools;
- it would be helpful to see how the proposed algorithm would impact on individual primary and secondary schools. However, it was explained it would not be appropriate to provide that level of detail as it might identify young people with ASN;
- in relation to the statistics in Appendix 2 of the report, it was questioned whether Highland really had double the percentage of children with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties than Scotland as a whole. If so, a wider discussion was needed in that regard. In addition, it was striking that Highland had more than double the percentage of young carers. Permanently caring for a disabled parent was very

different to other learning needs, and concern was expressed that the impact specific needs might have was not accounted for in the proposals;

- the algorithm would allow a more equitable process of allocation and the new system would enable Head Teachers to use their professional skills to match their ASN allocation to the specific needs of their young learners;
- the national framework on which the proposals were based were about inclusive practice, and Highland had already demonstrated a high level of inclusivity, with children accessing education and learning in the classroom who would previously, and possibly more so in urban areas, have been removed for more targeted support;
- the flexibility that the proposed top slice for specific cases would provide, and the fact the decision lay locally with the Head Teacher, was welcomed;
- information was sought, and provided, regarding ongoing collaborative training on the national frameworks that underpinned the proposals and what support was in place to allow Head Teachers to be released to attend multi-agency meetings about children in their schools;
- the Council had set out on an ASN journey in the past only to almost reverse its position, so it was important to get the approach right. Support was expressed for a Special Meeting of the Committee if it would help Members reach a consensus;
- in relation to section 6.3 of the report, it was questioned why the Council's Legal Team had been consulted on the legislation surrounding school placement decisions;
- if Highland had a higher percentage of children with ASN than the rest of Scotland, it made sense that the allocation of total education spend in Highland to ASN was one of the highest in the country;
- the issue with algorithms was they created winners and losers, and Members did not know who they were. If, as requested earlier, information could not be provided by individual school it was requested that it be provided by ASG;
- it was surmised that Inverness secondary schools would stand to gain from the proposals;
- with reference to section 8.1 of the report, it was questioned whether support needs had been assessed incorrectly in the past and whether this could be linked to Highland having a higher percentage of children with ASN;
- it was queried what had changed in last few years that detailed Child's Plans were no longer required, and further information was provided in that regard;
- continuous staff training was important given the many challenges children and young people faced in modern society;
- many young people suffered with their mental health as well as physical and learning conditions, and these all had an impact on a child's ability to learn;
- Additional Support for Learners benefited every child in the classroom, not just those with ASN, and the proposals would have a positive impact on children and young people and help to improve attainment across the board;
- Ms S Fowler, Thriving Families, welcomed the report and spoke in detail to the themes emerging from the feedback gathered from families, by Thriving Families, as to how they felt about ASL, explaining that this exercise had been combined with the national discussion on education. There had been 470 responses from parents and the data gathered had been submitted to the Scottish Government prior to Christmas; and
- the importance of listening to officers and Head Teachers, who were the experts, was emphasised. However, it was added that Members had a scrutiny role.

Following discussion, Mr J Finlayson, seconded by Mr D Millar, **MOVED** the recommendations in the report, subject to substituting “two years” for “three years” in recommendation iii.

As an **AMENDMENT**, Ms H Crawford, seconded by Mr A Christie, moved that recommendations i. and ii. be noted and recommendation iii. be amended to “agree to defer consideration of the strategic approach to Highland Additional Support for Learning staffing structure, as set out in Appendix 5 of the report, to a Special Meeting of the Education Committee and to invite officers to provide further clarity with respect to:-

- the workings of the proposed algorithm, including percentages of importance given to pupil roll, Clothing and Footwear Grants, SIMD 1, 2 and 3 pupils and Rurality.
- worked examples of before and after scenarios with respect to a range of schools.
- a risk assessment with respect to the impact that the algorithm could have on our stated aim of raising attainment.
- worked examples of how the Exceptional Needs Test would be applied and the level of needs required to override the algorithm.
- the level of consultation undertaken with respect to the teaching staff referred to in the Strategy and whether there is majority support for this strategy.”

On a vote being taken, the **MOTION** received 11 votes and the **AMENDMENT** received 7 votes, with 1 abstention. The **MOTION** was therefore **CARRIED**, the votes having been cast as follows:-

**For the Motion:**

Ms S Atkin, Mrs M Cockburn, Ms S Fanet, Mr J Finlayson, Ms M Hutchison, Ms L Johnston, Ms L Kraft, Mr D Millar, Mrs M Reid, Mr I MacDonald, Mr W Skene.

**For the Amendment:**

Mr A Christie, Ms H Crawford, Mr J Grafton, Mr D Gregg, Mr P Logue, Ms M MacCallum, Ms S Lamont.

**Abstention:**

Ms C Munro

**Decision**

The Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the most up-to-date information on the identified additional support needs of the children and young people in the Highlands;
- ii. **NOTED** the requirement to review the criteria in place for admissions to special schools and enhanced provisions based in line with new National guidance; and
- iii. **AGREED** the strategic approach to Highland Additional Support for Learning staffing structure, as set out in Appendix 5 of the report, for the next three years. This included top slice for exceptional circumstances, funding for enhanced provisions and an algorithm based on school roll, clothing/footwear grant, SIMD 1-3 and rurality.

At this stage, the Chair explained that he intended to take items 7 and 8 one after another before taking Members questions and comments on both items.

He explained that digital technology was a key part of how education was delivered in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, and the report at item 7 provided a comprehensive update on the strategies, plans and actions in place in Highland for Digital Learning. Highland had been at the forefront of deploying digital devices when it commenced its 1:1 Chromebook model. The Council had been fortunate to have those devices in place during the pandemic and continued to develop their use to support learning and teaching in schools.

The presentation at item 8 directly supported the report at item 7 and effectively showed the strategy at work, supporting both teachers and pupils in many different ways.

## **7. Highland Schools Digital Strategy 2023-26 Ro-innleachd Dhidseatach Sgoiltean na Gàidhealtachd 2023-26**

There had been circulated Report No EDU/3/23 dated 2 February 2023 by the Executive Chief Officer, Education and Learning.

## **8. Presentation: Digital Tools Taisbeanadh: Innealan Didseatach**

Ms J MacRae, Head Teacher, Ms B Fuller, Principal Teacher and 2022 National Digital Innovator of the Year, and pupils from Muirtown Primary School gave a presentation on their digital innovation in learning and teaching.

Discussion then took place on items 7 and 8, during which the following issues were raised:-

- Members welcomed the Strategy and the fact it was not overly prescriptive, and commended the pupils from Muirtown Primary School for their clear and confident presentation;
- there were potential risks associated with focussing on Google and Chromebooks – eg Google might change its education provision or the way Chromebooks functioned might change and become incompatible with legislation;
- there was better connectivity in some parts of Highland than in others and information was sought, and provided, as to what provision was in place in that regard;
- the introduction of Chromebooks had levelled the playing field for young people across Highland who would not ordinarily have had access to such technology. They had meant that learning was possible during the pandemic and had made learning more accessible to children with Additional Support Needs, and thanks were expressed to the decision-makers of the past for their foresight;
- in relation to the digital word game that had been demonstrated during the presentation, it was suggested that Muirtown Primary School could lead the way in developing something similar using Scots or Gaelic words; and
- the investment in Read and Write software was welcomed and further information was sought, and provided, as to how much it was helping inclusion in Muirtown Primary School and whether it was going to be implemented and embedded in all schools.

The Committee **NOTED**:-

- i. the strategic direction for digital learning and skills in Highland Schools. As new technologies became more accessible, the team aimed to support and engage with schools to enrich the curriculum and learning;
- ii. the progress made to support schools across Highland, recognising how the Highland Schools Digital Strategy would lead to improved outcomes for children and young people;
- iii. the plans to establish a Highland Digital Learning Academy with empowerment, collaboration, and communication as the core principles; and
- iv. the presentation in respect of item 8.

At this stage, the Chair explained that he intended to take items 9 and 10 one after another before taking Members questions and comments on both items.

