

Minutes of Meetings

To be submitted to the Council

On

29 June 2023

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The Highland Council
No. 3 2023/2024

Minutes of Meeting of the Highland Council held in the Council Chamber, Council Headquarters, Glenurquhart Road, Inverness on Thursday, 11 May 2023 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 C Ballance	Mr D Louden
Mr A Baldrey	Mr A MacDonald
Dr C Birt	Mr W MacKay (Remote)
Mr B Boyd (Remote)	Mr G MacKenzie
Mr R Bremner	Mrs I MacKenzie
Mr I Brown	Mr S Mackie (Remote)
Mr J Bruce	Mr A MacKintosh
Mr M Cameron	Mr R MacKintosh
Mrs I Campbell	Mrs A MacLean
Mrs G Campbell-Sinclair	Ms K MacLean
Mr A Christie	Mr T MacLennan
Mrs M Cockburn	Mr D Macpherson
Ms T Collier (Remote)	Ms M MacCallum (Remote)
Mrs H Crawford	Ms J McEwan
Ms S Fanet	Mr J McGillivray (Remote)
Mr J Finlayson (Remote)	Mr D Millar
Mr D Fraser	Mr H Morrison (Remote)
Mr L Fraser	Mr C Munro
Mr R Gale	Mrs P Munro
Mr K Gowans	Ms L Niven
Mr J Grafton	Ms M Nolan
Mr A Graham	Mr P Oldham
Mr M Green	Mrs M Paterson
Mr R Gunn	Ms S Rawlings (Remote)
Mrs J Hendry	Mrs M Reid
Ms M Hutchison	Mr M Reiss
Mr A Jarvie	Mr K Rosie (Remote)
Mrs B Jarvie (Remote)	Mrs L Saggars
Ms L Johnston	Mr A Sinclair (Remote)
Mr R Jones	Mr R Stewart
Mr S Kennedy	Ms K Willis
Ms E Knox	

In Attendance:

Interim Chief Executive
Interim Deputy Chief Executive
Interim 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
Interim Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure, Environment and Economy
Executive Chief Officer Housing and Property

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

Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of Mr D Gregg, Mrs B McAllister, Mr A Rhind, Mrs T Robertson and Ms M Smith.

**2. Declarations of Interest/Transparency Statement
Foillseachaidhean Com-pàirt/ Aithris Fhollaiseachd**

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

Item 7 – Mr R MacKintosh
Item 10 – Mr R MacKintosh

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

Item 6 v – Mr C Munro
Item 7 – Mr A Christie
Item 10 – Mr A Christie

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

There had been submitted for confirmation as a correct record the Minutes of Meeting of the Council held on 9 March 2023 as contained in the Volume which had been circulated separately.

The Council **APPROVED** the Minutes of Meeting of the Council held 9 March 2023.

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

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

Easter Ross Area Committee (Special Meeting)	13 March 2023
Climate Change Committee	16 March 2023
Nairnshire Committee	21 March 2023
Audit and Scrutiny Committee	23 March 2023
City of Inverness and Area Committee (Special Meeting)	23 March 2023
Gaelic Committee	30 March 2023
Comataidh na Gaidhlig	30 Màrt 2023
Housing and Property Committee	27 April 2023
Economy and Infrastructure Committee	4 May 2023

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

Economy and Infrastructure Committee: 4 May 2023

Starred Item 18 iii – Appointment to the Board of Tornagrain Conservation Trust

AGREED to appoint Mrs M Reid to serve as a Director on the Board of the Tornagrain

Notice of Amendment – Highly Protected Marine Areas Consultation Response
Brath Atharrachaidh – Freagairt Co-chomhairleachadh nan Sgìrean Mara Fìor
Ghlèidhte

With reference to the Minutes of the Meeting of the Economy and Infrastructure Committee held on 4 May, the following Notice of Amendment had been received in accordance with Standing Order 13 –

“We, the undersigned, give this Notice of Amendment to rescind the decision of the Economy and Infrastructure Committee meeting on Thursday, 4 May 2023 to note the details of the HPMA’s and the proposals put forward by Scottish Government; agree to homologate the Council’s response to the consultation; and agree the next steps proposed for engaging with the process.

And instead move that the Council:

Note the details of the HPMA’s and the proposals put forward by Scottish Government; agree that the response reflects the view of a private political group within the Highland Council; and agree next steps proposed for engaging with this process.”

Signed: Mr R Stewart Mr P Logue Mrs H Crawford Mrs I MacKenzie Mrs L Siggers
Ms B Jarvie Mr J Bruce Mr S Mackie Mr A Sinclair

In this connection, there had been re-circulated Report No. ECI/25/2023 dated 5 April 2023 by the Interim Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure and Environment.

Speaking to the Amendment, Mr Stewart explained that the response had been formulated following consultation with only a few Elected Members, with no formal records made, and therefore he questioned its transparency and accountability. He argued therefore that this failed to reflect the diverse range of opinions and perspectives of the Council as a whole as well as communities. Only once since the May 2022 Council elections had a similar approach been adopted seeking homologation of a response but this had involved a much shorter timescale and yet there had still been an opportunity for all Members to express their views in advance. The HPMA consultation had opened on 12 December 2022 and closed on 17 April 2023 and it was argued therefore that there had been ample opportunity to include Member representation.

In response, the Chair of the Economy and Infrastructure Committee explained that the deadline for the consultation was the result of a debate scheduled at the Scottish Government on HPMA’s on 3 May 2023, the day before the Economy and Infrastructure Committee met. Therefore, the Council’s response reported to that Committee had been included as part of the debate. Another round of public consultation was to take place in 2025, open to anyone to participate.

During discussion the following points were made:-

- public accountability and transparency were important;
- HPMA’s were a substantive policy issue;
- the information received regarding the discussions which had taken place at the Senior Leadership Group had been reflected in the Notice of Amendment;
- in terms of the Scheme of Delegation, it was the responsibility of Strategic Committees to deal with responses to consultations from Scottish and Westminster Governments;
- it was questioned why 4 months had not been sufficient time to allow Members any opportunity to consider the matter. A meeting could easily have been called

expeditiously by using MS Teams to allow Members, especially those representing coastal communities, to participate;

- it was recognised that, in the past, there had been a need to respond to consultations expeditiously and this had been done by officers in consultation with relevant Members but, akin to workshops and seminars, it was contended sessions could be arranged to deal with matters such as this;
- due process had been followed and there would always be instances where decisions were needed as a matter of urgency. Nevertheless, there was acknowledgment that lessons would be taken to avoid a repeat where possible;
- many fishermen were opposed to HPMAs; and
- reductions in staff numbers had resulted in additional pressure on those remaining to respond to the various consultations and perhaps the time had now come to rely more on the expertise that existed across the Council Chamber.

Thereafter, Mr K Gowans, seconded by Mr M Green, **MOVED** the Minute of the Economy and Infrastructure as it stood in relation to its decision regarding the Council's response to the Highly Protected Marine Areas Consultation.

As an **AMENDMENT**, Mr R Stewart, seconded by Mr P Logue, moved the terms of the Notice of Amendment.

On a vote being taken, the **MOTION** received 49 votes and the **AMENDMENT** received 13 votes, with 7 abstentions, and the **MOTION** was therefore **CARRIED**, the votes having been cast as follows:-

For the Motion:

Mr C Aitken, 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, Mr A Christie, Mrs M Cockburn, Ms T Collier, Ms S Fanet, Mr J Finlayson, Mr D Fraser, Mr L Fraser, Mr K Gowans, Mr J Grafton, Mr A Graham, Mr M Green, Mrs J Hendry, Ms M Hutchison, Ms L Johnston, Mr R Jones, Mr S Kennedy, Ms E Knox, Ms L Kraft, Mr B Lobban, Mr D Loudon, Ms M MacCallum, Mr A MacDonald, Mr W MacKay, Mr S Mackie, Mr G MacKenzie, Mrs A MacLean, Ms K MacLean, Mr T MacLennan, Ms J McEwan, Mr D Millar, Mr H Morrison, Mr C Munro, Ms P Munro, Ms L Niven, Ms M Nolan, Mr P Oldham, Mrs M Paterson, Ms S Rawlings, Mrs M Reid, Mr K Rosie.

For the Amendment:

Mr M Baird, Mr J Bruce, Mr H Crawford, Mr A Jarvie, Mrs B Jarvie, Mr P Logue, Mrs I MacKenzie, Mr A MacKintosh, Mr D Macpherson, Mr M Reiss, Mrs L Sagers, Mr A Sinclair, Mr R Stewart.

Abstention:

Mr A Baldrey, Mr C Ballance, Mr R Gale, Mr R Gunn, Mr J McGillivray, Mr R MacKintosh, Ms K Willis.

Decision:

The Council:-

- i. **NOTED** the details of the HPMAs and the proposals put forward by Scottish Government;
- ii. **AGREED** to homologate the Council's response to the consultation; and
- iii. **AGREED** the next steps proposed for engaging with the process.

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

- i. **NOTED** Highland and Western Isles Valuation Joint Board held on 25 November 2022 and
- ii. **APPROVED** Redesign Board held on 30 March 2023.

5. Question Time Àm Ceiste

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

Member Questions

(1) Mr A Christie

To the Leader of the Council

Please could the leader of the Council list and give details of what he regards as the top five achievements of the Administration to date including the benefit to Highland residents (except for Opportunity Cromarty Firth)?

The response had been circulated.

In terms of a supplementary question, the Leader was asked to update the Council on a few of the failures of the Administration, for example the failure to secure LEIP funding from the Scottish Government for much needed new schools including St Clement's.

In response, Members were advised that information was still awaited of the process of securing LEIP funding and as soon as LEIP funding information was forthcoming the Council would be able to move forward with its Capital Programme.

(2) Mr A Christie

To the Leader of the Council

In the Budget the following two savings referred to Council officers working with the organisations to identify alternative sources of funding.

5.1 Review of the Early Years grants budget for non-statutory services with the view to full removal by the beginning of 2024/25. This is a legacy budget which does not provide funding equitably for all EY organisations across Highland and the organisations do not provide commissioned services provided through an SLA with the Council via this grant funding.

Organisations currently in receipt of grant funding from this budget are: SNAP £65k, Toybox Gairloch £10k, Pultneytown Peoples Project £25k, CSS £60k, Fas Mor £10k, Allsorts £10k.

To mitigate the financial impact of the removal of these grants, a 6 month notice period will be given from 01/04/23 – effectively providing a 50% reduction in year one. From the next financial year the full year saving total will be £0.180m. Officers will work with the organisations involved to identify alternative sources of funding to offset the reduction in the Early Years budget. There are a range of Council funds that can be applied to - the most likely, but not only, source being the Council's Coastal Communities strategic fund, where Members will be able to consider and approve applications on a bid by bid basis.

5.2 Remove legacy funding provided to a number of arts, culture, sports, music and community organisations. Where Service Level Agreements are in place, notice per the

terms of those agreements will be given. From the next financial year the full year saving total will be £0.107m. The organisations and savings are as follows: Aros (Skye) £7k, Highland Print Studio £7k, Lochaber Music School £9k, Village Hall grants scheme (£50k pan Highland) and Sports Council funding (£34k pan-Highland). The grant schemes for the final two funding streams have been under subscribed in recent years.

As with 5.1 above, to mitigate the financial impact of the removal of these grants, organisations will be supported by the Council to identify and apply for alternative funding options.

Please could the Leader of the Council detail for each organisation the engagement that has been carried out to date by Council officers together with the financial outcome resourced for each organisations for 2023/24 and 2024/25 including the budget area any funding has come from?

The response had been circulated.

In terms of a supplementary question, the Leader was asked if it was fair to assume that, as his answer did not address the question relating to 2024/25 funding, at this point no money had been identified for any of the groups listed on the paper.

In response, it was clarified that at the Council's Budget meeting back at the beginning of March it had been indicated that the Administration would be putting a budget review in place and that budget review would also be looking proactively in terms of the following year's budget. So, in terms of 2024/25, nothing had been allocated for anything. This has yet to be discussed throughout this budget year.

(3) Mr M Reiss

To the Leader of the Council

Please could you explain, in reasonable detail, why the publication by Highland Council of the annual SRCMS results have been delayed by several months past the expected or customary date, despite having been received by the Council at approximately the expected time. (The previous two surveys were published by the Council in November and December of the two preceding years).

The response had been circulated.

There was no supplementary question.

(4) Mr R Gale

To the Leader of the Council

Following on from the Motion that was agreed at the Full Council on the 8th of December can you provide details of what actions were taken by you to lobby the NHS and the Minister for Women's Health to ensure that the breast screening unit is available in villages and communities such as Helmsdale to ensure that every woman has access to this vital service.

The response had been circulated.

In terms of a supplementary question, it was requested that, in the absence of a response from NHS Highland to his letter in January, if the Leader would write them to again to seek an actual response.

In response, it was confirmed that this would be done as soon as possible.

(5) Mrs H Crawford

To the Leader of the Council

In relation to the implementation of the Deposit Return Scheme (DRS) in March 2024, to ask the Leader to please provide a comprehensive projected financial impact assessment of the DRS on Highland Council, including potential savings or net losses to Highland Council, the anticipated impact to sales revenue for glass, aluminium and plastic and the impact upon the current level of staffing for Highland Council's waste and recycling services.

The response had been circulated.

In terms of a supplementary question, information was requested as to what income had been received by Highland Council from the sales of aluminium and glass, each year, for the past five years.

In response, it was agreed that this information would be provided.

(6) Ms K Willis

To the Chair of Education Committee

The Soil Association's Food For Life programme supports local authorities to serve healthier, sustainable, and locally sourced food for school meals that have a positive impact on health, the environment, and the local economy.

Please can the chair provide information on how many nurseries, primary schools, and secondary schools in Highland currently have bronze, silver and gold Food For Life awards for their school meals service?

The response had been circulated.

In terms of a supplementary question, information was sought if the Highland Council was actively working with food for life to achieve Silver and Gold awards for its school meals.

In response, it was stated that this question should have been submitted to the Chair of the Housing and Property Committee, as this is within the remit of that Service, and that Chair would provide an answer to that question.

(7) Mr A Baldrey

To the Chair of the Economy and Infrastructure Committee

Bike Racks on Buses

In pursuit of net zero targets and to facilitate greater use of 'wheeling opportunities' it would be highly desirable to see bike racks placed on all buses.

As Highland Council now operates a number of buses, can action be taken to progress the installation of bike racks on its own bus fleet to act as a 'leading example' to other bus operators?

The response had been circulated.

In terms of a supplementary question, it was queried if investigations were being made into potential publicity and consultation to see how much demand there was for people to put their bikes on buses so that they could change from a car journey to work to a bus plus a bike journey to work.

In response, it was confirmed that as the Council moved forward it would need to look forward as to how it could add value to its Council bus services and bike racks and their appropriate deployment could, and should, be considered. In the first instance, officers would be asked to collate information on how this could be approached and how others do this so the Council would be better able to take advantage of any opportunities to enhance and expand the appeal of council bus service.

(8) Mr C Ballance

To the Leader of the Council

Youth Highland

To ask the Leader if he would be prepared to meet with Youth Highland, its funders and other key stakeholders to review the approach that has been trialled by the Voluntary Youth Network and to consider how this work could help inform decisions around shaping and delivering services in the future?

The response had been circulated.

There was no supplementary question.

(9) Mr P Logue

To the Leader of the Council

To ask for an update on progress towards reinstating weekend opening hours at Ullapool and Gairloch recycling centres.

The response had been circulated.

In terms of a supplementary question, it was queried if the Leader agreed that making recycling facilities as easily accessible as possible was a vital part of fulfilling Highland Council's environmental responsibilities and that making weekend opening hours were a key component of that, ensuring that those with week day work, educational or caring responsibilities are not excluded.