Whilst most Gaelic reports tended to go to the Gaelic Committee, it was important that papers on Gaelic Medium Education (GME) came to the Education Committee, and he welcomed the report being presented today. It clearly showed the successes and challenges of GME in Highland and what needed to be done to support the sustainability of GME across the diverse authority area.

The presentation at item 10 again showed policy in action. Beth Campbell and Eubha Campbell were pupils from Portree High School who had come through GME from Sgoil Araich to the senior phase and had an inspirational story to tell. Their presentation would be in Gaelic and a translation would be available in the Teams chatline as they spoke as well as in paper form.

#### **9. Gaelic Medium Education and Gaelic Learner Education – The Highland Council Foghlam tron Ghàidhlig agus Foghlam Luchd-ionnsachaidh na Gàidhlig – Comhairle na Gàidhealtachd**

**Transparency Statement: Mr C Munro declared a connection to this item on the basis that his wife was a Gaelic Medium Education teacher and he had children in Gaelic Medium Education. However, having applied the objective test and reviewed his position in relation to the item and any personal connection, he did not consider he had an interest to declare.**

There had been circulated Report No EDU/4/23 dated 2 February 2023 by the Executive Chief Officer, Education and Learning.

#### **10. Presentation: Gaelic Medium Education (GME) Success Taisbeanadh: Soirbheachas Foghlam tron Ghàidhlig**

In early November 2022, 20 teams from high schools across Scotland had met to compete for the National Loganair Gaelic Schools' Debate. This was an annual event for Gaelic Medium pupils across Scotland and had been hosted in Holyrood.

Ms F MacNab, Depute Head Teacher, Portree High School, introduced the 2022 winners, Beth Campbell and Eubha Campbell, who gave a short presentation on their learning journey including their experiences, the challenges and the benefits of their years in GME, and what it meant to win such a prestigious prize.

Discussion then took place on items 9 and 10, during which the following issues were raised:-

- Gaelic was a matter affecting everyone. It was more than just the language but also about the art, culture and sport in Highland;
- it was proven that bilingualism boosted standards in education;
- the lack of GME teachers was disappointing but the work being undertaken with Sabhal Mor Ostaig to address this was welcomed, especially as the graduates were more likely to remain in Highland. However, this alone was not sufficient to plug the gap and a position statement as to the current position and the proposed measures to recruit more GME teachers was requested;
- attracting GME teachers, and retaining them, was an issue and the Scottish Government had to help in terms of incentives so that probationers were encouraged to come to Highland;
- Bòrd na Gàidhlig (BnG) had to take action to grow GME teachers. It had been suggested to them that a “task force” be formed but BNG’s response was that they were satisfied at the direction of travel. This apparent lack of urgency was disappointing as GME could not progress with a shortage of qualified teachers. It was therefore suggested that an urgent meeting be held with other stakeholders regarding this issue;
- community engagement was important so that there were pockets of Gaelic speakers;
- Highland needed to be seen as an attractive opportunity for those qualifying as GME probationers, and it was necessary to support and encourage them so that a teaching career in Highland was their first choice;
- it was pleasing to see a report on GME at the Education Committee;
- an idea of the range of subjects available in Gaelic in secondary school was requested, and provided; and
- the uplifting presentation was commended.

The Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the report and the provision of Gaelic Medium and Gaelic Education across Highland;
- ii. **NOTED** the areas of current and future development; and
- iii. **NOTED** the presentation in respect of item 10.

## 11. Early Learning and Childcare (ELC) Redesign

### Cunntas às Ùr mu Ath-dhealbhaidh Tràth-ionnsachaidh is Cùrainm-chloinne

**Declaration of Interest: Mrs M Reid declared an interest in this item as a commissioned partner of Highland Council and, in accordance with paragraph 5.6 of the revised Code of Conduct, left the meeting for the duration of the item.**

There had been circulated Report No EDU/5/23 dated 5 January 2023 by the Executive Chief Officer, Education and Learning.

During discussion, the following issues were raised:-

- the Chair reminded Members that the opportunities presented had been co-produced with partners on the back of very welcome positive meetings and engagement between officers and ELC partners that had taken place in the latter part of 2022. He emphasised that the report dealt specifically with the topic of ELC

redesign and any decisions around partner rates were matters for full Council as part of the budget setting process;

- in terms of resource implications it was important that any cuts or changes as a result of redesign were not just felt by partners but by the sector as a whole;
- the Council was committed to look at the Schools Consultation (Scotland) Act but it was important to demonstrate in Highland that we were provider neutral;
- it was hoped the collaboration to date would continue into the future;
- it was questioned how to it was possible to gauge how many children would need childcare in the next 2 to 3 years given that ELC did not have catchment areas;
- the report referred to “quick wins” where there was overlap in provision in some localities and clarification was sought, and provided, as to what this meant;
- shared opportunities to collaborate for mixed economies was to be welcomed as the purpose of this process was what was best for families and giving them more choice; and
- the second Private Voluntary and Independent (PVI) ELC meeting in December had been less well attended than the first but this might mean that the Council and the PVI Sector were moving forward positively in collaboration and that previous issues had been addressed.

The Committee **NOTED**:-

- i. the work taken forward to date as part of ELC redesign;
- ii. that the work represented a co-production approach with ELC PVI partner representatives, following two meetings with the sector in late 2022;
- iii. the developing ELC redesign opportunities and actions as set out in Appendix 1 of the report; and
- iv. that further updates would come back to this Committee.

## **12. Revenue Budget Monitoring and Service Performance Reporting for Quarter 3 Sgrùdadh Buidseit agus Aithris Coileanadh Seirbheis airson Cairteal 3**

There had been circulated Report No EDU/6/23 dated 17 January 2023 by the Executive Chief Officer, Education and Learning.

During discussion, the following issues were raised:-

- it was queried why the Education Committee did not receive Capital reports;
- clarification was sought, and provided, that there was no blanket decision not to fill school crossing patrols. This had apparently arisen at Cauldeen Primary School and it was questioned how many other schools had been similarly affected as, given the important interventions such posts had, it was inappropriate they were held as budget savings;
- in relation to the performance measure relating to the monthly monitoring of school attendance the update stated that it was “extending completion date to end of March 2023, to test the policy has appropriate flexibility to fit where required with particular locality demographics” and clarification was sought as to what this meant;
- it was questioned when the new Early Years Management Information System from SEEMIS would “go live”; and
- in response to a question, it was confirmed that the Education Service Plan Performance Dashboard captured the Third Sector organisations which the Council commissioned to deliver its services and meet the outcomes for children and young people as it was important this work was recognised and valued.

The Committee **NOTED**:-

- i. the forecast revenue position for Quarter 3 of the 2022/23 financial year, as set out in Appendices 1a and 1b of the report;
- ii. there were significant risks and uncertainties relating to current financial year forecasts, relating to pay award, inflation and other pressures;
- iii. the progress update provided in relation to budget savings delivery as set out in Appendix 2 of the report; and
- iv. the performance reporting update for Quarter 3 as set out within the report and Appendix 3 of the report.

**13. Statutory Consultation – Torridon Primary School: Proposal to Proceed to Statutory Consultation for Formal Closure**  
**Co-chomhairle Reachdail – Bun-Sgoil Thoirbheartain: Moladh a Dhol air Adhart gu Co-chomhairle Reachdail airson Dùnadh Foirmeil**

There had been circulated Report No EDU/7/23 dated 2 February 2023 by the Executive Chief Officer, Education and Learning.

The Committee **AGREED** to proceed to statutory consultation on the basis of the Proposal attached to the report.

**14. Statutory Consultation – Struan Primary School: Proposal to Proceed to Statutory Consultation for Formal Closure**  
**Co-chomhairle Reachdail – Bun-Sgoil an t-Sruthain: Moladh a Dhol air Adhart gu Co-chomhairle Reachdail airson Dùnadh Foirmeil**

There had been circulated Report No EDU/8/23 dated 2 February 2023 by the Executive Chief Officer, Education and Learning.

During discussion, Local Members commented that the local community were now generally supportive of the proposal to formally close Struan Primary School and were considering how the building might, in the future, be used as a community asset.

The Committee **AGREED** to proceed to statutory consultation on the basis of the Proposal attached to the report.

**15. Minutes of the Local Negotiating Committee for Teachers**  
**Geàrr-chunntas na Comataidh Barganachaidh Ionadail airson Thidsearan**

The Minutes of the Annual General Meeting and Ordinary Meeting of the Local Negotiating Committee for Teachers held on 22 November 2022 were **NOTED**.

The meeting concluded at 3.30 pm.

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

Minutes of Meeting of the **Pensions Committee and Pension Board** held in the Chamber, Council Headquarters, Glenurquhart Road, Inverness on **Thursday 16 February 2023 at 10.30am.**

**Present:**

**Pensions Committee**

Mr C Ballance  
Mr R Gale  
Ms L Kraft (remote)  
Mr D Louden (remote)  
Mr T MacLennan  
Mr P Oldham  
Mrs M Paterson

**Pension Board**

Mr G MacKenzie, The Highland Council  
Mr C Munro, The Highland Council (remote)  
Mr D MacSween, Unison (remote)  
Ms E Johnston, GMB

**Non Member**

Mr M Baird

**Officials in attendance:**

Mr E Foster, Head of Corporate Finance, Resources & Finance Service  
Mr J Campbell, Senior Auditor, Performance & Governance  
Ms C Strachan, Principal Accountant, Resources & Finance  
Mrs L Dunn, Joint Democratic Services Manager, Performance & Governance Service  
Mr A MacInnes, Committee Officer, Performance & Governance Service

**Also in attendance:-**

Mr M Oliphant, Audit Director, Audit Scotland  
Mr C Gardner, Senior Audit Manager, Audit Scotland  
Mr A Wallace, Audit Scotland

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

**Mr T MacLennan in the Chair**

**BUSINESS**

**1. Apologies for Absence  
Leisgeulan**

Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of Mr B Lobban, Mr A MacDonald and Mr A Sinclair of the Pensions Committee, Mr N MacDonald and Mr R Fea of the Pension Board.

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

There were no declarations of interest.

**3. Service Plan 2023/24  
Plana Seirbheis 2023/24**

There was circulated Report No. PC/1/23 by the Head of Corporate Finance.

The report detailed changes to the staffing structure for the administration of the Pension Fund; the implementation of Member Self Service to improve customer service and process efficiency and work plans for the Pension Board, Pension Committee and Investment Sub Committee. As the pension fund and number of members in it had increased, so had the complexity in administering the fund and its investments. The new proposed staffing structure aimed to address this to ensure it was fit for purpose.

It was highlighted that the Pension Fund had been a great success over a number of years for which was down to the hard work and professionalism of staff and the Pension Fund Adviser, AON. The Council had also been very fortunate to have had the services of Mr Ben Thompson the former Chair of the Investment Sub Committee who had much valued experience in the investment sector.

In terms of the review of employers' contributions there should be caution if employers ask for a break in payments due to difficult financial circumstances as it would be difficult to make up for those contributions in future. It was hoped that the Committee was not looking at sanctioning any breaks in payment schemes for employers as the fund needed to be protected for its members. It was advised that there was a legislative requirement that if there was a significant change to liabilities or covenant, the Fund or Employers' can request a review of contributions. Therefore, there was a need to ensure that within the Funding Strategy Statement a policy was developed that would deal with any situations of this nature, so that there was no detriment to the Fund. This policy would be submitted to the Committee for approval as part of the Funding Strategy Statement.

It was welcomed that systems for strengthening reporting of climate related financial disclosures would be implemented. The new post of Training, Development and Communications Manager would be very beneficial to both staff, Members of the Committee/Board and Employers.

It was suggested that the Plan reflects the length of time required to engage with internal and external audit, which could be extensive. Also, the target should be 100% (rather than 95%) for retirement information to allow benefits to be paid on time. The Committee supported these changes.

The Committee **APPROVED** the:-

- i. Pension Fund Service Plan 2023/24, subject to it being amended as follows
  - a) the Plan reflect the length of time required to engage with internal and external audit, and b) the target be 100% for retirement information to allow benefits to be paid on time;

- ii. new post of Pension Fund Manager to manage risks associated with senior personnel changes (section 6 of the report);
- iii. Pension Fund proposed staffing structure and budget for 2023/24 (section 6, 7 and 8 of the report);
- iv. budget to support the implementation of Member Self Service to improve customer service and process efficiency; and
- v. work plans for the Pensions Board, Pensions Committee and Investment Sub Committee.

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

There was circulated Report No. PC/2/23 by the Head of Corporate Finance which updated Members on matters relating to the administration of the Highland Council Pension Fund

It was highlighted that contributions from scheme employers were all being received on time and all contributions were up to date. Also, the transfer of Highlands and Islands Enterprise members to the Highland Council Pension Fund was completed in October 2022. This move was fully guaranteed by the Scottish Government and would not create a risk to the Fund. Discussions were ongoing with West Highland College regarding entry to the scheme and arranging a suitable guarantee. The guaranteed minimum pension comparison exercise was nearing completion and this would ensure that both details of guaranteed minimum pensions and periods of contracted out service, which were used to determine entitlement to the new single state pension, were up to date and robust.

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

#### **5. Draft Annual Audit Plan 2022/23 (External Audit Report) Dreachd Phlana Sgrùdaidh Bliadhna 2022/23 (Aithisg Sgrùdaidh bhon Taobh A-muigh)**

There was a verbal report by Audit Scotland on their draft annual audit plan setting out the work they planned to undertake as part of the audit of the pension fund.

The Auditors welcomed the opportunity to work with the Committee/Board and Officers on the external audit. They had completed the handover arrangements with the former external auditor, Grant Thornton and were now undertaking audit planning work. It was expected that the final audit plan would be issued in a few weeks time. The Auditors would report back to the Committee/Board in September 2023 at the final accounts stage.

The Committee **NOTED** the update on the draft Annual Audit Plan 2022/23 (External Audit Report).

## 6. Internal Audit In-Sgrùdadh

### 6.a Highland Council Pension Fund Internal Audit Annual Plan 2023/24 Plana Bliadhnail In-Sgrùdadh Maoin Peinnsein Chomhairle na Gàidhealtachd 2023/24

There was circulated Report No. PC/3/23 by the Strategic Lead (Corporate Audit & Performance) which provided the audits contained in the 2023/24 Internal Audit Plan.

It was queried if the Fund's Environmental, Social and Governance requirements would be monitored to ensure they were properly observed in investments. An undertaking was given to consider this in the scope of the audit.

The Committee:-

- i. **APPROVED** the 2023/24 Audit Plan; and
- ii. **NOTED** that consideration in the scope of the audit would be given to monitoring how the Fund's Environmental, Social and Governance requirements were being properly observed in investments.

### 6.b Highland Council Pension Fund Internal Report - Audit of Pension Fund Contributions Aithisg In-Sgrùdaidh Bliadhnail Maoin Peinnsein Chomhairle na Gàidhealtachd

There was circulated Report No. PC/4/23 by the Strategic Lead (Corporate Audit & Performance) which provided the audit review of Pension Fund Contributions.

It was a concern that there was a backlog in contribution records being kept up to date and reassurance was sought that there were targets to reduce this backlog in record keeping. It was advised that the target date for completion of the backlog in contribution records was 30 June 2023 and this would be monitored by the audit team to ensure progress had been made. The revised structure for the pensions team and additional resources in the team should address the issue of backlogs and updates on progress would be submitted in future reports to the Committee.

All employers were asked to complete a certificate of assurance and only a limited number had done so. It was queried what action was being taken to ensure employers were completing the certificate of assurance or were joining i-connect direct payroll transfer system. It was advised that certificate of assurance were only issued to employers not using the i-connect system and therefore it was only NHS Highland and University of Highlands and Islands that certificates were required. It was planned to have all employers join i-connect which had checks in place to provide assurance, so employers did not have to provide certification.

The Committee **NOTED** the content of the report and the audit opinion provided.