In response, whilst this was agreeable, it had to be affordable and resources available to deliver it. At this point of time, the Council did not have the ability to do that. The Chair of Communities and Place would be able to give further information on that.

(10) Mr A Graham

To the Leader of the Council

With reference to the Council's response to the Scottish Government's consultation paper on "Highly Protected Marine Areas", which Elected Members were involved in or

consulted during the preparation of this ²⁹⁵ submission?

The response had been circulated.

In terms of a supplementary question, the Leader was asked to undertake to ensure that in future important consultations, such as this one, input was obtained from a much wider range of Council Members, including those outwith the Administration

In response, Councillor Graham was referred to the debate at the Economy and Infrastructure Committee and to the discussion earlier in the meeting. There was already a commitment, where possible, for the Administration to comply accordingly but there would be certain circumstances where this was not possible, as had happened in previous Administrations

(11) Mr A Jarvie

To the Chair of Corporate Resources Committee

Will the Highland Council be following the Scottish Government's Public Sector Pay Strategy?

The response had been circulated.

In terms of a supplementary question, it was asked if the Highland Council's exemption from the Scottish Government's policy of reducing Chief Executive salaries by £10,000 for new appointments is supported by the Chair of the Corporate Resources Committee.

In response, it was explained that this wasn't a matter that had come before the Corporate Resources Committee. It was something that had been discussed at the Full Council in December and, the approach the Council would take was to find the best Chief Executive possible. That was the approach the Council agreed to follow and, at that time, it was stated that a pay award was pending and that was now included in the advert. .

(12) Mrs I MacKenzie

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

With Mental Health services for young people within schools and the local NHS CAMHS can the Chair give an update with regards to any vacancies to any gaps to the services?

The response had been circulated.

In terms of a supplementary question, confirmation was sought if there was an update that all monies allocated by Highland Council in respect of mental health in schools was being used for this purpose.

In response, it was agreed that the relevant information would be circulated in due course.

**6. Notices of Motion
Brathan Gluasaid**

Transparency Statement: Mr C Munro declared a connection to Motion (v) as a Church of Scotland elder but, having applied the objective test, did not consider that he had an interest to declare.

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

- (i) It is well known that voluntary, charitable and youth organisations are struggling with the reduction in funding that they are all experiencing, and this is made significantly more difficult with the level of letting fees for council premises that are being levied on such organisations.

Many of these organisations make a significant contribution to the mental welfare of our young people and this is particularly important in the wake of the Covid pandemic.

In addition, other such organisations provide vital childcare and after school clubs and activities for the children of working parents.

The level of letting fees is threatening the very existence of such organisations and if they have to close and withdraw their services the knock-on effect for children's mental health and the ability for working parents to continue to work is considerable, with the added impact on the local economies that will ensue.

That being the case this Council will review the letting charges for all such organisations and introduce a reduction in letting fees of 50% for all charitable and voluntary organisations.

By doing this we will ensure that the invaluable services that they provide across Highland will continue to the benefit of all communities.

Signed: Mr R Gale Mr J McGillivray Mr A Graham Ms J McEwan

Decision

The Council **AGREED**, in terms of Standing Order 12, that this motion be referred to the Corporate Resources Committee due to there being financial implications, and that it would be the first motion presented to Council in June 2023.

- (ii) Wave Trust

Highland Council supports the Wave Trust's 70/30 campaign to reduce child abuse, neglect and other adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) by at least 70% by the year 2030. Council asks officers to bring a report to a future meeting of this Council on how the ambitions of this campaign can best be achieved in Highland.

Further Highland Council considers that;-

Increased awareness of the impact of ACEs is key to driving investment in initiatives that promote safe, stable and nurturing relationships and environments which can have a positive impact on a broad range of challenges and on the development of skills that will help children and young people reach their full potential and it urges all concerned to use ACE awareness to have a positive impact on both individuals and society as a whole and it supports all teaching staff, pupils support assistants and early years practitioners to be encouraged to take up opportunities for continued professional learning sessions on Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)

Signed: Mr A Baldrey Mr R MacKintosh

During discussion, Members raised the following issues:-

- Councillor Reid referred to a free webinar on 3 June 2023 on national trauma training awareness, the details of which she offered to share with the Council after the meeting;
- the difficulties in accessing support and services in remote and rural areas was highlighted; and
- attention as drawn to the wide range of processes and policies the Council already had in place to reduce trauma and ACEs, with particular reference to the work of the Child Protection Committee in partnership with other groups, communities and schools. It was important that Members were made aware of previous decisions and ongoing work in this area as part of their training sessions.

Decision

The Council **AGREED** the motion.

- (iii) The Council Agrees that the creation of Highly Protected Marine Areas (HPMAs) will have a devastating impact on our island and coastal communities, which rely heavily on fishing and other marine-related activities for their livelihoods. Notes its strong opposition to the creation of HPMAs and urges the Scottish Government not to impose them where it is against the stated will of these communities. Notes that Local engagement and collaboration should be the way forward to Enhance the management of marine areas calling on the wealth of valuable local knowledge and inherited expertise of island and coastal stakeholders. Therefore, this Council agrees that a letter is to be sent to the Scottish Government expressing our opposition to the introduction of this HPMAs scheme and urging them to work with our local communities to find alternative solutions that protect our marine environment without compromising the livelihood, language, and culture of our remote, rural, island, and coastal communities and avoid the depopulation of rural areas via job loss & irreversible damage to the local economy.

Signed: Mr R Stewart Mrs B Jarvie

Decision

The Council **AGREED**, in terms of Standing Order 34, that this motion could not be discussed as it had already been considered in the preceding six months.

- (iv) The positive impact of the NC500 around the Highlands has been manyfold, however, with the positive impact on the economy of the Highlands comes the negative impact on services and amenities across the area.

Last year the Council waste collection services innovatively introduced a flexible and additional bin collection scheme which made a significant difference to the levels of waste that was abandoned in some of the most scenic parts of the Highlands.

Local communities have commented on what a positive difference this initiative made around the NC500 route.

That being the case this Council will put a similar project in place for the coming season to ensure that we make the NC500 route memorable for all the right reasons for the traveling visitors. In addition, this will also be welcomed by the local communities along the route who do not want to be faced with uncontrolled waste abandoned indiscriminately by the roadside.

Signed: Mr R Gale Mr M Baird Mrs McEwan Mrs A MacLean

During discussion, it was queried, and explained, why motions deemed incompetent for immediate discussion were not eliminated from inclusion on the agenda.

Decision

The Council **AGREED**, in terms of Standing Order 12, that this motion be referred to the Corporate Resources Committee due to there being financial implications, and that it would be the second motion presented to Council in June 2023.

(v) Voting rights of religious representatives on the Education Committee

New research shows a sharp decline in religious identity. Around 1 million less Scots now identify with Christian groups compared to 2011, when 53% of Scots identified with a Christian religion. That figure has now dropped to 33%.

Given these findings it seems bewildering that we allow unelected religious representatives the ability to vote on the education committee. Fundamentally no one who is unaccountable to the electorate should be able to vote on public policy and it's clear that decisions relating to education should be done on a democratic basis by people who are held to account by the electorate. Faith groups who wish to participate in discussions relating to local education may still do so in the same manner as any other interested local community group.

Currently the Council is required under the terms of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 to have three religious representatives on any committee established by the Council to discharge their responsibilities as an education authority.

There is no legal requirement however for these representatives to have a vote. The Scottish Government has clarified that "voting rights on committees are a matter for each authority."

In line with the above clarification statement by the Scottish Government, Highland Council agrees that only elected members of the Council with a mandate from the electorate should have a vote on the Education Committee.

Signed: Mr R MacKintosh Ms K Willis

During discussion, Members raised the following issues:-

- legal advice was sought, and the Clerk clarified that while legislation required religious representation on the Education Committee, the decision on the voting rights of those representatives was a matter for individual Local Authorities;
- it was pointed out that if only elected Members were to be given voting rights on the Education Committee, then other non-elected representatives, such as the Youth Convenor, would also lose their right to vote. It was clarified that non-elected representatives on the Committee would still be permitted to participate in discussion, even if not able to vote. The accountability that accompanied the democratic election process was cited a key reason why non-elected representatives should not be permitted to vote. A review of the position of non-elected representatives was suggested, noting that parents and teachers were not represented on the Education Committee;

- reference was made to the importance of separating church from state, with reference to practice in France, and to the detrimental impact some religious views could have of the mental wellbeing of children in relation to LGBTQ acceptance and women's rights;
- some Members spoke of the valuable contribution made by religious representatives over the years to the Education Committee, while others pointed out that some religious views could be hurtful;
- the statistic quoted in the motion referred to religious practice Scotland-wide, and it was suggested that areas of the Highlands remained more religious than the national picture;
- it was clarified that Members from wards for which no election had been required had the same status as Members who had been through the ballot process; and
- it was pointed out that the Church of Scotland had provided free education in the Highlands two centuries before it had been provided by the state, and church schools often provided a better standard of education than non-church schools. Reference was made to the valuable role of clerics in the House of Lords, and the wider contribution of religion to society.

Ms M Nolan proposed as an amendment to the motion, to delete the words from 'New research shows' to 'to vote on the education committee'. Mr MacKintosh accepted this amendment to his motion.

Mr R MacKintosh, seconded by Ms K Willis, **MOVED** the motion, as amended by Ms Nolan.

Mr L Fraser, seconded by Mr R Stewart, moved as an **AMENDMENT**, to reject the motion.

On a vote being taken, the **MOTION** received 48 and the **AMENDMENT** received 17 votes, with 1 abstention, the votes having been cast as follows:

For the Motion:

Mr C Aitkin, Ms S Atkin, Mr M Baird, Mr A Baldrey, Mr C Ballance, Dr C Birt, Mr R Bremner, Mr I Brown, Mr M Cameron, Mrs G Campbell-Sinclair, Mr A Christie, Mrs M Cockburn, Mrs T Collier, Ms S Fanet, Mr D Fraser, Mr R Gunn, Mr R Gale, Mr K Gowans, Mr J Grafton, Mr A Graham, Mr M Green, Mrs J Hendry, Ms M Hutchison, Ms L Johnston, Mr R Jones, Mr S Kennedy, Ms E Knox, Ms L Kraft, Mr B Lobban, Mr P Logue, Mr D Louden, Ms M MacCallum, Mr G MacKenzie, Mr A MacKintosh, Mr R MacKintosh, Mrs A MacLean, Mrs K MacLean, Ms J McEwan, Mr C Munro, Mrs P Munro, Ms L Niven, Ms M Nolan, Mr P Oldham, Mrs S Rawlings, Mrs M Reid, Mr K Rosie, Mr A Sinclair, Ms K Willis.

For the Amendment:

Mr J Bruce, Mrs I Campbell, Mr J Finlayson, Mr L Fraser, Mrs B Jarvie, Mr A MacDonald, Mr W MacKay, Mrs I MacKenzie, Mr T MacLennan, Mr D Macpherson, Mr J McGillivray, Mr H Morrison, Mr S Mackie, Mrs M Paterson, Mr M Reiss, Mrs L Saggars, Mr R Stewart.

Abstention:

Mrs H Crawford

Decision

The Council **AGREED** the following amended motion:

Fundamentally no one who is unaccountable to the electorate should be able to vote on public policy and it's clear that decisions relating to education should be done on a democratic basis by people who are held to account by the electorate. Faith groups who wish to participate in discussions relating to local education may still do so in the same manner as any other interested local community group.

Currently the Council is required under the terms of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 to have three religious representatives on any committee established by the Council to discharge their responsibilities as an education authority.

There is no legal requirement however for these representatives to have a vote. The Scottish Government has clarified that "voting rights on committees are a matter for each authority."

In line with the above clarification statement by the Scottish Government, Highland Council agrees that only elected members of the Council with a mandate from the electorate should have a vote on the Education Committee.

(vi) Disposable Vapes

Around 1.3million disposable vapes are thrown away in the UK each week, representing around 10 tonnes of lithium, the valuable resource crucial for electric car batteries, creating a new litter hazard across our streets and countryside, and contributing to extra plastic and toxic chemical pollution in land and sea. The Fire Brigade suggests that disposable vape batteries could have been responsible for the fire at the recycling depot in Aberdeenshire recently, and they have also been implicated in fires in bin lorries. E-cigarette use among teenagers doubled last year, creating a whole new generation of young people hooked on nicotine, with no societal benefit.

Highland Council therefore agrees to support the campaign by the Marine Conservation Society, Ash Scotland and Keep Scotland Beautiful to ban the manufacture and sale of disposable vapes in Scotland, and asks the Leader to join with other Councils in Scotland in writing to the First Minister welcoming the review into disposable vapes and to note Highland Council's support for a ban.

Signed: Mr C Ballance Mr A Baldrey Mr C Birt Mr A MacDonald Ms L Johnston

During discussion, Members referred to the useful role of vapes in assisting people to stop smoking cigarettes but expressed concern at the number of young people using them, to the detriment of their health, and the way they appeared to be marketed to appeal to younger people. It was proposed and accepted that the wording of the motion be strengthened with an additional sentence, as detailed below.

Decision

The Council **AGREED** the following amended motion:

Disposable Vapes

Around 1.3million disposable vapes are thrown away in the UK each week, representing around 10 tonnes of lithium, the valuable resource crucial for electric car batteries, creating a new litter hazard across our streets and countryside, and contributing to extra

plastic and toxic chemical pollution in land and sea. The Fire Brigade suggests that disposable vape batteries could have been responsible for the fire at the recycling depot in Aberdeenshire recently, and they have also been implicated in fires in bin lorries. E-cigarette use among teenagers doubled last year, creating a whole new generation of young people hooked on nicotine, with no societal benefit.

Highland Council therefore agrees to support the campaign by the Marine Conservation Society, Ash Scotland and Keep Scotland Beautiful to ban the manufacture and sale of disposable vapes in Scotland, and asks the Leader to join with other Councils in Scotland in writing to the First Minister welcoming the review into disposable vapes and to note Highland Council's support for a ban.

Acknowledging the rapid increase in the popularity of disposable vapes, The Highland Council reiterates the importance of strong enforcement in preventing the sale of restricted products to underage people.

7. **Carer Positive Policy** **Poileasaidh Cùramaiche Dheimhinnich**

Declaration of Interest: Mr R MacKintosh declared an interest in this as an employee for Highland Home Carers, in accordance with paragraph 5.6 of the revised Code of Conduct, he left the meeting for this item.

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

There had been circulated Report No. HC/11/23 dated 27 April 2023 by the Interim Chief Executive.

During discussion, Members thanked the officers for their hard work in developing the policy and raised the following issues:-

- this was a proactive policy that would deliver positive change for all Council's staff including teachers;
- the trade unions were supportive of the policy and the post implementation policy review;
- the importance of the policy was recognised given that many staff with caring responsibilities had to take annual leave, sick leave, reduce their hours or give up work which impacted on family finances particularly in the current cost of living crisis;
- it was crucial the policy review was undertaken in consultation with the relevant stakeholders and trade union colleagues so it was co-designed with those most affected;
- confirmation was sought, and provided, that information on any financial implications of implementing the policy would be brought to Members going forward;
- the policy would help with the current challenges around the recruitment and retention of staff;
- it was suggested recommendation iii. in the report be amended to read that the policy and guidance would be reviewed in approximately 6 months by the HR Sub Group, and a report brought back to the Corporate Resources Committee for consideration.
- issues for the review of the policy included whether the period of paid carers leave should be increased, couples who were both employees being allowed to apply individually for carers leave and the potential for employee carers and Members with an expertise to be involved in the review;

- consideration should also be given to the policy being extended to include those carers who lived separately from their dependents;
- It would be useful to establish the age and gender of those employees who were carers;
- there was a need to consider how to promote the policy to those employees who might not consider themselves as having caring responsibilities and to raise awareness of the financial support that might be available;
- wording in the policy needed to be considered in relation to circumstances where leave might be refused or postponed to make it less subjective;
- the importance of the Council being flexible and understanding in the definition of a carer was emphasised and that it considered all options to allow the carer to remain in employment; and
- an assurance was sought that the issues raised by Members would be taken into consideration in the review of the policy, noting this would be an ongoing process.

Decision

The Council:-

- APPROVED** the introduction of a Carer Positive policy;
- APPROVED** the introduction of up to 5 days paid carers' leave per year: and
- AGREED** the policy and guidance would be reviewed in approximately 6 months by the HR Sub Group, and a report brought back to the Corporate Resources Committee for consideration.

8. Member Survey Results and Learning and Development Programme Toraidhean Suirbhídh nam Ball agus Prògram Ionnsachaidh is Leasachaidh

There had been circulated Report No. HC/12/23 dated 27 April 2023 by the Interim Chief Executive.

During discussion, Members thanked the Interim Chief Executive, Business Manager and team for their hard work in relation to the Members' survey and raised the following issues:-

- to enable an effective Programme, as much data as possible needed to be gathered from the survey. However, only 27 responses were received out of 74 Members, a response rate of 36%;
- it was recognised that, whilst some Members were experienced, all Members could learn and improve in their role. This would be to the benefit of Members and constituents;
- it was suggested that, once the Member Working Group was formed, the survey be re-sent, to enable the Programme to benefit from as much rich data as possible and to assist officers;
- there was concern that individual Members could be identified from the publishing of the equalities section of the survey and an assurance was sought, and provided, that this would be kept in mind going forward;
- the time involved and salary paid to Members prevented many working young persons from becoming councillors;
- the challenges Members faced in terms of competing priorities in being able to attend the training sessions was highlighted, highlighting the fact online training was useful; and
- it was suggested the Members' survey be shortened on the basis this was likely to achieve a higher completion rate with questions being more focused on the key information that was required.

Decision

The Council:-

i. **NOTED** the findings of the Members' Survey;

and **AGREED**:-

- ii. to establish a short life Members' Working Group to scope future requirements, with a view to bringing forward a Members' Learning and Development programme for Council approval in June 2023;
- iii. to implement a range of evaluation metrics to assess the effectiveness of learning outcomes; and
- iv. to re-establish the Governance Review Steering Group with refreshed membership, to take forward a review of governance arrangements, supported by the ECO for Performance and Governance.

9. **Corran Ferry and Levelling Up Fund Update** **Cunntas às Ùr mu Aiseag a' Chorrain is mun Mhaoin Àrd-ireachaidh**

There had been circulated Joint Report No. HC/13/23 dated 26 April 2023 by the Interim Depute Chief Executive and Interim Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure and Environment.

The Interim Depute Chief Executive provided commentary on key points in the report during which he referred to the very difficult position with the Corran Ferry operations with both ferries currently being under repair. Every effort was being made to ensure repairs were carried out as quickly as possible. The Interim Depute Chief Executive would be visiting the boat yard the following week to see how the repairs were progressing. There had been extensive work by officers to mitigate the loss of the Corran Ferry service including community liaison as set out in the report. The loss of ferry service had highlighted the problems with old ferries and the need to address this, both in the short term with replacement ferries and long term the aspiration of a fixed link. An update on the proposed replacement vessels and shoreside infrastructure for the Corran Ferry service and an update on the Levelling Up Fund applications was provided. The Council's agreement was sought to submit a Levelling Up Fund (LUF) application for the replacement ferry service as a resolution to the challenges posed at Corran Narrows.

During discussion, Members raised the following points:-

- the recent challenges the Council faced but, moreover, the community had faced due to the unreliability of the Corran Ferry service was recognised. Over a protracted period, officers and elected Members had met with a huge range of stakeholders and partners and members of the public. These conversations with such a diverse range of interests, some social, some technical, some financial and some governmental, had provided an extensive body of information that had enabled the Council to consider every solution and variation thereof;
- a considerable amount of professional expertise had gone into the Levelling Up Fund (LUF) proposal and thanks were extended to staff and also the many professionals from external sources who provided specialist knowledge that had informed the recommendations in the report;
- the Council had already spent £1.6m on an outline business case to support an option to improve the shore side infrastructure and provide 2 electrically powered vessels;
- the report was seeking Members' approval to begin the process to replace aged vessels and re-establish the reliable transport link that the communities on the both sides of the Loch Linnhe relied on;
- the breakdown and delay to repairs for both ferries had highlighted the increasing

fragility of the service and the urgent need to replace the old and the very old ferries. Because of the challenging conditions at the Corran narrows and because they were quarterdeck ferries it was not possible to replace them temporarily or permanently from vessels already operating in Scotland;

- the Corran narrows was the busiest ferry route in Scotland. The Outline Business Case had taken several years and significant Highland Council funds to develop and, with the help of CMAL and inclusion in the small ferry replacement programme, the ferry design was nearing completion. All that was missing was the funding. That was why the Council had to develop an application for the next round of the LUF for the Corran ferry. Because of the funding cap of £50m, the LUF bid would be for the shoreside infrastructure and one ferry. This had resulted in a rumour circulating locally in Lochaber that the Council would now only be progressing the project with one ferry. This was not the case. Therefore, clarity was urgently needed to avoid further confusion. It was requested that it be communicated as soon as possible to the communities affected that there has been no change to the Outline Business Case, that the ultimate ambition was to procure two new ferries, and that other funding opportunities would have to be sourced for the second ferry. An undertaking was given by the Interim Depute Chief Executive to do this;
- the catastrophic failure of the ferry service at Corran was having a significant impact on residents and business in the area. Not only was it making it very difficult for daily travel for those living and working in the area, but visitor numbers have dropped significantly with many people cancelling their holidays to the area. Businesses were reporting very significant loss of income and questioning how much longer they could survive with these losses. Until there were new ferries operating at the narrows, it was highly likely that service failure would become an increasingly frequent problem. Members were urged to support the Corran Ferry as the next LUF bid;
- reference was made to the desire for a Stromeferry bypass and the considerable effort that had gone into this over an extensive period of time. An option had been chosen but some 10 years later the community were still waiting for the funding to build the bypass route;
- a ferry service was not the only viable solution and the LUF bid should not preclude the option of a fixed link over the Corran Narrows. Therefore, an amendment was proposed that a future report be brought to Council providing further details of the prospectus for LUF Round 3 for the options of 1.) a fixed link Corran narrows crossing, and 2.) a Corran ferry replacement option, with an appraisal of the other constituency bids for agreement;
- a marine mortgage to pay for vessels had previously been suggested in a canvass of residents in the area with a small charge of users of the vessels to pay for the mortgage. This idea had not been taken forward. There were other funding opportunities to finance new vessels which could be explored;
- in relation to the fixed link option a study by HITRANS estimated that this could cost in the region of £150m to £200m. These figures were being checked to ensure they were up to date. Delivering such a significant capital project would take a very long time, even if funding was available and at present it was not. Therefore a short term solution was required;
- the difference in cost between the design and delivery of a hybrid ferry compared to an electric ferry was not significant and opportunities would be taken to generate electricity locally. Electric ferries would be a significant step forward in meeting the Council's net zero targets;
- in terms of practical financial relief to businesses in the area who were detrimentally financially affected by the loss of ferry service, it was understood that there was no compensation available and the focus had to be on finding a sustainable solution for crossing the Corran narrows;
- the lack of spend on infrastructure in the Highlands was highlighted, such as improving the A9;
- the additional costs associated with the loss of the ferry service would need to come

from Council reserves if the Service budget was overspent;

- there were a number of issues, other than financial, to be resolved before a fixed link over the Corran narrows could be achieved such as there was a fault line on the Great Glen and cruise ships went through the narrows. A fixed link should be an iconic structure that would bring people to the area; and.
- when the ferry service recommenced, it was suggested that some help be provided to the community such as free use of the ferries for a short period and a webcam to let people know how busy it was. It was advised that the provision of a webcam was being looked at and would be progressed as soon as possible.

Thereafter, Mr K Gowans, seconded by Mrs G Campbell-Sinclair, **MOVED** the recommendations in the report.

As an **AMENDMENT**, Mr R Stewart, seconded by Mr P Logue, Moved that Members i) Note the current position in respect of the Corran Ferry service; ii) Note progress on delivering the Corran Ferry replacement project; iii) Note the outcome of Levelling Up Fund submissions for 2022; iv) Agree that a future report is brought to Council providing further details of the prospectus for Levelling Up Fund Round 3 for the options of 1.) a fixed link Corran narrows crossing, and 2.) a Corran ferry replacement option, with an appraisal of the other constituency bids for agreement.

On a vote being taken, the **MOTION** received 58 votes and the **AMENDMENT** received 10 votes, with no abstentions, and the **MOTION** was therefore **CARRIED**, the votes having been cast as follows:

For the Motion:

Mr C Aitken, Ms S Atkin, Mr M Baird, Mr A Baldrey, Mr C Ballance, Dr C Birt, Mr R Bremner, Mr I Brown, Mr M Cameron, Mrs B Campbell, Mrs G Campbell-Sinclair, Mr A Christie, Mrs M Cockburn, Ms T Collier, Ms S Fanet, Mr J Finlayson, Mr D Fraser, Mr L Fraser, Mr R Gale, Mr K Gowans, Mr J Grafton, Mr A Graham, Mr M Green, Mr R Gunn, Mrs J Hendry, Ms M Hutchison, Ms L Johnston, Mr R Jones, Mr S Kennedy, Ms E Knox, Ms L Kraft, Mr B Lobban, Mr D Loudon, Ms M MacCallum, Mr A MacDonald, Mr J McGillivray, Mr W MacKay, Mr G MacKenzie, Mr A MacKintosh, Mr R MacKintosh, Mrs A MacLean, Ms K MacLean, Mr T MacLennan, Mr D Macpherson, Ms J McEwan, Mr D Millar, Mr H Morrison, Mr C Munro, Ms P Munro, Ms L Niven, Ms M Nolan, Mr P Oldham, Mrs M Paterson, Ms S Rawlings, Mrs M Reid, Mr M Reiss, Mr K Rosie, Ms K Willis.

For the Amendment:

Mr J Bruce, Mr H Crawford, Mr A Jarvie, Mrs B Jarvie, Mr P Logue, Mrs I MacKenzie, Mr S Mackie, Mrs L Sagers, Mr A Sinclair, Mr R Stewart.

Decision

The Council:-

- NOTED** the current position in respect of the Corran Ferry service;
- NOTED** progress on delivering the Corran Ferry replacement project;
- NOTED** the outcome of Levelling Up Fund submissions for 2022;
- AGREED** that the Corran Ferry replacement forms the basis of a submission to the UK Government's Levelling Up Fund for 2023; and
- AGREED** that a future report was brought to Council providing further details of the prospectus for Levelling Up Fund Round 3, with an appraisal of the other constituency bids for agreement.

**10. Highland Health & Social Care Partnership: Strategic Plan
Com-pàirteachas Slàinte is Cùraim Shòisealta na Gàidhealtachd: Plana Ro-innleachdail**

Declaration of Interest: Mr R MacKintosh declared an interest in this as an employee for Highland Home Carers, in accordance with paragraph 5.6 of the revised Code of Conduct, he left the meeting for this item.

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

There had been circulated Report No. HC/14/23 dated 25 April 2023 by the Executive Chief Officer Health and Social Care. The report provided an update to Council on the latest draft of the Strategic Plan for delivery of integrated health and adult social care services. The report provided a draft version (Appendix 1) of the Strategic Plan for 2023 – 2026 for Members to provide comment on prior to the issue of the final draft plan by the Joint Monitoring Committee for formal consultation with the public.

Following commentary on the report by the Head of Integration Adult Social Care comments raised by Members during discussion included:-

- the officers and various stakeholders involved in developing the strategic plan 2023 to 2026 for adult social care services were thanked for all their work. It set out a vision on how to improve the health and wellbeing of adults over the next 3 years. It set out the need for reform and key principles to adopt. The consultation undertaken to date and the public consultation to take place would help inform how the delivery of the service was transformed. There would be more detailed locality planning once the strategic plan was in place. It was fully recognised that one size did not fit all and as far as possible the aim was to enable people to live at home independently. Work to improve health inequalities would continue alongside communities and partners and the strategic plan was an important step to enable this. The scale of the financial and staffing challenges highlighted the need for change and the closure of care homes was given as an example of this;
- the plan would enable residents to lead the best lives that they could. It was a good plan but there were gaps in it such as the section on 'making it happen'. This section had too many ideas, too much information and was not felt to be set out in a coherent order. An undertaking was given that this would be reviewed. Also, the plan was for 2023 to 2026 but perhaps it should be 2024 to 2027 as the strategic plan was nothing without the operational plans and given the time to develop these operational plans. Also, the performance reporting could be enhanced by setting timelines and tracking progress;
- for the plan to succeed, it was dependant on a number of other actions and ways of measuring and monitoring the plan were not clearly defined;
- there was a lack of co-production with communities in the plan and transformation in service provision would need support from communities and the way to do this was by co-production;
- the adult care crises had been looming for many years and this plan should have been considered before now. There were many suggestions in the plan that set out how care could be delivered to those that required it, and a focus on health, wellbeing and independence was welcomed;
- in terms of innovations and support options available to deliver services this would vary across areas and there would be a need to liaise with communities as to what they could offer;
- although there was a lack of workforce in the care sector, one had to appreciate the skills and knowledge of care workers which was a highly skilled and often undervalued job. The strategic plan must include the use of technology such as telecare solutions;
- locality planning was ongoing such as on the Isle of Skye and the Sir Lewis Ritchie report on primary care out of hours services which had social care elements to it;

- staffing was key to providing services in social care and the challenges in recruitment were well known and innovative solutions to this would hopefully address this;
- the section on delivery plans should be enhanced with defining community in this context, such as who does this actually mean and who will we be working with and how will they be contacted. Defining these points will help deliver services more quickly once the plan was approved;
- a Care Inspectorate Scotland report highlighted the challenges facing private sector care homes many of which were unprofitable and did not have the money for upgrades to meet required standards. There was a particular problem for care homes in rural areas that tended to be smaller and were failing to make their homes financially viable. It was advised that for existing care homes, they were not required to meet new standards and this only applied to new care home registrations;
- the Council and NHS Highland working together could do more to improve the health of people in Highland such as trying to improve the diet of the Highland population. It was advised that the NHS worked with High Life Highland to keep people active and contributed to the prevention agenda;
- it would be better if there was a diverse range of providers of care homes and the plan would look to involve communities and families in the provision of social care;
- as part of the consultation on the plan there would be an equality impact assessment;
- engagement with communities and stakeholders on the plan would happen once a final draft of the plan was approved by the Joint Monitoring Committee;
- more central government support for help with tackling drug and alcohol abuse was needed;
- mental health issues had become more apparent since the Covid pandemic, particularly in remote areas, and services to support people were required. Mental health should be more articulated in the plan;
- Raigmore Hospital was an ageing hospital that provided services to all the Highland area and thought was required on how to meet the growing demand for facilities at this hospital. It was advised that Raigmore's primary role was to deliver acute services and was not therefore part of the plan;
- age friendly communities should be looked at for the Highlands as promoted by the World Health Organisation;
- Support for GPs in the plan and locality plans was welcomed as was the Council continuing to request additional funding for adult social care services;
- there should be a commitment to addressing how the plan would be delivered;
- housing would be key in enabling people to live and be supported locally as part of an age friendly community. The Housing & Property Committee had just agreed a housing plan with input from the NHS;
- locality social care hubs were envisaged for Caithness and Lochaber and were part of integrated working;
- extra money was to be provided for the hospital at home project to enable people to continue to live in their own homes;
- there would be demographical information appended to the plan and specific information relating to Nairn would be provided for Councillor B Jarvie; and
- reporting on health matters at Area Committees was being considered.