## 7. Risk Management Update Fios às Ùr mu Rianachd Chunnairt

There was circulated Report No. PC/5/23 by the Head of Corporate Finance which provided an update on the Fund's risk register and compliance with the Pension Fund Regulator requirements on internal controls.

The significant risks to the Pension Fund were highlighted as staffing resources and inflation. Having appropriately qualified and experienced staff was very important for the Pension Fund which was a specialist area and the new staff structure for the pensions team aimed to address the resources required to administer the Fund. Inflation was very high at present and this had an impact on the Fund. Increasing inflation would increase pension liabilities as these were inflation linked, with a potential increase to employer contributions. It was hoped that inflation would drop over the course of the year. As part of the triennial actuarial valuation to be completed by the Fund's Actuary as at 31 March 2023, assumptions about future inflation and its potential impact on liabilities and employer rates as well as on investment returns would be considered.

It was welcomed that all the risks were being managed well and stayed as minimal as possible and thanks for this were extended to Officers.

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

### **Mr Ed Foster, Head of Corporate Governance**

The Chair advised that Mr Ed Foster was leaving the Council at the beginning of March and on behalf of the Committee/Board extended his thanks to Ed for all his hard work and professionalism in his support of the work of the Committee/Board. Ed had always been very approachable and had always provided sound advice and knowledge to the Committee/Board on Pension Fund matters. Ed had been a pleasure to work with and while everyone was sorry to see him depart the Council, they wished him well for the future in his new employment.

The Committee/Board extended their appreciation to Ed in the usual manner.

Ed thanked the Committee/Board for the kind words and gave his own thanks to the Committee/Board who had been a pleasure to work with and extended his thanks and appreciation to the Finance team who were very much valued.

The meeting ended at 11.30 a.m.

## The Highland Council

Minutes of Meeting of the **Wester Ross, Strathpeffer and Lochalsh Committee** held remotely on 20 February 2023 at 10.30 am.

### Present:

Mrs I Campbell  
Dr C Birt

Mrs E Kraft  
Mr P Logue

### In attendance:

Mr W MacKinnon, Ward Manager, Communities and Place  
Ms J Wileman, Assistant Ward Manager, Communities and Place  
Mr J Henderson, Policy Assistant Empty Homes & PRS Liaison  
Mr I Moncreith, Roads Operations Manager  
Mr D Manson, Principal Housing Officer  
Ms S Lamb; Project Officer (Community Regeneration)  
Miss J MacLennan, Democratic Services Manager, Corporate Governance  
Ms R Ross, Administrative Assistant, Corporate Governance

### Also in attendance:

Insp. R.Ross – Police Scotland

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

### Business

#### 1. Apologies for Absence Leisgeulan

There were no apologies for absence.

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

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

Item 7 – Mr P. Logue

#### 3. Police – Area Performance Summary Poilis – Geàrr-chunntas Dèanadais Sgìreil

There had been circulated Report No WRSL/001/23 dated 9 February 2023 by the North Area Commander.

During discussion the following issues were raised:-

- the Rural Watch programme was welcomed as it would help Members to spread information to the community especially in relation to fraud;
- concern was expressed about the increase in the number of missing people, especially adults; and
- the work being done with children's homes to help decrease the number of missing looked after children was welcomed.

The Committee **NOTED** progress made against the objectives set within the Highland Local Policing Plan 2020-2023 Year 1, attached as Annex A to the report, for the period covering 01 April 2022 - 31 December 2022.

#### 4. Area Roads Capital Programme 2023/24 Prògram Calpa Rathaidean Sgìreil 2023/24

There had been circulated Report No WRS/002/23 dated 15 December 2022 by Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure, Environment & Economy.

During discussion the following issues were raised:-

- it was queried how the areas selected for repair were chosen with attention being drawn to the road between Dingwall and Strathpeffer which was not listed on the report despite being thought to be in a worse condition than the area near Kinellan Drive which was listed;
- in response to a query it was confirmed that the sections of road listed on the report as being dependent on additional funding were not presented in any particular order;
- plans for a section of the C1055 to be overlaid were welcomed;
- confirmation was sought, and provided, that ongoing repairs and patching would still be done on roads that were not on the Capital Plan;
- attention was drawn to the bad condition of the road between Achnashellach and Garve;
- in response to a query, it was clarified that Lochalsh was included within the Ross and Cromarty Capital Roads budget;
- clarification was sought on why surface dressing was used instead of overlay in some cases; and
- the use of the Pothole Pro machine was welcomed.

The Committee:-

- **APPROVED** the proposed 2023/24 Area Roads Capital Programme for Wester Ross, Strathpeffer and Lochalsh Area; and
- **AGREED** to remove the section of road from Glenelg to Donovan Sawmill from the Area Roads Capital Programme with the funds instead being spent on Glenbeag and Moil Road.

#### 5. Wester Rosss, Strathpeffer and Lochalsh HRA Capital Programme 2023/27

### **Prògram Calpa Cunntas Teachd-a-steach Taigheadais Rois an Iar, Shrath Pheofhair is Loch Aillse 2023/27**

There had been circulated Report No WRSL/005/22 dated 3 February 2023 by Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure, Environment & Economy.

The Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the update on the 2022-23 Wester Ross, Strathpeffer and Lochalsh HRA Capital Programme at section 5 of the report;
- ii. **NOTED** the resources available to Wester Ross, Strathpeffer and Lochalsh at paragraph 6.7 of the report;
- iii. **AGREED** the proposed investment priorities in the HRA Capital Programme for Wester Ross, Strathpeffer and Lochalsh 2023-27 as set out in Appendix 1 of the report; and
- iv. **NOTED** that updates on the Housing Revenue Account Capital Programme would continue to be provided through ward briefings and at future Local Committees as requested by local Members, in addition to reporting to Housing and Property Committee.

### **6. Housing Revenue Account: Garage Rents 2023/24 Cunntas Teachd-a-steach Taigheadais: Màil Gharaidsean 2023/24**

There had been circulated Report No WRSL/004/22 dated 6 February 2023 by Executive Chief Officer Housing and Property.

During discussion the following issues were raised:-

- attention was drawn to the fact that garages were often too small for modern cars;
- a question was asked about the viability of installing EV charging points in garages;
- in response to a question, it was clarified that a consultation with garage tenants was included in the consultation with housing tenants; and
- attention was drawn to the fact that a rent increase of 7% would amount to an increase of about £3 per month.

The Committee **AGREED** a 7% rent increase to apply to Wester Ross, Strathpeffer and Lochalsh Garages and Garage Sites.

### **7. Community Regeneration Fund Applications Iarrtasan Maoin Ath-bheothachadh Coimhearsnachd**

**Transparency Statement: Mr P Logue made a Transparency Statement in as a close family member had recently resigned from the board of Balmacara Community Trust. However, having applied the objective test, he did not consider that he had an interest to declare.**

There had been circulated Report No WRSL/005/22 dated 3 February 2023 by Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure, Environment & Economy.

The Committee **AGREED** to grant funding for all applications less the generic overhead costs for Gale Action forum and less £3101 for Strathpeffer Residents Association.

**8. Minutes**  
**Geàrr-chunntas**

There had been circulated for noting Minutes of Meeting of the Wester Ross, Strathpeffer and Lochalsh Committee held on 8 November 2022 which were approved by the Council on 8 December 2022.

The Committee **NOTED** the minutes.

The meeting concluded at 11.45 am

## The Highland Council

Minutes of Meeting of the **Corporate Resources Committee** held in the Chamber, Council Headquarters, Inverness on Wednesday 22 February 2023 at 10.30 am.