Decision

The Council **NOTED**:-

- i. the work undertaken by the Strategic Planning Group in producing a draft of the Strategic Plan 2023–2026; and
- ii. comments by Members on the proposed draft of the Plan would be considered by

the Strategic Planning Group prior to sign off by the Joint Monitoring Committee of a final consultation draft.

11. Update on Outline Business Case for Inverness and Cromarty Firth Green Freeport Dreachd Chùis-gnothachais airson Saor-phort Uaine Inbhir Nis agus Chaolas Chromba

There had been circulated Report No. HC/15/23 dated 25 April 2023 by the Interim Depute Chief Executive.

During discussion, Members raised the following issues:-

- assurance was provided that officers had spent a lot of time and hard work moving the project forward behind the scenes and it was anticipated that the Outline Business Case would be available shortly. In this regard a target date was requested for the Outline Business Case;
- a focus on housing and other local amenities should be maintained throughout the project, and include the community in the process;
- it was queried how much the project would cost the Council, and could it be assumed that current Council costs would be covered from the £1 million Outline Business Case fund. In addition, it was queried if the Council would ensure that funding for housing and other amenities would be met from the £25 million seed funding money;
- in response to a query how Members would be selected for the Inverness and Cromarty Firth Green Freeport (ICFGF) Members Monitoring Group, it was clarified that the Monitoring Group would be politically balanced;
- thanks were expressed to the officers and the team for their hard work on the project;
- regarding the terms of reference for the Members Monitoring Group it was requested to expand it so that the group reported directly to Council any concerns or breaches in conditions of the investment;
- it was queried what the work specifically entailed in relation to paragraph 4.12 Land within the Green Freeport tax site in Council Ownership, of the report;
- Members were pleased to acknowledge that the Council were working closely with other local authorities who had successfully been awarded similar status to cut down on duplication of working methods and to streamline the process;
- appreciation was expressed to see markers of regeneration and strengthening of communities across the region within the report; and
- it was confirmed that an updated report would be presented to Members at the next meeting in June 2023.

Decision

The Council:-

- i. **NOTED** the Council's role and responsibilities in the preparing the Outline Business Case, including as Accountable Body, as summarised in Section 4 of the report;
- ii. **AGREED** to the proposals set out in relation to governance and particularly the establishment and Terms of Reference for the Member's Monitoring Group as set out in section 5.3 of the report;
- iii. **NOTED** the intention to report the Outline Business Case to a future Council meeting prior to submission to UK and Scottish Governments; and
- iv. **AGREED** to add an additional Term of Reference for the Member's Monitoring Group that the group report directly to Council any concerns or breaches in conditions of the investment.

12. Public Sector Reform

There had been circulated Report No. HC/16/23 dated 24 April 2023 by the Interim Chief Executive.

During discussion, Members raised the following issues:-

- support was expressed for the matter being progressed through the Redesign Board, and it was necessary to consider, as soon as possible, how to engage with the review and what the Council wanted to be devolved from central government – e.g. more powers over revenue setting. The Chair of the Redesign Board suggested that a Redesign Board workshop would provide a way forward;
- it was necessary to clearly articulate the Council's priorities and it was suggested that consideration be given to a further report to the Full Council in June setting out the types of things the Council would wish to prioritise for the benefit of Highland;
- representations had been made at CoSLA as to the need for governments to think differently in terms of how Highland and Island authorities operated and the responsibilities they had to diverse communities; and
- in relation to the Council's submission at Appendix 1 of the report, clarification was sought, and provided, as to what was meant by greater flexibility over teacher numbers.

Decision

The Council:-

- i. **NOTED** the update;
- ii. **AGREED** to homologate the Council's submission to the Scottish Parliament's Finance and Public Administration Committee's enquiry into Public Sector Reform; and
- iii. **AGREED** that work be progressed through the Redesign Board.

13. Clerk to the Highland Licensing Board Clèireach do Bhòrd Cheadachd na Gàidhealtachd

The Council **APPROVED** the appointment of Mr Iain Meredith as Clerk to the Licensing Board on a temporary basis until Ms Claire MacArthur returns from maternity leave.

14. Timetable of Meetings Clàr-ama Choinneamhan

The Council **AGREED** the following changes to the current timetable:

Easter Ross Area Committee – from 15 May to 22 May 2023.

15. Deeds Executed Sgrìobhainnean Lagha a Bhuilicheadh

There had been circulated a list of deeds and other documents executed on behalf of the Council since the meeting held on 9 March 2023 which were **NOTED**.

The meeting ended at 5.15 pm.

The Highland Council

Minutes of Meeting of the **Nairnshire Committee** held in the Chamber, The Court House, High Street, Nairn on 15 May 2023 at 11.00 am

Present:

Mr L Fraser
Mr M Green

Ms B Jarvie
Mr P Oldham

In attendance:

Mr D Haas, Inverness City Area Manager
Mr L Hannah, Ward Manager, Nairn and Badenoch and Strathspey
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

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

Item 5 – Mr L Fraser

and the following Transparency Statements:-

Item 3 – Mr M Green and Mr L Fraser

Item 6 – Mr L Fraser

At this point the Chair drew Members' attention to the following items of Good News:-

- the development of the Nairn Common Good Fund engagement Group and creation of a Common Good Officer post;
- the creation of a new Events and Festivals budget for 2023 of £10,000;
- the support given to many Common Good Projects including Community Food Growing, Harbour Street toilets and Link Street Development;
- support given to the Nairn BID;
- funding support provided for Christmas lights;
- a £10,000 support package agreed for the Nairn Games;
- continued support for the Book and Arts Festival; and

- the Reduce, Reuse. Recycle feasibility study funding which was due to be awarded in the near future.

During Discussion the following points were raised:-

- support was expressed for the work of the Local Access Panel;
- the work put into the Moray Firth Development plan was commended;
- the good working relationship between councillors and the Lord Lieutenant was highlighted; and
- attention was drawn to the success of the Clean Up the War Memorial Day in recognition of the Coronation

3. Nairn Business Improvement District Proposal Moladh Sgìre Leasachadh Gnothachais Inbhir Narann

Transparency Statement: Mr M Green and Mr L Fraser declared connections to this item as Nairn BID payers but, having applied the objective test, did not consider that they had an interest to declare.

There had been circulated Report No NC/09/23 dated 5 May 2023 by the Interim Depute Chief Executive and the Executive Chief Officers Communities and Place and Economy and Regeneration.

During Discussion disappointment was expressed at the lack of response from the Transport Minister regarding the Nairn bypass.

The Committee :-

- NOTED** the proposal for the renewal of Nairn BID; and
- AGREED** to recommend to full Council at its meeting on 29 June 2023 that, as a potential BID levy payer, the Council supports the Nairn BID Ltd Proposal in the BID ballot.

4. Ward Discretionary Budget Buidseat Fo Ùghdarras Uàird

The Committee **NOTED** that the following Ward Discretionary Fund applications have been approved since 1 April 2023:-

Organisation	Project	Amount
Nairn Games Committee	Nairn Games (Massed Pipe Bands)	£1,000
Green Hive	Trike Nairn	£1,000 Comprising of £262.84 (Ward Discretionary Fund) and £737.16 (Ward COVID Resilience Budget balance)

During discussion the following main points were raised:-

- the allocation shown of £1000 for the Nairn Games was no longer correct as funding had since been provided from the Events and Festivals budget instead; and
- attention was drawn to the fact that not all the money in the Ward Discretionary Fund had been spent by the end of the year and groups should be encouraged to apply for funding for one off projects.

5. Nairn Common Good Fund – Consultation on proposal to dispose, by sale, of Grant Street workshop and yard, Grant Street, Fishertown, Nairn
Maoin Math Coitcheann Inbhir Narann – Co-chomhairleachadh air moladh gus faighinn cuidhteas, le reic, de bhùth-obrach is lios Shràid nan Granddach, Sràid nan Granddach, Baile an Iasgaich, Inbhir Narann

Declaration of Interest: Mr L Fraser declared an interest in this item on the basis that he had an interest in leasing the Grant Street yard 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 NC/10/23 dated 17 April 2023 by the Interim Executive Chief Officer Performance and Governance and the Executive Chief Officer Communities and Place.

During discussion the following main points were raised:-

- information was sought, and provided, on how a further consultation could be avoided and on whether the property could be sold at a reduced price;
- the possibility of a Community Asset Transfer was discussed;
- suggestions were made of ways to use the land that would be of benefit to the community;
- it was emphasised that income from the sale of the property would go to the Common Good Fund for re-investment in the local community; and
- attention was drawn to the current unsafe state of the building and the financial implications of making the property safe to rent.

The Committee:-

- NOTED** the outcome of the consultation process undertaken as contained in the analysis at Appendix 1 of the report;
- APPROVED** the responses to the issues raised in connection with the proposal for publication on the Council's website as contained in the table in Appendix 1 of the report ; and
- AGREED** to dispose of the Grant Street workshop and yard in its current condition for the reasons and implications outlined in the report.

6. Housing Performance Report – 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023
Aithisg Coileanaidh Taigheadais - 1 An Giblean 2022 gu 31 Am Mart 2023

Transparency Statement: Mr L Fraser declared a connection to this item on the grounds that he undertook work for the Housing Service but, having applied the objective test, did not consider that he had an interest to declare.

There had been circulated Report No NC/11/23 by the Executive Chief Officer Housing and Property.

- in response to a question it was confirmed that there were 270 cases of rent arrears;
- on the point being raised, it was confirmed that the shaky start in quarters 1 and 2 was due to the installation of new computer system and some repairs taking longer than expected;
- in response to a question it was confirmed that 90% of the homeless people accommodated in Nairnshire needed to remain living in the area;
- attention was drawn to the links with the welfare team, housing support and CAB to provide support for struggling tenants; and
- face to face engagement with tenants was welcomed.

The Committee **NOTED** the information provided on housing performance for the period 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023.

7. Minutes Geàrr-chunntas

There had been circulated and were **NOTED**:-

- i. Minutes of the Meeting of the Nairnshire Committee held on 23 January 2023 which were approved by the Council on 9 March 2023; and
- ii. Minutes of the Special Meeting of the Nairnshire Committee held on 21 March 2023 which were approved by the Council on 11 May 2023.

The meeting concluded at 11.40am

The Highland Council

Minutes of Meeting of the **Sutherland County Committee** held in the Chamber, Council Offices, Drumbuie, Golspie on Tuesday 16 May 2023 at 10.30 am.

Present:

Mr M Baird
Mr R Gale (Chair)
Ms M Hutchison

Mr J McGillivray
Mr H Morrison
Ms L Niven

In attendance:

Ms F Duncan, Executive Chief Officer, Health and Social Care
Mr P Tomalin, Ward Manager
Ms J Sutherland, Roads Operation Manager
Mrs K Lyons, Principal Solicitor
Mr M Dent, Access Officer
Ms M Grant, Principal Housing Officer
Mr C Sutherland, Principal Repairs Officer
Ms P Betts, Project Officer (Community Regeneration)
Ms A Macrae, Senior Committee Officer

Also in attendance:

Station Commander M Leavey, 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 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

There were no declarations of interest.

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

There had been circulated Report No SCC/05/23 by the Local Senior Officer for Highland.

In discussion, Members raised the following main points:-

- a query as to whether the Service had any information on recent incidents of deliberate fires in Golspie. The Station Commander confirmed he would report back to Members on this issue;

- an update was sought and provided on the plans for delivering the Driving Ambitions initiative in partnership going forward, including engagement with young people and schools;
- an explanation was sought on the figures for station availability at Tongue and Bonar Bridge and a query in relation to recruitment status at the Lochinver station. The Station Commander advised he would provide Members with a more detailed response on the issues raised. He also referred to the joint mobilisation protocol being undertaken between Tongue and Bettyhill stations;
- potential initiatives to encourage recruitment in the Bonar Bridge/Ardgay area given there was more of a population in this area compared to other rural settlements in Sutherland;
- an update was sought and provided on progress with the roll out of lighter personal protection equipment in the area for firefighters attending wild fires;
- an explanation was sought and provided on the process within the Service for providing station commanders with advance notice of muirburn in the area; and
- the Service be commended on the work undertaken in Sutherland to keep the public safe.

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

4. **The Progress of School Counselling Services in Sutherland Comhairleachadh Sgoile ann an Cataibh**

There had been circulated Report No SCC/06/23 by the Executive Chief Officer Education and Learning.

In discussion, Members raised the following main points:-

- queries as to how many counsellors covered Sutherland and their general availability and in relation to the timescales for young persons to access counselling sessions. It was confirmed that a response to these points would be provided to Members outwith the meeting;
- it was positive there was provision for self-referrals and that pupils were generally able to access counselling timely;
- confirmation was sought and provided that arrangements would be made for counsellors providing services in Sutherland to attend a future Area Business meeting; and
- confirmation was sought and provided that approximately a third of all referrals continued to be due to anxiety.

The Committee:-

- NOTED** the progress to date with respect to counselling in schools;
- NOTED** the very recent changes in some of the provision in schools in Sutherland; and
- NOTED** the wider supports in place in relation to the mental health and emotional wellbeing of children and young people in our schools as noted in the Committee paper from September 2022 as noted in the report.

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

There had been circulated Report No SCC/07/23 by the Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure & Environment.

In discussion, Members raised the following main points:-

- the additional funding for roads approved at the Economy and Infrastructure Committee on 4 May 2023 was a positive development. However, it was important to be aware this would allow only approximately 22/23 schemes of the full priority list for Sutherland set out in Appendix 2 of the report to be progressed;
- welcoming that the B9176 Ardgay to Evanton road would be progressed in the current year, noting the Struie route was also one of the main arteries for North and West Sutherland. It was disappointing that similar works were not being progressed on the route outwith the area;
- further clarity was sought and provided on the status of the pavements in Bonar Bridge in the recommended priority list. Members had the ability to accelerate works within the Programme if they so wished;
- noting that any queries in relation to the condition of the Naver Bridge be referred to the appropriate structures team within the Service;
- an update was sought and provided that staff training to allow the pothole pro to be deployed in Sutherland was being organised;
- an update was sought and provided in relation to crash barriers, noting this was a specialised area managed by the Service centrally. The prioritised list of schemes for Sutherland had been provided to the relevant team within the Service;
- the fact the majority of works would be carried out in house was welcomed, while acknowledging the need to use external contractors as and when required to ensure the budget allocation was spent; and
- the Service be congratulated on the proactive approach being taken in relation to the Helmsdale to Melvich Road.

The Committee **APPROVED** the proposed prioritised Area Roads Capital Programme for Sutherland Area.

6. **Sutherland Spaceport Byelaws to Restrict Public Access** **Fo-laghan Port-fànais Ionad Fànais Chataibh airson Inntrigeadh Poblach a Chuingealachadh**

There had been circulated Report No SCC/08/23 by the Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure & Environment.