### Present:

Ms S Atkin (substitute)	Mr D Louden
Mr M Baird	Mr A MacDonald
Mr R Bremner	Mr G Mackenzie
Mr J Bruce	Mr S Mackie
Mrs G Campbell-Sinclair	Mr D Millar
Mr A Christie	Mr C Munro
Mr R Gale	Mr P Oldham
Mr S Kennedy	Mr R Stewart
Mr B Lobban	

### Non-Members also present:

Ms S Fanet	Mr R MacKintosh
Mr J Finlayson	Mr T MacLennan
Mr K Gowans	Mr J McGillivray
Mrs B Jarvie	Mr M Reiss

### Officials in Attendance:

Mrs K Lackie, Interim Chief Executive  
 Mr M MacLeod, Interim Depute Chief Executive  
 Mr E Foster, Head of Finance, Resources and Finance  
 Mrs S McKandie, Head of Revenues and Customer Services, Resources and Finance  
 Ms E Barrie, Interim Head of HR, Resources and Finance  
 Mr D Scott, ICT Transformation Manager, Performance and Governance  
 Mrs L Dunn, Joint Democratic Services Manager, Performance and Governance  
 Ms A Macrae, Senior Committee Administrator, Performance and Governance  
 Ms R Ross, Committee Administrator, Performance and Governance

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

**Mr D Louden in the Chair**

## BUSINESS

### 1. Apologies for Absence Leisgeulan

Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of Mr M Green and Mr A Rhind.

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

The Committee **NOTED** the following:

- Transparency Statements: Items 5, 6.b, 10, 11.ii – Mr A Christie
- Transparency Statement: Item 9 – Mr R Stewart

### 3. Preliminaries/Good News Naidheachdan Matha

#### Preliminaries

The Chair advised that this was Mr E Foster's last meeting of the Committee before leaving the Council to take up a new post. He paid tribute to Mr Foster's sage advice during his tenure which had been highly valued and appreciated by Members and conveyed best wishes to Mr Foster and family for the future.

#### Good News

The Chair advised that the Council had signed up to the Scottish Government Young Person's Guarantee Scheme which demonstrated the organisation's ongoing commitment to the supporting young people into the world of work with the aim of retaining young talent within Highland. He detailed the activity of work being undertaken for young people within the Council through Scheme, The My Future, My Success programme, the Employability Service and Modern Apprenticeships. The Council was committed to providing work experience and where possible to support requests from schools/colleges. The Council was also committed to supporting the most vulnerable young people particularly with barriers to attendance and vulnerabilities to achieving a positive destination after education.

The Chair acknowledged the excellent collaboration within the Council on this activity of work and thanked all officers involved in delivering on the commitment of the Young Person Guarantee Scheme.

The Committee **NOTED** this item.

### 4. Late Submission of Expenses Claims A' Cur A-steach airson Cosgaisean Anmoch

It had previously been agreed by the Corporate Resources Committee that late submissions of Elected Members expenses claims would be presented to the Committee for approval.

The Committee **APPROVED** the following claims:

- i. Mr Laurie Fraser £88.20 mileage for the months of June and August 2022; and
- ii. Mr Russell Jones £495.90 mileage for the months of July, August, September and October 2022.

### 5. Corporate Revenue and Capital Monitoring Report to 31 December 2022 Aithisg Teachd-a-steach Corporra agus Sgrùdadh gu 31 Dùbhlachd 2022

**Transparency Statement:** Mr A Christie made a Transparency Statement in respect of this item as he had a connection in his capacity as a Non-executive director of NHS Highland. However, having applied the objective test, reviewed his position in relation to the item and any personal connection, he did not consider that he had an interest to declare.

#### a. Corporate Revenue Monitoring to 31 December 2022 Sgrùdadh Teachd-a-steach Corporra gu 31 Dùbhlachd 2022

There had been circulated Report No **RES/01/23** by the Head of Corporate Finance.

During discussion, Members raised the following main points:-

- concern at the scheduling of the Corporate Resources Committee close to the forthcoming full Council meetings in March 2023, particularly the budget meeting. An assurance was provided that the scheduling of meetings would be considered to ensure this situation did not arise next year;
- confirmation was sought and provided that it was hoped there would be further improvement in the outturn position by the end of the next quarter, factoring in the effect of industrial action by teachers and the recent mild weather in relation to winter maintenance. However, it was important Members were mindful of the potential impact of unforeseen events;
- clarification was sought and provided that in relation to the significant underspend on Covid 19 funding, a review of earmarked reserves would form part of the budget papers to be considered by the Council on 2 March 2023; and
- the contribution the management of staff vacancies had made to the savings achieved on the Education and Learning budget. It was confirmed this information would be provided directly to Mr R Stewart outwith the meeting.

Thereafter, the Committee **NOTED** the:

- i. financial position of the General Fund and HRA revenue budgets as at 31 December 2022 and the estimated year end forecast; and
- ii. status of budgeted savings in the year.

**b. Corporate Capital Monitoring to 31 December 2022**  
**Sgrùdadh Calpa Corporra gu 31 Dùbhlachd**

There had been circulated Report No **RES/02/23** by the Head of Corporate Finance.

During discussion, Members raised the following main points:-

- concern at the impact of the delay by the Scottish Government in announcing the successful projects for funding from the Learning Estate Investment Programme on the ability of the Council to develop and set its capital programme;
- there was awareness of the current challenges in terms of contractor availability and rising inflation, however the Capital Programme was essential to communities and economic development in the Highlands; and
- the difficult circumstances facing Government and the Council at the current time. A seminar on the Capital Programme had been arranged at which it would be helpful to have Members input. Detailed consideration of the Programme was required irrespective of the Scottish Government's announcement.

Thereafter, Mr A Christie seconded by Mr A MacDonald moved to approve the recommendations as set out in the report along with a further recommendation that a letter be sent by the end of this month signed by all Group Leaders expressing concern over the delay in announcing the successful projects for funding from the Learning Estate Investment Programme. The letter should include reference to the disappointment the failure to announce was having on children, parents, and staff at Beaully Primary, Dunvegan Primary, Park Primary, Tornagrain Primary and St Clements school, as well as the consequent delay the Highland Council now faced as a direct result in setting the Capital Programme.

Mr D Loudon seconded by Mr C Munro moved as an amendment the recommendations as set out in the report.

On a vote being taken, there were 6 votes for the motion, 10 for the amendment and no abstentions, and the **AMENDMENT** was carried, the votes having been cast as follows:

**For the motion:** Mr M Baird, Mr J Bruce, Mr A Christie, Mr R Gale, Mr A MacDonald, Mr R Stewart

**For the amendment:** Mrs S Atkin, Mr R Bremner, Mr G Campbell-Sinclair, Mr S Kennedy, Mr B Lobban, Mr D Louden, Mr G Mackenzie, Mr D Millar, Mr C Munro, Mr P Oldham

### **Decision**

The Committee **NOTED** the:

- i. spend for Q3 2022/23, the estimated year end outturn and the funding profile;
- ii. whole life financial overview and risk assessment rating for the major capital projects; and
- iii. review of the capital programme remained ongoing and an update would be brought to Council in March 2023.

## **6. Revenue and Performance Monitoring to 31 December 2022 Sgrùdadh Teachd-a-steach agus Coileanadh gu 31 Dùbhlachd 2022**

### **a. Depute Chief Executive's Service Seirbheis an Iar-Àrd-Oifigeir**

There had been circulated Report No **RES/03/23** by the Interim Chief Executive/Chief Executive.

The Committee considered and **NOTED** the:

- i. latest forecasted outturn for Quarter 3 for the 2022/23 financial year; and
- ii. performance information provided at Section 7 of the report.

### **b. Resources and Finance Service Seirbheis nan Goireasan agus an Ionmhais**

**Transparency Statement:** Mr A Christie made a Transparency Statement in respect of this item as he had a connection in his capacity as General Manager of Inverness, Badenoch & Strathspey Citizen's Advice Bureau. However, having applied the objective test, reviewed his position in relation to the item and any personal connection, he did not consider that he had an interest to declare.

There had been circulated Report No **RES/04/23** by the Interim Chief Executive.

The Committee **NOTED** the:

- i. Revenue position for Quarter 3 period to 31 December 2022;
- ii. statutory performance indicators, local key performance measures and where available, comparisons to Scottish averages; and
- iii. effectiveness of the standard and level of services provided by the Resources and Finance Directorate and alignment with the Council's commitment to Best Value and continuous improvement.

**c. Performance and Governance Service  
Seirbheis a' Choileanaidh agus an Riaghlachais**

There had been circulated Report No **RES/05/23** by the Executive Chief Officer Performance and Governance/Interim Chief Executive.

The Committee **NOTED** the:

- i. revenue monitoring position for the period 1 April 2022 to 31 December 2022;
- ii. Directorate was on track to deliver all approved savings by the end of the financial year; and
- iii. Directorate's performance information.

**7. Treasury Management - Summary of Transactions  
Rianachd Ionmhais - Geàrr-chunntas Ghnothaichean**

There had been circulated Report No **RES/06/23** by the Head of Corporate Finance.

In discussion, Members raised the following main points:-

- the Head of Corporate Finance be commended on converting short term loans into longer term borrowing through the Public Works Loan Board at a very favourable rate prior to the increase in interest rates, resulting in significant reductions in loan repayments for the Council;
- clarification was sought and provided that security was a main consideration for the Council when undertaking borrowing and ensuring the Council's borrowing was spread across different counterparty organisations. A counterparty limit was set for each lender to mitigate against circumstances where an individual organisation failed;
- an opinion was sought and provided on the predictions for interest rates going forward and reference was made to the importance to having flexibility in terms of having some element of short term borrowing; and
- a report be brought forward on the UK Bank Bail-in Legislation and its possible impacts to the Council. It was confirmed that a response would be provided directly to Mr T MacLennan on this request.

The Committee considered and **NOTED** the Treasury Management Summary of Transactions reports for the period to 31 December 2022.

**8. Banking and Related Financial Transactions – Authorised Signatories  
Gnothachasan Ionmhasail Bancaireachd is a' Buntainn ri Bancaireachd – Luchd-soidhnigidh Ùghdarraichte**

There had been circulated Report No **RES/07/23** by the Head of Corporate Finance.

The Committee **APPROVED** the:

- i. deletion of Margaret Grigor, Finance Manager Corporate Budgeting, Treasury & Taxation from the list of authorised signatories for banking and related financial transactions with immediate effect;
- ii. deletion of Edward Foster, Head of Corporate Finance from the list of authorised signatories for banking and related financial transactions with effect from 3 March 2023; and

- iii. addition of Brian Porter, Head of Resources and Sheila McKandie, Head of Revenues and Customer Services to the authorised signatories list with immediate effect.

**9. Grievance Policy and Guidance Review and Update**  
**Ath-sgrùdadh is Ùrachadh den Phoileasaidh is den Stiùireadh Ghearanan**

**Transparency Statement: Mr R Stewart made a Transparency Statement in respect of this item as he had a connection on the basis that a family member was an employee of Highland Council. However, having applied the objective test, reviewed his position in relation to the item and any personal connection, he did not consider that he had an interest to declare.**

There had been circulated Report No **RES/08/23** by the Interim Depute Chief Executive.

- confirmation was sought and provided that the updated policy would apply only to new grievances;
- an assurance was sought and provided that the policy and guidance sought to reinforce statutory requirements and good practice;
- the number of grievances that had been submitted over the past year and the number that had progressed to a Members stage 3 hearing. It was confirmed this information would be provided directly to Mr R Stewart outwith the meeting;
- further clarity was sought and provided as to the process to be followed when an employee had both a grievance and disciplinary process being conducted in tandem;
- concern as to why union colleagues had agreed to the removal of Member involvement at stage 3 of the process on the basis this provided for extra scrutiny and was beneficial to their members and those not in a union. It was explained this was in line with best practice and without infringing the rights of an individual sought to ensure staff received an appropriate hearing for their grievance and a quicker resolution;
- it should be mandatory for all managers within the Council to receive robust induction training on human resources matters such as grievances and disciplinary processes, including retrospectively, and for refresher training to be provided; and
- the implementation of the updated policy and guidance and impact on staff would be reviewed in six months and a report brought back to the Committee.

The Committee:

- i. **APPROVED** the updated Grievance and Resolution Policy and Guidance as outlined in Sections 5 and 6 of the report; and
- ii. **AGREED** that implementation of the updated policy and guidance be monitored and reviewed.

**10. Recognition of the King's Coronation**  
**Aithne do Chrùnadh an Rìgh**

**Transparency Statement: Mr A Christie made a Transparency Statement in respect of this item as he had a connection in his capacity as a Non-executive director of NHS Highland. However, having applied the objective test, reviewed his position in relation to the item and any personal connection, he did not consider that he had an interest to declare.**

There had been circulated Report No **RES/09/23** by the Interim Chief Executive.

The Committee:

- i. **APPROVED** an additional bank holiday on Monday 8 May 2023 for all staff;
- ii. **NOTED** offices, service points, council run ELCs and schools (subject to the Scottish Government approval as outlined in paragraphs 3.5 and 4.4 of the report) would be closed; and
- iii. **NOTED** that normal emergency response would be available from services on 8 May 2023 with enhanced payments applying.

## **MINUTES OF MEETINGS GEÀRR-CHUNNTAS CHOINNEAMHAN**

### **11. Minutes of Meetings Geàrr-chunntasan Choinneamhan**

**Transparency Statement: Mr A Christie made a Transparency Statement in respect of item 11.ii as he had a connection in his capacity as a Non-executive director of NHS Highland. However, having applied the objective test, reviewed his position in relation to the item and any personal connection, he did not consider that he had an interest to declare.**

The following Minutes of Meetings had been circulated and:

- i. **APPROVED** - Central Safety Committee – 2 December 2022;
- ii. **APPROVED** - Staff Partnership Forum – 1 February 2023; and
- iii. **NOTED** - Appeals & Disputes Committee – 3 February and 17 February 2023.

The meeting was closed at 11.45pm.

## The Highland Council

Minutes of Meeting of the **Communities and Place Committee** held in the Council Chamber, Council Headquarters, Glenurquhart Road, Inverness on Thursday 23 February 2023 at 10.30 am.

### Present:

Mr A Baldrey (remote)	Mr P Logue (remote)
Mr J Bruce	Mr W MacKay (remote)
Mr J Finlayson (remote)	Mr G MacKenzie (Chair)
Mr L Fraser (remote)	Ms K MacLean (substitute)
Mr R Gale	Mr H Morrison (Vice Chair)
Mr A Graham	Ms L Niven (remote)
Mr R Gunn	Ms M Nolan (remote)
Mrs J Hendry	Mrs M Reid (substitute)
Mrs B Jarvie (remote)	

### Non-Members also present:

Mr M Baird (remote)	Mr T MacLennan (remote)
Dr C Birt (remote)	Mr D Macpherson (remote)
Mrs I Campbell	Mrs B McAllister (remote)
Mr A Christie (remote)	Mr J McGillivray (remote)
Ms S Fanet (remote)	Mr C Munro (remote)
Mr D Fraser (remote)	Mrs M Paterson
Mr S Kennedy	Mrs T Robertson
Mr R MacKintosh (remote)	

### In attendance:

Mr A Gunn, Executive Chief Officer, Communities and Place  
 Ms C Campbell, Head of Community Operations and Logistics  
 Ms A Clark, Head of Community Support and Engagement  
 Ms S McKandie, Head of Revenues and Customer Services  
 Mr A McKinnie, Strategic Lead, Waste Strategy and Operations  
 Mr A Yates, Strategic Lead, Environmental Health and Bereavement Services  
 Miss M Murray, Interim Principal Administrator  
 Ms R Ross, Committee Officer

### Also in attendance:

Chief Superintendent R Shepherd, Police Scotland

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

## Mr G MacKenzie in the Chair

### Business

#### 1. Apologies for Absence Leisgeulan

Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of Mr M Cameron, Ms T Collier and Mr M Green.

## 2. **Declarations of Interest** **Foilseachaidhean Com-pàirt**

There were no Declarations of Interest.