In discussion, Members raised the following main points:-

- an explanation was sought and provided that it would not be practical to process a Section 11 Order under the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003 for each launch event as this would place an undue burden on the Council in terms of workload. The proposed byelaws would allow access to be managed more flexibility around launch events given likely constraints such as timing of launches due to weather and technical matters;

- confirmation was sought and provided that any parties who had a right to access the land, such as those with grazing rights, crofting tenures, landowners or those with the express permission of the landowner(s) would not be affected by the proposed byelaws;
- further clarity was sought and provided that the byelaw would be worded so that responsibility for clearing and enforcing the exclusion zone would be passed onto the site operator or range licensee; and
- confirmation was sought and provided that provision for the public who wished to view the launches would form part of the Visitor Management Plan. It was also likely that the highway would be subject to a traffic order for launches.

The Committee **AGREED** to:-

- i. promote draft byelaws to restrict public access to the launch exclusion zone associated with Space Hub Sutherland during launches; and
- ii. make the proposed byelaws available for public inspection and to consult those persons and bodies set out in Section 12 (7) of the 2003 Act.

7. Housing Performance Report – 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023
Aithisg Dèanadais a thaobh Taigheadais – 1 Giblean 2022 gu 31 Màrt 2023

There had been circulated Report No SCC/09/23 by the Executive Chief Officer Housing and Property.

In discussion, Members raised the following main points:-

- confirmation was sought and provided that the number of void properties in Sutherland was low. There were currently two hard to let properties located in Lochinver and Melvich;
- further clarity was sought and provided on the current complement of tradesmen within the Service in the area. In addition, reference was made to the challenges around the willingness of contractors to travel to North and West Sutherland;
- information was sought and provided in relation to the level of rent arrears, in Sutherland, noting these were relatively low compared to other areas in Highland;
- a query in relation to the level of rent arrears shown for East Sutherland and Edderton in Quarter 4 as a proportion of the total rent income for Sutherland. It was confirmed that this information would be provided to Members outwith the meeting; and
- further clarity was sought and provided that in terms of homelessness no impact had been observed due to the closure of the Women's Aid refuge in Inverness or issues raised at the Homeless Working Group.

The Committee **NOTED** the information provided on housing performance in the period 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023.

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

There had been circulated Report No SCC/10/23 by the Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure & Environment.

Thanks having been expressed to the Project Officer for the work involved, the Committee:-

- i. **APPROVED** the application presented for a funding award from the Community Regeneration Fund as follows:-

Applicant	Project	Grant Awarded
Dornoch Heritage SCIO	Historylinks Extension Project – Phase 3 - Construction	£50,000.00

- ii. **AGREED** to ringfence up to the balance of remaining funding (£101,673.65) for a transport project, which would be brought back as a full application to a future Committee for consideration.

**9. Repurposing Sutherland Place Based Investment Fund – Repair Golspie Public Toilets
Ag Ath-adhbhrachadh Maoin Stèidhichte air Àite Chataibh – Càradh Taighean-beaga Poblach Ghoillspidh**

There had been circulated Report No SCC/11/23 by the Head of Community Support and Engagement.

The Committee **AGREED** a contribution of £1,878 towards the repair of Golspie Public Toilets.

**10. Dornoch Common Good
Dornoch Heritage Society - Application for funding
Math Coitcheann Dhòrnaich
Comann Dualchais Dhòrnaich – Iarrtas airson Maoineachadh**

There had been circulated Report No SCC/12/23 by the Head of Community Support and Engagement.

The Committee **APPROVED** £50,000 to Dornoch Heritage SCIO for the Historylinks Museum Extension project (Phase 3), subject to match funding being in place.

**11. Ward Discretionary Awards
Duaisean fo Ùghdarras Uàird**

North, West and Central Sutherland Ward Discretionary Budget applications approved 1 April 2022 – 31 March 2023

The Committee **NOTED** that the following North, West and Central Sutherland Ward Discretionary Budget applications were approved in the 2022/23 Financial Year:

Loch Shin Sailing Club – Sailing Equipment	£1,155.00
Naver Telecentre Centre – Service Development and Community Outreach	£1,528.00
NW Training Centre – Adult Learning Programme 2022-2023	£1,500.00
Kyle of Sutherland Development Trust – Sutherland Wellbeing Promotional Plan	£415.00
Community Care Assynt – Drop in Hub	£4,413.00
Culrain Hall – Replacing flat roof	£4,175.00
Lairg and District Community Initiatives – Emergency Food Parcels	£200.00
Kyle of Sutherland Development Trust – Promoting Community Partnership	£400.00
Durness CC - Purchasing Defibrillators	£2,820.00
Scourie Community Development Co – Mental Health Support	£350.00

East Sutherland and Edderton Ward Discretionary Budget applications approved 1 April 2022 – 31 March 2023

The Committee **NOTED** that the following East Sutherland and Edderton Ward Discretionary Budget applications were approved applications approved in the 2022/23 Financial Year:

Clyne Heritage Society – Greeanan Community Archaeological Excavation	£2,500.00
Highland Historic Buildings Trust – Easter Ross Churches Trail	£350.00
Kyle of Sutherland Development Trust – Sutherland Wellbeing Promotional Plan	£415.00
HLH Youth Zone – Summer Activities, Holiday Hunger and Safe Space Drop-in	£2,900.00
Sutherland Care Forum - Food Support Worker	£2,000.00
Go Golspie – Development Officer Project	£3,000.00
Dornoch Academy – Trip to Scottish Parliament	£795.00
Dornoch Allsorts – After School Childcare	£1,000.00
Dornoch Free Church – The Living Room	£350.00
Kyle of Sutherland Development Trust – Promoting Community Partnership	£400.00
Clyne Heritage Society – 25 year celebrations	£920.00
Lochview Rural Training – Family and Adult Learning	£900.00
Sutherland Care Forum - Food and Heat Support	£500.00
St Andrew's Church, Golspie – Food and Fuel Support	£500.00

North, West and Central Sutherland Ward Discretionary Budget applications approved 1 April 2023 – 31 March 2024

The Committee **NOTED** that the following North, West and Central Sutherland Ward Discretionary Budget applications had been approved since 1 April 2023:

Lairg Community Council - Lairg Bird Hide upgrade	£2,000.00
Sutherland Women's Football Club - Transport Funds	£800.00

East Sutherland and Edderton Ward Discretionary Budget applications approved 1 April 2023 – 31 March 2024

The Committee **NOTED** that the following East Sutherland and Edderton Ward Discretionary Budget applications had been approved since 1 April 2023:

Clyne Heritage Society – Aultcraggie Roundhouses Archaeological Excavation	£500.00
Dornoch Bowling Club – Victorian Benches	£700.00
East Sutherland Camera Club – Highland Challenge 2023	£600.00
Sutherland Women's Football Club - Transport Funds	£800.00

**12. Minutes
Geàrr-chunntas**

There was circulated and **NOTED** the Minutes of the Sutherland County Committee held on 24 January 2023, which were approved by the Council on 9 March 2023.

The meeting concluded at 11.40am.

The Highland Council

Minutes of Meeting of the **Lochaber Committee** held remotely on **Tuesday, 16 May, 2023 at 10.35 a.m.**

Present:

Mr A Baldrey
Ms S Fanet
Mr J C Grafton
Mr A MacDonald

Mr T MacLennan
Ms L Siggers
Ms K Willis

Officials in Attendance:

Mrs D Ferguson, Senior Ward Manager (Ross, Skye and Lochaber), Communities and Place
Mr D Wood, Principal Housing Officer, Housing & Property Service
Mr A Lawrie, Principal Repairs Officer, Housing & Property Service
Mr A MacLeod, Policy Officer, Performance & Governance
Mr A Bryce, Project Officer Active Travel, Infrastructure & Environment
Mrs S McKandie, Head of Revenues & Business Support, Resources & Finance
Mr A MacInnes, Interim Senior Committee Officer, Performance and Governance 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 none.

**2. Declarations of Interest/Transparency Statement
Foillseachaidhean Com-pàirt/ Aithris Fhollaiseachd**

There were none.

**3. Housing Performance Report
Aithisg Coileanaidh Taigheadais**

There was circulated Report No. LA/7/23 by the Executive Chief Officer Housing and Property.

In particular, reference was made to the condition of the Claggan Quadrangles that had been discussed previously at Committee. It was understood a process for improvements had been agreed, however from viewing the properties recently serious concern was again expressed regarding the condition of these properties. There was a need to substantially improve the condition of the properties and an understanding of what level of investment was required to bring the properties up to an acceptable standard. It was advised that some maintenance work on the properties had commenced details of which were provided. There was a cyclical maintenance budget for properties but it was not

a large budget and a substantial upgrading of Claggan flats would require a plan and significant funding. Also with there being private owners of these flats, some did not always want work done on their premises and this was outwith the Council's control. In terms of the £120k funding previously set aside for energy efficiency measures at these flats, it was requested that the Council's Tenant Participation Services be asked to do a survey of current residents of Claggan Quadrangles on how they would want this money spent on these properties.

In terms of time taken to undertake repairs, often the delay was due to contractors being too busy to undertake the work and it was queried how this could be improved. The Council was limited in what it could do to make contractors more responsive to undertake repairs and it did look at contractors outwith the area but they were very busy too. There were also delays in securing materials to carry out repairs and problems in recruiting and retaining in house staff due to the volume of work available locally.

Nationally and across Highland more money was required to be set aside for housing maintenance.

The type of weedkiller to be used at the Claggan Quadrangles would be clarified as it was understood that a contractor in the area had been using glyphosate and this should be stopped.

The work of staff in the repairs team was recognised for all their efforts in completing repairs as quickly as possible over the winter period. This work was often carried out in inclement weather conditions and their work was highly valued and much appreciated.

The Committee **NOTED**:-

- i the information provided on housing performance in the period 1 April, 2022 to 31 March, 2023;
- ii further discussion on a plan to improve the condition of Claggan Quadrangles would be held at an Area Business meeting;
- iii that the Council's Tenant Participation Services be asked to do a survey of current residents of Claggan Quadrangles on what areas they would want money spent to improve these properties; and
- iv the type of weedkiller to be used at the Claggan Quadrangles be clarified for Councillor Willis.

4. The Islands Emergency Cost Crisis Fund 2022/23 Maoin Staing Cosgais Èiginneach nan Eilean 2022/23

There was circulated Report No. LA/8/23 by the Executive Chief Officer Communities and Place. The report was in relation to the Scottish Government grant funding provided to the Highland Council to help alleviate the cost crisis in island communities. The report set out recommendations for distribution of the share of funding for W11 Caol and Mallaig (Small Isles). The funding had been very well received by the Island communities that had received them.

It was queried if in future it would be possible to consider funding for areas of the Highlands such as Lochaber which were not technically Islands. The Ardnamurchan Peninsula and Knoydart for example were very isolated and more isolated than some Islands. It was advised that this specific funding was for Islands, so it was not possible to use it in non Island areas. However, when

there was Highland wide spend, it was looked to ensure that the needs of other isolated areas were met and this would continue to be the case in any future funding rounds.

The Committee:

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

ii. **AGREED** to homologate the decision 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.

iii. **AGREED** to homologate the decision to award capital grants to Isle of Muck and Isle of Canna.

5. **Implementation of Islands (Scotland) Act 2018 – Annual Report Buileachadh Achd nan Eilean (Aba) 2018 – Aithisg Bhliadhnail**

There was circulated Report No. LA/9/23 by the Depute Chief Executive which provided an update on the implementation of the Islands (Scotland) Act 2018 as it related to the Highland Council area for the financial year 2022/23.

In discussion, reference was made to the issue of depopulation which was happening in areas of Lochaber and the positive benefits from the work undertaken to support Island Communities as detailed in the report was excellent. The availability of public services in rural areas, such as care homes, ferries, broadband, dental surgeries was particularly important. It was requested that the importance of the provision of such services be highlighted to the Scottish Government in order to stop depopulation. The importance of a fixed link over the Corran narrows was also highlighted and the need for the Scottish Government to work with the Council to achieve this ambition. An undertaking was given to relay this message at an Islands Strategic Group meeting with the Scottish Government. It was advised that the Scottish Government was looking at the depopulation issue, along with the Convention of the Highlands and Islands.

It was queried what effect highly protected marine areas would have on the population of the Islands. It was advised that the Council had submitted a response to the Scottish Government consultation on this matter and the consultation period had now ended. There were no areas as yet defined as highly protected marine areas.

The Committee **NOTED** the update and acknowledged the work that had taken place.

6. **Highland Quiet Routes – Pilot Project Report Slighean Sàmhach na Gàidhealtachd – Aithisg Pròiseact Paidhleit**

There was circulated Report No. LA/10/23 by the Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure and Environment. The report related to the Highland Quiet Routes pilot project to encourage safe walking, cycling and horseback activities on designated rural roads where traffic and vehicle speeds are low. Additionally, it aimed to preserve the natural beauty of rural areas, whilst

supporting access to the outdoors for everyone, which is shown to support local economic development through increased tourism.

The Project Officer gave a presentation on The 'Glencoe Quiet Route' which comprised a single-track road from the River Coe Bridge South-East to the outskirts of Glencoe Village to link with the A82; passing Red Squirrel Campsite and Clachaig Inn and will facilitate an active travel link between Glencoe and accommodation along the route. The aim was to provide a safe low-traffic route that encourages more people to consider active travel for everyday journeys. If approved, the pilot project would go live on 1 July, 2023 for a period of 18 months and it would be reviewed thereafter.

In discussion, a view was expressed that the overall project cost of £25k was not the best use of public money and it would be better if the money was used to upgrade the path alongside this road. However, it was felt that the pilot project had merits in improving road infrastructure, increasing active travel and providing choices for wider communities and better connectivity along this rural road for tourists, residential properties and holiday accommodation. The reduced speed limit to 40mph and additional signage would also help improve safety as this road was used as a diversionary road when the A82 was closed.

There would be ongoing consultation with the community on the Glencoe quiet route. It was requested that at the end of the trial period, a review of the pilot project should include what data had been collected, outcome of consultation with the community and whether funding could be accessed to improve the path alongside the road. The results of the trial may also indicate whether a further reduction in speed limit to 30mph could be considered.

Thereafter, the Committee:-

- i **NOTED** the contents of the report;
- ii **APPROVED** the 'Glencoe Quiet Route' including Temporary Traffic Regulation Order reducing the Speed Limit on the route to 40mph for 18 months; and
- iii **NOTED** that a review of the pilot project would include what data had been collected, outcome of consultation with the Community and whether funding could be accessed to improve the path alongside the road.

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

The Committee **NOTED** the following Ward Discretionary Fund grant awards 2022/2023 and 2023/24.

Ward 11 and 21 Ward Discretionary Fund Grant awards 2022/2023

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
 Highland Council – Remembrance Day 2022 costs - £302.09
 High Life Highland – Glen Nevis Outdoor classroom works - £2,000
 Highland Council – Tougal car park pothole repairs - £2,410
 Highland Council – Cruise ship presentation plaques - £187.50
 Highland Council - poppy wreaths 2022 - £29.09
 Lochaber High School Parent Council – sensory garden - £1,600
 Road to the Isles Group – Tougal pot hole repairs - £2.400

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 2022 - £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
 Duror & Kentallen Community Council – IT meeting equipment - £540
 Ardgour Community Council – IT meeting equipment - £78.43
 Highland Council – Remembrance Day 2022 costs - £302.09
 Kentallen and Duror Community SCIO – replacement picnic benches
 Acharacle Community Council – IT meeting equipment - £403.80
 St Pauls Episcopal Church (Kinlochleven) – warm space and meals project - £2,350
 High Life Highland - Glen Nevis Outdoor classroom works - £2,000
 Highland Council – Cruise ship presentation plaques 2023 - £187.50
 Highland Council – Cleaning of West Highland Way signs - £370
 Highland Council – Property legal search - £250
 Highland Council - poppy wreaths 2022 - £29.08
 Fort William Marina and Shoreline CIC – salt water power washer - £1,754
 Ardgour Glensanda Development Trust – Local plan plan - £1,754
 Highland Council – Kinlochleven directory – £1,000

Ward 11 and 21 Ward Discretionary Fund Grant awards 2023/2024 – No Spend to date

8. Minutes Geàrr-chunntas

There was circulated for information, Minutes of Meeting of the Lochaber Committee held on 24 January, 2023 which were approved by the Council on 9 March, 2023, the terms of which were **NOTED**.