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

The Chair spoke to a number of good news items as follows:-

- Graeme Turnbull, Acting Fleet Coordinator in the Transport and Logistics team, had successfully passed his transport manager qualification and had achieved a Certificate of Professional Competence for Transport Managers in Road Haulage.
- Sara Krzyzanowski, Customer Services Officer at the Dingwall Service Point, had been successful in passing the examination for the Certificate in the Law & Practice of Registration in Scotland. Having another fully qualified Registrar in Highland was to be welcomed.
- Annemarie MacAlpine, Customer Services Operations Manager, had been nominated by fellow members of the Executive Council for the position of Vice President of the Association of Registrars of Scotland and would take up this position at the Annual General Meeting in Edinburgh in May. After a period of two years as Vice President, Annemarie would then take on the mantle of President of the Association.

On behalf of the Committee, the Chair offered his congratulations to these three members of staff for their significant achievements and raising the profile of Highland.

The Committee **NOTED** the good news.

## 4a. **Police Performance Report** **Aithisg Coileanaidh Poileis**

There had been circulated Report No CP/1a/23 by the Divisional Commander, Police Scotland.

The Chair welcomed Chief Superintendent Shepherd to his first meeting of the Committee since his appointment as Divisional Commander and looked forward to working with him in a full and cooperative fashion.

Chief Superintendent Shepherd introduced himself and expressed thanks to his predecessor, Chief Superintendent Trickett, for his hard work during his tenure. He went on to introduce the Performance Report, explaining that he proposed, in future, to include additional statistics that might be of interest to Councillors and communities, namely, public confidence rating, satisfaction of service users, and 101 and 999 call information. He also provided operational updates on the Local Policing Strategic Demand Review; resourcing and custody provision in Caithness; proposals for a new Police Station in the Alness area; Highland Blues, a six-part

documentary on Highland policing; and the Taser strategy. It was proposed to include similar updates in future performance reports.

During discussion, the following issues were raised and responded to:-

- transporting detainees from one area to another was costly and time-consuming, and a timescale was sought for the review of custody provision in Caithness;
- speeding in built-up areas was a common complaint at Community Council meetings, and it was questioned what could be done to reduce such instances and identify the culprits;
- concern was expressed that demand on policing continued to increase and was likely to be seen in statistics during the coming year;
- the implementation of technology, such as mobile devices, to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of policing in Highland was welcomed;
- reference was made to increasing instances of risk-taking driver behaviour and road rage, and the Driver Engagement North initiative was welcomed;
- concern was expressed regarding the increase in acquisitive crime and the long-lasting and profound effect on victims;
- information was sought as to how recruitment was progressing and how this would impact on the Chief Superintendent's plans;
- Local Members were concerned regarding the number of Police vacancies on Skye, despite being in the privileged position of having a Police Hostel;
- it was queried what Chief Superintendent Shepherd's plans were to visit rural areas to discuss issues of concern to local communities. For example, drugs were seen as a serious issue on Skye despite Police reports appearing to suggest otherwise;
- it was questioned whether the condition of roads was a contributing factor to fatal and serious road traffic accidents. Particular reference was made to the A9 which was of concern to many people;
- it would be useful if the New Driver Early Intervention Scheme could be expanded to include school pupils who were approaching driving age;
- further information was requested regarding the decrease in drug possession offences and whether this was linked to the reduction in Stop and Search;
- Members had heard previously about the difficulties the Police had in terms of detaining people with mental health issues, and further information was sought in that regard, including how the Police worked with NHS Highland;
- Members had previously raised concerns regarding having a centralised Armed Response Unit covering the whole of the Highlands and Islands, and the immediate response in terms of having Tasers in every Police Station and training many more officers was welcomed;
- the proposed additional statistics were welcomed, and this would be helpful across all Committees the Police reported to;
- concern was expressed that the statistics did not reflect all crime as many people gave up due to long response times when they called to report an incident;
- in Nairn there was a Police Station but no full-time Police officers, and it was suggested that people had become despondent about reporting crimes as officers had to come from elsewhere;
- people reported crime on housing estates to the Council's Housing Service rather than the Police due to fear of retribution, and there was a need for better

information sharing to resolve issues more quickly, particularly those relating to anti-social behaviour and drugs;

- it was hoped the Council could support calls for additional Scottish Government funding to aid Police resources in Highland and make it a safer place;
- greater Police visibility and engagement with schools and community groups would increase public confidence. However, it was recognised that time and resources were limited;
- further information was sought regarding blackmailing of vulnerable males; and
- it was queried how confident the Chief Superintendent was that new recruits could be retained in Highland for the duration of their career.

The Committee **NOTED** progress made against the objectives set within the Highland Local Policing Plan 2020-2023 Year 3, attached as Annex A to the report, for the period covering 1 April 2022 - 31 December 2022.

#### **4b. Highland Draft Local Police Plan 2023-2026 – Consultation Response Dreachd Phlana Poileis Ionadail na Gàidhealtachd 2023-2026 – Freagairt Cho-chomhairle**

There had been circulated Report No CP/1b/23 dated 6 February 2023 by Executive Chief Officer, Communities and Place.

The Committee **AGREED** the Council's response to the draft Highland Local Police Plan.

#### **5. Revenue Budget Monitoring Report: 2022/23 Quarter 3 Aithisg Sgrùdaidh Buidseat Teachd-a-steach: Cairteal 3 2022/23**

There had been circulated Report No CP/2/23 dated 8 February 2023 by the Executive Chief Officer, Communities and Place.

During discussion, the following issues were raised:-

- information was sought, and provided, as to whether there were any seasonal or other factors that were likely to significantly impact the final outturn, positively or negatively; what happened in the event of a budget deficit at the end of the financial year; and whether the vacancy rate was expected to increase from the current 11% and if there would be an impact on service provision as a result; and
- reference was made to the issues that had been experienced in some Inverness Wards last year in terms of grass-cutting, and an assurance was sought that recruitment of seasonal staff was taking place sufficiently early to ensure grass-cutting could commence in April/May. The Chair assured Members that recruitment to seasonal posts was already underway. A great deal of thought had been given to the recruitment challenges that had been experienced, and measures such as converting some seasonal posts to permanent positions to make them more attractive to potential candidates were being explored.

The Committee **NOTED**:-

- i. the forecasted outturn for the 22/23 Revenue budget for the Communities and Place Service as at Quarter 3 was £1.210m overspend;
- ii. higher costs pertaining to fuel and parts including vehicle components, spares and tyres were placing significant pressures on the budget.

## 6. Capital Budget Monitoring Report: 2022/23 Quarter 3 Aithisg Sgrùdaidh Buidseat Calpa: Cairteal 3 2022/23

There had been circulated Report No CP/3/23 dated 31 January 2023 by the Executive Chief Officer, Communities and Place.

During discussion, the following issues were raised:-

- information was sought, and provided, regarding the slippage in respect of fleet and its impact on service provision;
- a number of public conveniences across Highland had been the subject of vandalism and some were closed as a result. However, there appeared to be a reluctance to install CCTV in certain areas, even where Community Councils had offered to fund it, and it was queried how that could be overcome. The Head of Community Operations and Logistics undertook to try to progress matters in respect of Golspie public conveniences. However, it was questioned whether CCTV would solve the problem;
- there had been a number of successful play park projects across Highland, and the partnership working that had taken place in that regard was commended. In addition, it was questioned whether there had been an explanation from the Scottish Government as to why a large proportion of play park funding would not be distributed until 2025/26;
- on the point being raised, the Chair confirmed that a further Members' visit to Inverness Waste Transfer Station could be arranged once it was operational;
- burial grounds were one of the most important services the Council provided and the need for long-term planning was emphasised, there being a large number with limited remaining capacity. Particular reference was made to Kilvean Cemetery, and it was suggested it was necessary to look for another major cemetery site in Inverness. Reassurance having been sought in respect of the various burial ground projects set out in Appendix 1 of the report, the Executive Chief Officer, Communities and Place, spoke to the clear governance arrangements in place and confirmed that a report on long-term planning could be presented to a future meeting to provide further reassurance; and
- on the point being raised, the Chair confirmed that a briefing on cemeteries in Nairn could be arranged for Local Members and suggested that Mr L Fraser contact the Strategic Lead, Environmental Health and Bereavement Services, in that regard.

The Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the forecasted capital outturn for the Communities and Place Service for 22/23 as at Quarter 3;
- ii. **APPROVED** the Play Park funding distribution proposals as detailed at section 4.9 of the report;
- iii. **NOTED** the current forecasts for the major projects in the Communities and Place Service; and
- iv. **AGREED** that a report on long-term planning in respect of burial grounds be presented to a future meeting of the Committee.

## 7. Environmental Health Performance 22/23 and Operational Plan to 23/24 Coileanadh Slàinte Àrainneachdail 22/23 agus Plana Obrachaidh gu 23/24

There had been circulated Report No CP/4/23 dated 3 February 2023 by the Executive Chief Officer, Communities and Place.

During discussion, the following issues were raised:-

- concern having been expressed regarding the increase in dog fouling, the Strategic Lead, Environmental Health and Bereavement Services, sought feedback from Members regarding problem areas and confirmed he was happy to look at where patrols could be increased, improving signage and whether there was any educational material that could be used. In addition, Members raised the issue of school fields being closed to the public after hours due to being unable to control dog fouling, and the the Strategic Lead, Environmental Health and Bereavement Services, undertook to liaise with colleagues in the Education and Learning Service in that regard;
- reference having been made to an abandoned catering van at Loch Lochy, the Strategic Lead, Environmental Health and Bereavement Services, confirmed that local officers were dealing with the matter and undertook to check the current position;
- constituents in Invergordon were concerned regarding the issue of seagulls and information was sought, and provided, as to whether there were any plans to reduce numbers in a safe and humane way. The Strategic Lead, Environmental Health and Bereavement Services, undertook to provide a Members' briefing on the matter. Members added that seagulls were now a red-listed endangered species, and it was necessary to be cognisant of that and engage with organisations such as the RSPB as to how best to deter them from urban areas without endangering them further; and
- Highland had some of the cleanest air in Britain but there were problem areas such as Academy Street and Telford Street in Inverness. It was confirmed that the annual Local Air Quality Progress Report to the Scottish Government could be provided to Mr A Graham for information.

The Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the Environmental Health performance in 2022/23 to date including delivering statutory duties to over 6000 properties on private water supplies, over 5000 food businesses, and responding to 12,000 annual service requests on a wide range of public health, nuisance, licensing, safety, dog control, animal health and incivility issues;
- ii. **APPROVED** the Environmental Health Operational Plan to 31 March 2024 as detailed in Appendix 1 of the report;
- iii. **NOTED** that the team was preparing annual reports on local Environmental Health team performance for Area Committees in 2023.

## 8. Joint Health Protection Plan 2023-2025 Co-Phlana Dion Slàinte 2023-2025

There had been circulated Report No CP/5/23 dated 2 February 2023 by the Executive Chief Officer, Communities and Place.

The Committee **APPROVED** the Joint Health Protection Plan 2023-2025.

**9. Highland Community Led Initiatives – Cost of Living Support Fund Update  
Iomairtean air an Stiùireadh le Coimhearsnachdan na Gàidhealtachd – Cunntas  
às Ùr mu Mhaoin Taic Cosgais Bith-beò**

There had been circulated Report No CP/6/23 dated 1 February 2023 by the Executive Chief Officer, Communities and Place.

During discussion, the following issues were raised:-

- the fact that the fund had been used so quickly was testament to how much it was needed;
- the number of projects coming to fruition throughout Highland was welcomed;
- it was questioned why there was a disparity in terms of the number of projects across the various areas and what the barriers were to carrying out such projects and applying for funding;
- the difference a local authority could make to people's lives in times of hardship was emphasised;
- the work being done by volunteers across many different kinds of organisations was acknowledged; and
- the need to build resilience and activity within communities was emphasised.

The Committee **NOTED**:-

- i. the process established to distribute the Cost of Living Support Fund; and
- ii. the awards made to date, including the range of initiatives supported to help alleviate the effects of the cost of living crisis in their communities.

**10. Update on Waste Strategy  
Cunntas às Ùr mu Ro-innleachd Sgudail**

There had been circulated Report No CP/7/23 dated 3 February 2023 by the Executive Chief Officer, Communities and Place.

During discussion, the following issues were raised:-

- it was questioned if there was a plan in place in the event the funding application to Zero Waste Scotland was unsuccessful, and how much financial gain could be expected from an increase in recycling;
- support was expressed for the proposed works at Skye Waste Transfer Station;
- clarification was sought, and provided, concerning the recommendations in the report. It was confirmed that acceptance of the funding included acceptance of the service changes to be funded;
- the provision of an extra bin for every household could put pressure on space in communal areas, especially in blocks of flats, and adaptations to bin storage at Council-owned properties might be required;
- the need to provide education and information to households on the proposed service changes was emphasised;
- more detailed information on the long-term revenue implications of the proposed service changes was requested and the Strategic Lead, Waste Strategy and Operations, undertook to provide this at a future meeting of the Committee;

- members of the public had expressed confusion around the rules about bringing trailers and vans with DIY waste to Recycling Centres, and clarification was sought, and provided, in that regard; and
- on the point being raised, it was confirmed that glass recycling banks would continue to be in operation.

The Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the contents of the report;
- ii. **APPROVED** the acceptance of funding to enable service change should the Highland Council's application to the Scottish Governments Recycling Improvement Fund (RIF) be successful; and
- iii. **NOTED** the updated position on Waste Transfer Station Infrastructure in Aviemore, Inverness and Fort William.

#### **11. Minutes of the Waste Strategy Working Group Geàrr-chunntas Buidheann Obrach Ro-innleachd Sgudail**

The Minutes of the Waste Strategy Working Group held on 19 January 2023 were **APPROVED**.

The meeting concluded at 1.00 pm.

## The Highland Council

Minutes of Special Meeting of the **Isle of Skye and Raasay Committee (Comataidh an Eilein Sgitheanaich agus Ratharsair)** held remotely on **Monday, 27 February, 2023 at 9.00 am.**

### Present:

Mr J Finlayson  
Mr D Millar

Mr C Munro  
Mr R Stewart

### Participating Officials:

Mr W MacKinnon, Ward Manager, Communities & Place  
Ms L MacKellaich, Road Safety Officer, Infrastructure, Environment & Economy  
Mr R Bartlett, Road Safety Technician, Infrastructure, Environment & Economy  
Mr A MacInnes, Committee Officer, Performance & Governance

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

### Mr J Finlayson – Cathraiche (Chair)

#### 1. Apologies for Absence Leisgeulan

There were no apologies for absence.

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

There were no declarations of interest.

#### 3. Kyleakin – Proposed One Way Road Traffic Regulation Order Caol Acain – Òrdugh Riaghladh Trafaig Rathaid Aon Slighe ga Mholadh

There was circulated Report No. SR/7/23 by the Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure, Environment and Economy which invited Members to approve the introduction of a One-way System, Traffic Regulation Order on the U4887 Kyleakin (Link Road) and U4885 Kyleakin (W. Side King's Arms), Kyleakin.

There was 1 unresolved objection which stated that the proposal for the One-way System and associated footpath on the U4887 Kyleakin (Link Road) would remove the ability to park on the street. In response to the objection, it was highlighted that there was alternative parking to the U4885 Kyleakin Link Road; the property in question had off street parking in the form of a private driveway and there was also on street parking available on the A850 Kyleside.

Members supported the proposal for the introduction of a One-way System as detailed in the report in the interests of road safety for all road users and noted that the statutory consultation had been undertaken.

The Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the background to the proposed One-way System Traffic Regulation Order and the representations received;
- ii. **NOTED** the objection made to “The Highland Council (U4887 Kyleakin (Link Road) and U4885 Kyleakin (W. Side King’s Arms)), Kyleakin (One Way), Traffic Regulation Order 2022”;
- iii. **APPROVED** the making of the One-way System Traffic Regulation Order; and
- iv. **NOTED** the intention to monitor the area after the introduction of the One Way System including commissioning a traffic survey to determine effectiveness of the new road layout.

The meeting ended at 9.07 a.m.