The meeting ended at 11.40 a.m.

The Highland Council

Minutes of Meeting of the **Climate Change Committee** held in the Council Chamber, Council Headquarters, Glenurquhart Road, Inverness on Wednesday 17 May 2023 at 10.30 am.

Present:

Ms S Atkin	Mr D Louden
Mr J Bruce	Mr R MacKintosh
Ms S Fanet	Ms M Nolan (remote)
Mr D Fraser (remote)	Mr K Rosie (Chair)
Mr J Grafton	Ms K Willis (Vice Chair) (remote)
Mr P Logue (remote)	

Non-Members also present:

Mr C Ballance	Mrs B Jarvie (remote)
Dr C Birt	Ms K MacLean (remote)
Ms T Collier (remote)	Mr J McGillivray (remote)
Mr R Gale (remote)	Mrs T Robertson (remote)
Mr A Graham	

Officials in Attendance:

Mr M MacLeod, Interim Depute Chief Executive
 Mr N Osborne, Climate Change and Energy Team Manager
 Ms F Daschofsky, Project Manager, Climate Change and Energy Team
 Mr R Macdonald, Energy Manager, Climate Change and Energy Team
 Ms D Morris, Climate Change Coordinator (Communications and Engagement)
 Mr J Bennett, Climate Change Coordinator
 Ms M Murray, Interim Principal Administrator
 Mrs O Bayon, Committee Officer

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 K Rosie in the Chair

Business

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

Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of Mr C Aitken, Mrs I Campbell and Mrs P Munro.

2. **Declarations of Interest/Transparency Statement** **Foilseachaidhean Com-pàirt/ Aithris Fhollaiseachd**

There were no Declarations of Interest.

3. **Carbon Emissions Land Tax Review** **Ath-sgrùdadh Cìs Fearainn Sgaoilidhean Carboin**

There had been circulated Report No CCC/8/23 dated 17 April 2023 by the Interim Depute Chief Executive.

During discussion, the following comments were made:-

- the introduction of a Carbon Emissions Land Tax (CELT) would potentially disproportionately impact community landowners, crofters and family farms, and disappointment was expressed that they had not been consulted as intended;
- concern was expressed regarding policy development being outsourced to an external organisation rather than being Member-led;
- the need for more information and different perspectives, to enable a fully informed decision to be made, was emphasised;
- it was necessary to know more about the logistics and bureaucracy associated with implementing a CELT, as well as the potential impact on food production and the rural economy. Food security was cause for concern going forward, with self-sufficiency in the UK being little more than 50% and the price of basic foodstuffs increasing exponentially;
- it would have been helpful to provide examples in the report of how a CELT would be managed, how landowners would deal with it and how much revenue it was expected to bring in;
- it was necessary to protect people as much as possible but, if the world was going to combat climate change, it was inevitable there would be some negative impacts;
- whilst the points regarding the need for more consultation and detail were accepted, some Members expressed strong support for the principle of a CELT, commenting that it had the capacity to make a major contribution to reducing and absorbing carbon emissions in Highland;
- some landowners would be more able to pay a CELT than others, and concern was expressed regarding how communities buying land would be protected;
- as stated in the report, the Council could not carry on with business as usual;
- reference was made to the recent issues surrounding The Scottish Government's consultation on Highly Protected Marine Areas, and the loss of trust in policymakers by rural communities, and the need for caution was emphasised;
- it would be beneficial to have more coproduction on the reports being brought to the Committee and specifically on the CELT proposals to create a policy that protected the climate as well as Highland's fragile rural economy and communities;
- a CELT presented risks in terms of incentivising further greenwashing, which would have a negative impact on local control of land usage, and disincentivising necessary activities such as house-building. There was also a risk a CELT would not bring in the revenue the Council would like to see;
- Council Tax bands were inherently unfair, and the proposal to establish a similar standardised banding scheme in respect of a CELT was questioned;
- the climate and ecological emergency was the biggest challenge facing the Council, and it was emphasised that the Committee was simply being asked to support the principle of developing a draft framework at this stage;
- the principle underlying a CELT was that landowners had a responsibility to manage their land in a way that was climate and nature conscious. Crofters and small farms would not be impacted, as had been suggested, as they did not have landholdings big enough to be subjected to a CELT. It was aimed at large

landowners, many of which owned land in Highland which was not currently being managed sustainably. Eighty percent of peatland in Highland was currently emitting carbon when it should be absorbing it, there was virtually no woodland to store carbon and the UK was one of the most biodiversity depleted countries in the world. A CELT would encourage landowners to change how they managed their land and, as they did so, they would pay less tax. Surrounding communities would benefit from the regeneration and increased carbon capture and this would also create more local jobs in rural areas. It was added that the Council would be involved in developing the draft framework and, if it became policy, Councils would have the choice as to whether they wanted to implement a CELT;

- the Motion to Full Council in March had proposed that the Council become a Member of the Carbon Emissions Land Tax Coalition, and it would have been helpful to provide some detail in the report as to what that entailed;
- clarification was sought, and provided, in relation to the planned public consultation and engagement referred to in recommendation iii. of the report; and
- given the importance of this theme to rural areas and community landowners, crofters and family farms, it was proposed that the matter be referred to a Members' Seminar to ensure the views of Members were gathered prior to a decision being made, and that representatives from the John Muir Trust and all the aforementioned landholders be invited to be involved in the Seminar.

Following discussion, and given the nature of the debate, the Chair commented that a Members' Seminar was a sensible way forward and confirmed he was content to accept the proposal in that regard. It was further confirmed that the findings of the Seminar would be fed back to a future meeting of the Full Council to inform the final decision.

The Committee:-

- i. **AGREED**, given the importance of this theme to rural areas and community landowners, crofters and family farms, that the matter be referred to a Members' Seminar to ensure the views of Members were gathered prior to a decision being made, and that representatives from the John Muir Trust and all the aforementioned landholders be invited to be involved in the Seminar; and
- ii. **NOTED** that the findings of the Seminar would be fed back to a future meeting of the Full Council to inform the final decision.

4. **Net Zero Strategy** **Ro-innleachd Neoini Lom**

There had been circulated Report No CCC/9 /23 dated 21 April 2023 by the Interim Depute Chief Executive.

During discussion, the following comments were made:-

- the rewarding collaborative process that had been followed in developing the Net Zero Strategy was commended and thanks were expressed to all officers and Members involved for their time and effort;
- information was sought, and provided, on the rationalisation of the Council's estate and what could be done immediately to reduce carbon emissions, such

as turning down heating; whether there would be Member input into the Local Transport Strategy; and the timeline for the Pathfinder Project in respect of Electric Vehicle infrastructure;

- the importance of local communities having a say as to what land would be set aside as green space was emphasised;
- concern was expressed regarding coastal erosion at Chanonry Point;
- the Annual Utility Cost Forecasts set out in the Strategy showed the extent of the pressure the Council was facing as a result of increasing energy prices, and the efforts of officers in coming up with schemes to both reduce carbon emissions and save money were welcomed;
- the Strategy came with many challenges as it was going to involve embedding climate action across all Council services and activities;
- going forward, climate action had to be the dominant theme in every Council budget, which would require collaboration and a complete change in decision-making and budget-setting;
- the section of the report on Governance and Reporting was fundamental to progressing the Strategy and the development of the Action Plan. Particular reference was made to the key role of the Thematic Group leads, and it was hoped they would be in attendance at Full Council in June;
- information was sought, and provided, as to how the Strategy and Action Plan would tie in with the Highland Local Development Plan and Place Plans;
- whilst the Net Zero Strategy was welcomed and commended, it was disappointing that it had taken so long for the Council to produce such a Strategy;
- targets were important as they encouraged Members to push forward and be ambitious. However, concern was expressed that the Strategy simply emulated the Scottish Government's Net Zero target of 2045, and it was suggested this could be reviewed, perhaps to 2040;
- political leadership was needed to drive the Strategy forward and ensure it was not business as usual, and there were strong arguments that the Chair of the Climate Change Committee, or the Vice Chair if the Chair was unavailable, should be on the Budget Review Group, the Senior Leadership Group and the Net Zero Strategy Group;
- achieving Net Zero was only stage one, and did not begin to address improving the situation;
- clarification having been sought regarding the recommendations in the report, the Chair confirmed the intention was that the Strategy would be presented to the Full Council on 29 June for approval;
- on the point being raised, the Chair confirmed that the fully costed Action Plan would feed into the Council's budget process for 2024/25; and
- all Elected Members had a duty to engage with local communities and promote the Council's vision for achieving Net Zero.

The Committee:-

- i. **AGREED TO RECOMMEND** to the Full Council the Strategy for approval;
- ii. **NOTED** that the Strategy would be presented to Full Council on 29 June 2023 for ratification; and
- iii. **NOTED** a fully costed action plan would be developed for consideration by the end of December 2023.

5. **Draft Communications and Engagement Strategy** **Dreachd Ro-innleachd Conaltraidh is Com-pàirteachais**

There had been circulated Report No CCC/10/23 dated 2 May 2023 by the Interim Depute Chief Executive.

During discussion, the following comments were made:-

- the proposed Strategy was a large piece of work that effectively involved the whole of the Council and how it operated and communicated;
- the development of a business case for in respect of a behavioural change app was welcomed;
- officers were commended for the comprehensive report;
- the framing and tone of climate change messaging was critical;
- it was felt that the Communications and Engagement Strategy needed to be in place and operational already, particularly as the Net Zero Action Plan was in development, and the proposed timeline of early 2024 was questioned. In addition, it was questioned why no consideration had been given to external communication and engagement with Community Councils and the wider community; and
- in relation to engaging with communities, the Chair confirmed that Highlands & Islands Climate Hub would be invited to participate at a future meeting of the Climate Change Committee.

The Committee:-

- i. **AGREED** that officers proceed with the delivery of the first phase of communications and engagement, in accordance with the approach outlined within the report; and
- ii. **NOTED** a detailed internal Communications & Engagement Strategy and Action Plan would be developed for consideration at a future Climate Change Committee.

6. **Training and Literacy** **Tréanadh agus Litearras**

There had been circulated Report No CCC/11/23 dated 28 April 2023 by the Interim Depute Chief Executive.

During discussion, the following comments were made:-

- given the scale of the climate emergency, surprise was expressed that many Elected Members had never attended a meeting of the Climate Change Committee, and the need for Members to increase their knowledge of the issues surrounding climate changes was emphasised. However, it was recognised that Members had many other important commitments and managed their time accordingly;
- food production and consumption contributed 30% of carbon emissions, significantly more than transport. However, it was acknowledged that the Council did not have control over food production;
- it was important that training was provided to all Members and staff;
- it was suggested that training be extended to schools and that, through working with the Education Committee and Education and Learning Service, the work

taking place in Highland to address climate change be included as part of the curriculum;

- it was suggested that public sector catering should take the lead in terms of promoting plant-based diets as a successful way to combat climate change;
- Members needed to stand and work together, based on facts, in the face of populism;
- mandatory climate literacy training was essential, particularly in terms of developing the Net Zero Action Plan, and needed to be coordinated with the Communications and Engagement Strategy. In addition, information was sought and provided, on the timeline for delivering the training.

The Committee **NOTED**, subject to the approval of the Net Zero Strategy:-

- i. the need for climate change training to be mandatory across all levels of the Council, from officers to Elected Members, to achieve our climate change ambitions; and
- ii. that Carbon Literacy Training should be delivered to Members, the Executive Leadership Team and the Senior Leadership Team in the first instance, to allow for assessment of training requirements for other staff.

**7. Inverness West Bank and Inverness Castle Heat Network Feasibility Studies
Sgrùdaidhean Iomchaidheachd Lìonra Teasa Bruach an Iar Inbhir Nis agus
Caisteal Inbhir Nis**

There had been circulated Report No CCC/12/23 dated 28 April 2023 by the Interim Depute Chief Executive.

During discussion, the level of engagement from external stakeholders was highlighted and welcomed. In addition, appreciation was expressed to officers for the significant amount of work that had gone into developing the two feasibility studies.

The Committee otherwise **NOTED** the contents of the report.

The meeting concluded at 12.00 noon.

The Highland Council

Minutes of Meeting of the **Health, Social Care and Wellbeing Committee** held in the Council Chamber, Glenurquhart Road, Inverness on Thursday, 18 May 2023 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 (remote)
Mrs B Jarvie	Mrs M Reid
Ms L Johnston	Mrs T Robertson
Ms E Knox	Mrs L Saggars (remote)
Ms L Kraft	

Non-Members present (remote):

Mr M Baird	Mr A Graham
Mr J Finlayson	Mr D Millar
Mr R Gale	Mr P Oldham

Non-voting Members:

Dr T Allison, Director of Public Health, NHS Highland (remote)
 Ms K Patience-Quate, Deputy Director of Nursing, NHS Highland (remote)
 Ms J Douglas, Care and Learning Alliance
 Mr H Tedstone, Highland Hospice

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, Head of Performance and Improvement, Health and Social Care
 Ms J Park, Strategic Lead Child Health, Health and Social Care
 Ms M McIntyre, Head of Children and Justice Social Work, Health and Social Care
 Ms D Munro, Lead Officer Child Protection, Health and Social Care
 Ms J Hutchinson, Strategic Lead (Care and Support), Health and Social Care
 Ms M Murray, Interim Principal Administrator, Performance and Governance
 Ms F MacBain, Senior Committee Officer, Performance and Governance

Also in Attendance:

Ms P Cremin, Chief Operating Officer, NHS Highland
 Mr S Steer, Director of Adult Social Care, NHS Highland

**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 welcomed Mr Harry Tedstone (Highland Hospice) to the meeting as a new third sector representative.

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

An apology for absence was intimated on behalf of Mrs P Munro.

**2. Declarations of Interest/Transparency Statement
Foillseachaidhean Com-pàirt/ Aithris Fhollaiseachd**

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

Item 10 – Ms L Kraft

**3. Service Achievements
Coileanaidhean Seirbheis**

The Committee **NOTED** updates on the following successes:

- Monday Night Football / Youth Action Team;
- Family Fund Payment to Young Carers;
- Mental Health Officer Service; and
- National Foster Care Fortnight 15 to 28 May 2023, and celebration of Isa and Alec Taylor's 40 years fostering.

During discussion, Members praised the Monday Night Football activity and referred to several similar activities taking place across the Highlands, and the considerable benefits to the young people participating. The volunteers who organised these activities were thanked, and it was suggested that consideration be given to providing funding and support for such events, and to compiling a list of all similar activities for a future meeting. It was pointed out that the fees for the use of Council-owned halls could be prohibitive. Clarification was sought and provided on the process used to identify young carers for the family fund payments.

**4. Appointments
Cur an Dreuchd**

The Committee **AGREED** to appoint Ms K MacLean to replace Ms E Knox on the Highland Community Justice Partnership.

**5. Adult Social Care Assurance Report and Strategic Context
Aithisg Bharantachaidh agus Co-theacsa Ro-innleachdail Cùram Sòisealta Inbheach**

There had been circulated Report No HCW/**05**/23 by the Executive Chief Officer Health and Social Care.

During discussion, the following issues were raised:

- concern was expressed at the ongoing recruitment challenges, including the burden being placed on existing staff, in the context of unemployment at 2%. The partnership's commitment to the care sector was highlighted, and the value of the Strategic Plan summarised;

- it was disappointing that delivery of some services would fall short due to lack of funding and staff. It was important to change attitudes towards the caring profession and encourage careers in this sector;
- it was challenging for smaller private care homes to break even and remain open, and it was envisaged there needed to be a move towards more care at home;
- there was a move away from discussing numbers of beds required, and rather to considering the number of care hours required to deliver services;
- clarification was sought and provided on the 227 Local Authority, and 654 private, guardianship orders that had been considered in Highland in 2022. Some of these were not only for older people who had lost capacity to handle their own affairs, but were also for adults who had never had capacity and hence could not grant a power of attorney. The importance of planning for the future in terms of writing wills and arranging power of attorney was emphasised;
- attention was drawn to the geographic challenges facing Highland, and to the increased percentage of the population who were of retirement age;
- with reference to the Highland Hospice's pilot model for the provision of palliative care, including a helpline and a palliative care response team (Sunflower Home Care, which brought home-based health and social care to rural and remote communities across the Highlands), a suitable model for the delivery of care at home was required for Highland, with an appropriate rag system and timeline. In this respect, the role of the Strategic Plan, and related locality plans, which were being developed, was outlined, noting that the delivery of the Strategic Plan would be monitored by the NHS Highland - Highland Council's Joint Monitoring Committee;
- in relation to locality plans, it was important to manage community expectations in light of the ongoing challenges and capacity issues in care homes;
- the need for flexibility and collaboration in relation to the recruitment and employment of carers was emphasised;
- attention was drawn to third sector innovation work due to start in Highland to address the recruitment challenges across the whole care sector (child and adult) and find a community-centred way to meet the specific needs of remote and rural areas. The Care and Learning Alliance (CALA) had been working with a wide range of partners, locally and nationally, within the current framework and policies to identify where change was required;
- information was sought and provided on how further care home closures would be managed;
- Members welcomed the news that the in-house programme for Mental Health Officers had received national recognition by winning the SASW MHO Practice Award 2023, which had contributed to the qualification of 4 MHOs, with another 3 trainees in post;
- it was queried whether the 1460 contacts made by the mental health team in 2022 included repeat patients and, while it was thought this was the case, the Head of Integration Adult Social Care would confirm this to Mrs A MacLean outwith the meeting;
- reference was made to 'Dying to Know' events at which professionals such as solicitors and accountants provided information on end of life issues to the public and staff, and it would be helpful if similar events continued;
- it would be beneficial if 'wellbeing' was higher up the budgetary agenda, given its importance, an example being to set up a training scheme through UHI to provide care modules or part or all of a social work degree. This might

- encourage Highland young people to study locally and attract students from outwith the area;
- an initiative run by CALA to take nursery children into care homes was praised, and consideration should be given to extending this to older pupils to give them an insight into careers in Adult Social Care. Workplace shadowing and mentoring might also encourage young people into careers in the care sector;
 - information was sought on the various handyman schemes, and it was explained that this was currently under review to provide a more consistent service across the Highlands. The key role such services could play in reducing delayed discharges from hospital was outlined; and
 - confirmation was sought that funding was available for household adjustments for part-time as well as full-time carers, and this would be clarified to Mrs B Jarvie outwith the meeting.

The Committee **NOTED** the:

- i. contents of the report; and
- ii. continued commitment and collaborative actions to sustain service provision, whilst responding to the ongoing operational pressures arising as a result of the ongoing covid response and pressures associated with difficulties in meeting demand arising as a result of staffing challenges.

6. Fostering and Adoption – Family Based Care Daltachd agus Uchd-mhacachd – Cùram Stèidhichte air Teaghlach

There had been circulated Report No HCW/06/23 by the Executive Chief Officer Health and Social Care.

During discussion, the following issues were raised:

- Members thanked all foster carers and referred to the achievements of Mr and Mrs Taylor, who had been mentioned at item 3 having fostered and adopted children for 40 years;
- the table at paragraph 5.1 in the report referenced ‘Fostering, Adoption and Adult Placement Services’ and, in response to a query, it was clarified that these three areas were broken down in the Improvement and Action Plan appended to the report;
- information was sought and provided on the rigorous matching process undertaken for fostering and adoption;
- progress on the Improvement and Action Plan was welcomed, as were the figures showing fewer children having to leave their families;
- the services for adults affected by adoption, detailed in section 15 of the report, should be extended to those affected by fostering;
- it was important to involve children and young people in their care and support plans;
- assurance was sought on how the increase in the number of young children who were being accommodated, often with serious health and developmental needs associated with parental substance misuse, was being tackled. Reference was made to the whole family approach;
- third sector assistance with direct therapeutic work and Therapeutic Life Story Work was proposed, along with assistance in publicising the need for foster carers;

- it would be helpful if real foster carers could be featured in adverts to encourage others to foster;
- assurance was sought and provided that children with a disability who were being fostered would receive the same levels of care and support as birth children;
- young parents should be supported through pregnancy and after birth and attention was drawn to the valuable work of the Family Nurse Partnership in this regard;
- in response to a query about why the fostering and adoption process was so lengthy, attention was drawn to the importance of preparation and correct matching, to giving prospective parents and carers sufficient time to reflect on what they were going to undertake, and to ensuring safeguarding issues were fully taken into consideration; and
- information was sought and provided on why some people preferred to adopt rather than foster children.

The Committee:

- NOTED** and scrutinised the content of the report which aimed to offer transparency and accountability for Highland Council's Fostering and Adoption Service; and
- AGREED** an annual report be presented to committee from the Fostering and Adoption Service to enable continuous scrutiny and assurance of improvements to the service.

7. Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children in Highland Clann gun Neach Còmhla Riutha a' Sireadh Comaraich sa Ghàidhealtachd

There had been circulated Report No HCW/07/23 by the Executive Chief Officer Health and Social Care.

During discussion, the following issues were raised:

- assurance was sought in relation to the treatment of and funding for the 16-18 age group, especially given the relatively high numbers that went missing, often to larger cities;
- the reduction in the transfer timeline for moving young people out of hotels from 10 working days to 5 days was likely to be challenging;
- the trauma faced by separated children was acknowledged, and reference was made to the importance of offering appropriate support and, where required, familiar cultural experiences, as well as education and training, and opportunities for the future. Working on this in partnership with the third sector was important, as was the need to protect vulnerable young people from getting involved with people traffickers and crime;
- information was sought on the costs likely to be involved; and
- it was clarified that unaccompanied children tended to arrive in small groups of two to five.

The Committee **NOTED**:

- the context, background and action by the formation of a strategic partnership, including the 3rd sector Alliance, in developing an urgent

- humanitarian response to support the holistic needs of separated children in Highland;
- ii. the complex and changing policy, procedural and financial arrangements directly linked to ministerial updates;
- iii. the financial pressures given funding did not cover real time costs of the full provision of services across the broad partnership; and
- iv. COSLA's key role in representation of all local authorities across Scotland.

8. Children at Risk of Harm Inspection Update and Action Plan Cunntas às Ùr mu Sgrùdadh is Plana-ghnìomha do Chloinn ann an Cunnart bho Chron

There had been circulated Report No HCW/08/23 by the Executive Chief Officer Health and Social Care.

During discussion, the following issues were raised:

- Members were urged to read the full inspection reports, not only the Committee reports, and it was requested that links be provided in future;
- in response to a suggestion that the Committee should monitor and scrutinise any improvements, it was clarified that governance would be undertaken through the Public Protection Chief Officer Group and Community Planning Partnership Board, with regular updates likely to be to every second Committee meetings, this to be finalised with the Chair; and
- the rag register, dynamic nature of the action plan, and the work towards the implementation of a trauma-informed approach were welcomed;

The Committee **NOTED** the:

- i. update; and
- ii. improvement plan developed by the partnership to deliver on the recommendations outlined in the inspection report.

9. Child Protection Minimum Dataset Seata Dàta as Lugha airson Dìon Chloinne

There had been circulated Report No HCW/09/23 by the Executive Chief Officer Health and Social Care.

During discussion, the following issues were raised:

- information was sought and provided as to whether all children who were referred to the Children's Reporter were on the Child Protection Register. The role of the Child Protection Register in keeping children safe was explained, with the Register highlighting children who were vulnerable or at risk of harm to all agencies and partners;
- assurance was sought and provided that asylum seeking children and refugees could also be included on the Child Protection Register;
- attention was drawn to an online Child Protection training module which was free and available to all;
- information was sought and provided on why around 50% of children on the Child Protection Register were under the age of five. In terms of monitoring,

- it was explained that all children on the register must be seen fortnightly, though this would change to weekly in September 2023;
- it was queried why the Children’s Reporter Annual Referrals rate per 1,000 children (chart 14 in the report) was higher in Highland than in several other Local Authority areas and whether this was due to a difference in social work practice. This anomaly had been considered by the Child Protection Committee and would be reported back at the next meeting of the Committee; and
 - the importance of early intervention, close monitoring and a whole sector approach was emphasised.

The Committee **NOTED** the:

- i. purpose and background to the development of the minimum dataset; and
- ii. range of data contained within the report.

10. Health and Social Care – Service Performance Reporting for Q4 – 1 January 2023 to 31 March 2023
Slàinte agus Cùram Sòisealta – Aithris Coileanaidh Seirbheis airson C4 – 1 Faoilleach 2023 gu 31 Màrt 2023

Transparency Statement: Ms L Kraft declared a connection to section 4.3 of this item as a case worker for an MSP, and frequent user of the Service Complaints Portal but, having applied the objective test, did not consider that she had an interest to declare.

There had been circulated Report No HCW/**10**/23 by the Executive Chief Officer Health and Social Care.

During discussion, Members felt there had been a significant improvement in complaint handling by the Service, and across the Council, and appreciation for this should be expressed to staff. On the point being raised, it was confirmed that disability access in the Council Chamber was under review.

The Committee **NOTED** the Service’s performance information.

11. Health and Social Care Staff Vacancies and Associated Risks
Beàrnan Luchd-obrach agus Cunnartan Co-cheangailte airson Slàinte is Cùram Sòisealta

There had been circulated Report No HCW/**11**/23 by the Executive Chief Officer Health and Social Care.

During discussion, the following issues were raised:

- a further update report was requested for the next meeting of the Committee, with a suggestion that this become a standing item;
- assurance was sought that exit interviews were being undertaken, ideally not by direct line managers, and that safe spaces were provided for staff to discuss the challenges and pressures they were facing;
- suggestions included asking recently retired staff to be mentors for new staff or to return on a flexible basis, and using the positive experiences of real social care staff to publicise the sector as a fruitful career;

- given the serious and worrying nature of the report, in the longer term, a Highland-based medical or expanded health sciences campus would be useful. It was explained that conversations were taking place with UHI about a variety of issues;
- flexible contracts should be offered to staff to create a 'bank' type staffing pool;
- concern was expressed at the additional workload created by ongoing vacancies, with particular reference to social workers and mental health officers. Suggestions to actively retain staff included asking existing staff if they were interested in retraining for posts that were difficult to recruit to, ensuring a supportive flexible environment, and breaking down the tasks of challenging posts to allocate lesser skilled tasks to other members of staff. A whole-day workshop on this topic would be beneficial;
- interaction with and the support provided by the third sector and other Council services was acknowledged and welcomed;
- information was sought on where to signpost anyone interested in a post which was proving challenging to recruit to, and the possibility of a Health and Social Care employment portal was suggested;
- it was important to support people who were less academically inclined - for example, through mentoring;
- local hubs for employment and support were important, especially for people who did not drive and in areas where public transport was poor; and
- appropriate rewards and flexibility for posts which were highly stressful, such as social workers, should be considered, with attention drawn to the impact of social care staff shortages on every item on the Committee agenda.

The Committee:

- NOTED** the contents of the report;
- AGREED** to support the inclusion on the risk register of issues in relation to vacancies set out in the report; and
- AGREED** to present a further update report on the issue to the next meeting of the Committee.

12. Minutes Geàrr-chunntas

The following Minutes had been circulated and were **NOTED**:-

- Highland Child Protection Committee held on 3 November 2022 and 23 February 2023;
- Highland Council / NHS Highland Joint Monitoring Committee held on 5 October 2022, 18 January 2023 and 24 February 2023; and
- Highland Violence Against Women Partnership Group (HVAWPG) held on 7 November 2022.

During discussion, reference was made to section 6 of the HVAWPG Minutes of 7 November 2022, and an update was requested on the action, 'It was agreed to ask the Highland Council to consider electing a "Women's Champion" as other authorities have.' This would be investigated and reported back to Mrs A MacLean.

The Committee **NOTED** the position.

The meeting ended at 3.25pm.

The Highland Council

Minutes of Meeting of the **Easter Ross Area Committee** held remotely on Monday, 22 May 2023, at 10.30 am.

Present:

Ms T Collier
Mr D Louden
Mrs P Munro

Ms M Nolan
Mr A Rhind

Officials in Attendance:

Ms H Ross, Senior Ward Manager
Mr L Clancy, Principal Housing Officer
Mr C Sharp, Housing Repairs Manager
Ms F MacBain, Senior Committee Officer

**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 Item 9, which was chaired by Ms M Nolan)

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

Apologies were intimated on behalf of Mrs S Rawlings and Ms M Smith.

2. **Declarations of Interest/Transparency Statement** **Foilseachaidhean Com-pàirt/ Aithris Fhollaiseachd**

Item 9 - Mrs T Collier and Mr D Louden.

3. **Inspection Report of St Duthus Special School by HMle** **Aithisg Sgrùdaidh Sgoil Shònraichte an Naoimh Dubhthach le Luchd-sgrùdaidh an Rìgh airson Foghlaim**

There had been circulated Report No ERA/9/23 by the Area Education & Learning Manager.

During discussion, the progress reported was welcomed, with particular reference to the positive information on the relationship between staff and pupils, and noting that the Head Teacher had only been in post a short time when the inspection had taken place. Improvements to the school environment would be welcomed. As the Area Education & Learning Manager had been called away on urgent business, it was requested that he present the report to the next Area Business Meeting for information.

The Committee **NOTED** the content of the report and **AGREED** the report be presented by the Area Education Manager to an Area Business Meeting.

4. **Ross & Cromarty Educational Trust Report Aithisg Urras Foghlaim Rois is Chromba**

There had been circulated Report No ERA/10/23 by the Area Education & Learning Manager.

During discussion, Members sought further information on the potential costs if funds were to be managed differently. It was also suggested that investigation be undertaken into potential investment opportunities similar to those used by the Council's pension fund management team.

The Committee:

- i. **NOTED** the content of the report; and
- ii. **AGREED** to delegate authority to Education officers to explore options to improve investment income and report findings, including costings, back to the Committee; and
- iii. **AGREED** to discuss and report back on possible investment options with the Principal Accountant Corporate Finance, Resources and Finance.

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

There had been circulated Report No ERA/11/23 by the Executive Chief Officer, Housing and Property.

During discussion, the following issues were raised:

- the increasing level of rent arrears was concerning, though it was noted that this was consistent across the Highlands. It was confirmed that of 1445 properties in Cromarty Firth, around 593 were in arrears, though the figures were fluid and some arrears could be due to the timing of the report;
- in response to concerns about long waiting times for repairs, it was clarified that the targets were 14 hours for emergency repairs, 8 days for routine repairs, and 3 months for minor works. Some larger projects, such as replacement kitchens, were part of the capital programme and as a result void times could be longer to allow for the contract to be completed;
- information was sought and provided on the procedure for reporting and for tackling mould, which included commissioning an independent contractor report, and Members said it would be helpful if they could receive copies of these reports, and any actions planned. A high percentage of mould issues were the result of property management issues, for example lack of ventilation or heating, often exacerbated by high energy costs;
- in response to concerns about lack of response to some maintenance requests, it was advisable to log all issues via the service centre to ensure they were properly tracked and monitored. Ms M Nolan offered to discuss with her colleagues putting a motion to the Housing and Property Committee on this issue;
- in relation to homeless accommodation, Ms T Collier asked for information on how to facilitate a family in temporary accommodation staying permanently in that property. The reasons why this was not standard

allocation practice were outlined and the query would be further addressed outwith the meeting; and

- Members were invited to visit the depot in Alness to gain a further insight into Housing issues such as maintenance and void management.

The Committee **NOTED** the information provided on housing performance in the period 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023 and **AGREED** the Principal Housing Officer for homelessness contact Ms T Collier in relation to a customer query.

6. **Ward Discretionary Awards** **Duaisean fo Ùghdarras Uàird**

The Committee **NOTED** the circulated Ward Discretionary Awards information for the periods 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023, and 1 April 2023 to 30 April 2023.

7. **Minutes** **Geàrr-chunntas**

There is circulated and were **NOTED** Minutes of Meeting of the Easter Ross Area Committee held on 23 January 2023, which were approved by the Council on 9 March 2023.

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

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

9. **Disposal of Invergordon Town Hall – Update** **Faighinn Cuidhteas de Thalla-Bhaile Inbhir Ghòrdain – Cunntas às Ùr**

Declarations of Interest

Ms T Collier, due to her partner's involvement with the Invergordon Naval Museum & Heritage Centre, and Mr D Loudon, as a Director of Tain Heritage Trust, declared an interest in this item and left the meeting for its duration:

Ms M Nolan took the Chair for this item.

There had been circulated Report No ERA/12/23 by the Executive Chief Officer, Communities and Place.

Following discussion, the Committee **AGREED** that the Invergordon Town Hall sale process be paused for a 6 month period, as detailed in the report.

The meeting ended at 11.30am

The Highland Council

Minutes of Meeting of the Isle of Skye and Raasay Committee (Comataidh an Eilein Sgitheanaich agus Ratharsair) held remotely on Monday, 22 May, 2023 at 10.30 am.

Present:

Mr J Finlayson
Mr D Millar

Mr C Munro
Mr R Stewart

Officials in attendance:

Mrs F Malcolm, Head of Integration, Adult Social Care, Health & Social Care
Mr W MacKinnon, Ward Manager, Communities and Place
Ms J Bruce, Principal Housing Officer, Housing & Property
Mr A Bryce, Project Officer Active Travel, Infrastructure & Environment
Mr S Manning, Principal Traffic Officer, Infrastructure & Environment
Mr A Macleod, Policy Officer, Performance & Governance
Ms F Cameron, Programme Manager Community Regeneration, Infrastructure & Environment
Ms M Gray, Project Officer Community Regeneration, Infrastructure & Environment
Mr A MacInnes, Interim Senior Committee Officer, Performance & Governance

Also in attendance:-

Ms L Bussell, Director of Nursing, NHS Highland

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 none.

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

There were none.

**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 30 January and 27 February, 2023 which were approved at the Highland Council meeting held on 9 March, 2023, the terms of which were **NOTED**.

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

There was circulated Report No. SR/8/23 by the Executive Chief Officer Housing and Property.

Following commentary on the report by the Principal Housing Officer, Members scrutinised the report and noted that the following information would be provide to them:-

- whether there was a correlation between the increase in average time for emergency repairs being completed and average re-let times.
- whether it was known to the Council that repairs were required prior to tenants leaving properties.
- whether there was a full complement of staff within the Housing maintenance team and whether there was difficulty in hiring contractors to undertake repairs;
- was any tenant satisfaction feedback on the quality of repairs carried out on properties.

The Committee otherwise **NOTED** the information provided on housing performance in the period 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023.

5. North Skye – Health and Social Care Infrastructure Update
Ceann a Tuath an Eilein Sgitheanaich – Cunntas às Ùr mu Bhun-structair
Slàinte is Cùraim Shòisealta

There was circulated Report No. SR/9/23 by the Head of Integration Adult Social Care.

Following commentary on the report by the Head of Integration Adult Social Care and supplemented with comments by the Director of Nursing, NHS Highland, the following main points were raised by Members: -

- The communities of Skye and Raasay wished to see the implementation of the recommendations in Sir Lewis Ritchie’s report on primary care out of hours services and there was frustration on how slow progress had been. The community were looking for progress in relation to urgent care in Portree, community bed provision and staffing in Portree and Broadford hospitals.
- Urgent care provision had been suspended due to staffing challenges and a sustainable model was being looked at for North Skye and it was hoped this would be implemented soon. In terms of bed capacity there were massive recruitment challenges of registered staff particularly at Home Farm care home.
- It was welcomed that in recognition of the significance of the work required as a result of the Sir Lewis Ritchie report, Scottish Futures Trust have become involved with a view to assisting agencies and the local community in setting the direction for the future delivery of health and social care services in North Skye in particular.
- Several years ago there had been moves to close Portree hospital and there had been a significant community effort to save the hospital and this led to Sir Lewis Ritchie reviewing the situation. Sir Lewis’s report was not an aspiration but a binding document which NHS Highland Board committed too and was part of the business case to build the new Broadford hospital. Sir Lewis’s report had some success particularly in Raasay and Glenelg, but areas remained outstanding i.e. provision of urgent care in Portree Hospital and future community bed provision. The

agencies involved under the auspices of the Scottish Futures Trust required to take these outstanding issues forward.

- The closure of Budhmor care home was of huge concern to communities. It was a big challenge in keeping smaller care homes open and this was covered in the Highland Health and Social Care Partnership strategic plan.
- The plans for social housing in Portree required a model that was fit for purpose and deliverable. It was hoped that the Scottish Futures Trust would look at the infrastructure issues such as provision of housing, care villages and cluster housing to support people in appropriate housing.
- There was a need to make the health and social care sector more attractive as a career. There was ongoing work to make it an attractive profession such as working with University of Highlands and Islands on an apprenticeship scheme.
- There was a need for a better view of Home Farm care home. It had changed significantly since NHS Highland took it over and it was hoped that people would want to work there and were comfortable with their families being there.
- There was a will for all agencies to work together to resolve the health and social care needs of Skye and Raasay and communities wanted to see progress as soon as possible.

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

6. Highland Quiet Routes – Pilot Project Report Slighean Sàmhach na Gàidhealtachd – Aithisg Tùs-Phròiseict

There was circulated Report No. SR/10/23 by the Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure and Environment.

Following consideration, the Committee:-

- NOTED** the contents of the report; and
- APPROVED** the 'Armadale to Tormore Quiet Route' and 'Raasay (Inverarish) Quiet Route', including Temporary Traffic Regulation Orders reducing the speed limit on 60 mph sections of both routes to 40mph for a period of 18 months.

7. Local Allocation of Parking Income Sònrachadh Teachd-a-steach Parcaidh Ionadail

There was circulated Report No. SR/11/23 by the Interim Depute Chief Executive.

The Programme Manager provided a summary of the report during which it was advised that an application for match funding for an application submitted to the Islands Infrastructure Fund for 7 road improvement schemes on Isle of Skye and Raasay and EV Chargers at the Old Man of Storr had been unsuccessful. Members were very disappointed that the application had not been successful. They believed it was a very strong application for improving roads for tourism and communities. The bid involved a lot of Officers time to prepare the application and Officers were commended for their work on this. It was important to continue with investment to improve road infrastructure in the area which was a priority for communities.

It was felt that perhaps another look should be given to the road infrastructure priorities and whether to concentrate investment on roads maintenance rather than

provision of EV charges. Funding for EV charges could be sought from future rounds of the Islands Infrastructure Fund.

The Committee:-

- i. **AGREED** to homologate £81k of the local allocation of income generated as a result of car parking charges in the 2022/23 financial year, along with £44k from the area share of local car parking income for 2021/22 as agreed at Area Committee on 30 January 2023 to road infrastructure improvements, as match funding totalling £125k for an application submitted to the Islands Infrastructure Fund for 7 road improvement schemes on Isle of Skye and Raasay and EV Chargers at the Old Man of Storr; and
- ii. **NOTED** that an application for match funding for an application submitted to the Islands Infrastructure Fund for 7 road improvement schemes on Isle of Skye and Raasay and EV Chargers at the Old Man of Storr had been unsuccessful; and
- iii. **NOTED** that schemes may require to be adjusted for operational reasons or following further discussion with local Members as a result of the unsuccessful bid for Islands Infrastructure grant match funding.

8. **Parking Tariffs Skye Cosgaisean Parcaidh an Eilein Sgitheanaich**

There was circulated Report No. SR/12/23 by the Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure and Environment.

Following a summary of the report by the Principal Traffic Officer, Members made the following main points:-

- Parking charges were also introduced to help with the management of car parking at busy tourist sites
- It was disappointing that the area was not receiving an income from car parking in Somerled Square, Portree. This was a car park that pre dated the policy change and income from these car parks made up part of the Service budget.
- In terms of enforcing no overnight parking for motorhomes, there was flexibility in the working hours of Parking Enforcement Officers and from May onwards there would be evening patrols. Also, there was recruitment underway for 3 additional parking enforcement officers to provide additional cover in outlying areas of Highland. There was also a proposal to have an additional Parking Enforcement Officer to cover Skye in future, making a total of 3 Officers for Skye.
- Consideration be given to installing more signs and using social media to communicate that motorhomes were prohibited from parking overnight in Council car parks. It was highlighted that there were 12 trial sites in Highland for short term stop over points for motor homes which had been introduced as a result of lack of parking spaces for motorhomes to stop overnight. It was also felt that more could be done to engage with travelling websites to highlight available parking for motorhomes.
- There was a wider issue outwith parking income regarding sustainable tourism and the challenges and opportunities that this brought and perhaps

should be considered at a Ward Business meeting or Area Committee in future;

- The environmental impact from waste from motorhome users was a concern. It was hoped that most motorhome users disposed of their waste in a sensible manner and when not, this would be dealt with through enforcement. Strategies were developed with a view to pragmatic solutions to disposing of waste.

The Committee:-

- i) **APPROVED** the introduction and enforcement of Mandatory parking charges at the new Kilt Rock Car Park development as detailed in Item 4;
- ii) **APPROVED** the homologation of changes in parking fees and charges as supported by Isle of Skye and Raasay Members on 13 March 2023 in Item 5 of the report;
- iii) **NOTED** that item 6 of the report is in line with the changes in parking fees and charges agreed at Full Council on 2 March 2023; and
- iv) **NOTED** the income to be earmarked for local committee spend from 2022/23 in Item 7 of the report.

9. **Implementation of Islands (Scotland) Act 2018 – Annual Report Buileachadh Achd nan Eilean (Alba) 2018 – Aithisg Bhliadhnail**

There was circulated Report No. SR/13/23 by the Depute Chief Executive.

In discussion, the following main points were raised by Members:-

- Skye was the second biggest Island in Scotland and at times some of the Island Authorities did not take recognition of this and they tried to take the majority of funds.
- In terms of the National Islands Delivery Group and the Islands Strategic Group it was queried if there was representatives from the Highland Council on these groups. It was confirmed that the Policy Officer represented the Council on both these groups and the Chief Executive and Leader of the Council attended the Islands Strategic Group meetings. In addition it was proposed to introduce an Islands Transport Forum.
- In terms of depopulation while this may not be happening in Skye the number of economically active people to those who are not was a concern. It was queried what could be done to increase the number of economically active people in Skye. It was advised that the Convention of Highlands and Islands had a focus on depopulation as did the Scottish Government.

The Committee **NOTED** the update and acknowledged the work that had taken place.

10. **Street Naming Request – Isle of Raasay Iarrtas Ainmeachadh Sràide – Eilean Ratharsair**

There was circulated Report No. SR/14/23 by the Executive Chief Officer Communities and Place.

The Committee **APPROVED** the homologation of 1 new street name for a housing development on the Isle of Raasay, as Deer Park - Pàirc nam Fiadh.

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

The Committee **NOTED** the following Ward Discretionary Fund Grants for Ward 10 in the financial year 2022/23:-

Staffin Primary Parent Council - beach path repair works £1000 Headway Highland – training course £71

Portree & Braes Community Trust, Light Up Portree Sub Group - Autumn Fling, £1410

Poppy Scotland - wreaths Armistice Day £80

Kilmuir Community Trust – Archiving £500

Portree High School - James Dunbar Restoration Project £450

Skye Wind Band – equipment £540

Isle of Skye Pipe Band – equipment £2000

High Life Highland - Portree Youth Club – sessional workers £3000

SEALL - Small Halls Project £500

High Life Highland & Lochalsh, Skye Housing Association - Football Project and Healthy Homes Project £1500

Raasay Heritage Trust – Grid Connection £1000

King George V Playing Field – Fencing & Security £3370

Skye & Raasay Play Parks Maintenance £579

The meeting ended at 12.15 p.m.

The Highland Council

Minutes of Meeting of the **Dingwall and Seaforth Area Committee** held in Committee Room 1, Council Offices, Dingwall on 22 May 2023 at 10.30 am.

Present:

Mr S Kennedy
Mr G MacKenzie

Mrs A MacLean
Mrs M Paterson

In attendance:

Mr M Rodger, Executive Chief Officer – Housing and Property
Ms D Agnew, Ward Manager (Black Isle, Dingwall and Seaforth), Communities and Place
Mr R MacLeod, Service Lead Housing Investment/Building Maintenance, Housing and Property
Mr D Manson, Principal Housing Officer, Housing and Property
Mr J Henderson, Policy Assistant - Empty Homes & PRS Liaison, Housing and Property
Miss J MacLennan, Joint Democratic Services Manager, Performance and Governance

Also in attendance:

Group Manager R Dibble, Scottish Fire and Rescue Service

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

Mr G MacKenzie in the Chair

Business

1. Apologies for Absence Leisgeulan

There were no apologies for absence.

2. Declarations of Interest/Transparency Statement Foillseachaidhean Com-pàirt/ Aithris Fhollaiseachd

There were no Declarations of Interests/Transparency Statements.

3. Scottish Fire and Rescue Service Seirbheis Smàlaidh is Teasairginn na h-Alba

There had been circulated Report No DSA/6/23 dated 30 April 2023 together with the Ross and Cromarty Performance Report by the Local Group Manager for the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS). In particular, Members' attention was drawn to the new proposal from SFRS to reduce unwanted fire alarm signals. From 1 July 2023, SFRS would stop attending automatic fire alarm call outs to commercial businesses and workplace premises unless a fire had been

confirmed. Control room operators would ask anyone reporting a fire alarm to check if there was an actual fire before sending the nearest appliance. This would however not apply to sleeping premises such as hospitals, care homes, hotels or domestic dwellings. This initiative would significantly cut down journeys, thus reducing carbon emissions and improving road safety.

During discussion, Members raised the following main points:-

- Members expressed their appreciation to Group Manager Dibble who was leaving his current post to take up another within the Service. There had been significant improvements locally and these were to be commended;
- a recent Member visit to Invergordon had highlighted the pride that fire personnel had for their stations;
- businesses had expressed concern regarding the SFRS's proposal not to attend automatic fire alarm call outs to commercial businesses. Whilst it was acknowledged that businesses needed to take responsibility for their premises, it was felt that this could put individuals at risk and result in delays in tackling fires before they got out of control. This was seen as a continuation of cuts to the emergency services;
- approximately 40% of call outs were false alarms and could use an appliance which was needed elsewhere;
- the introduction of the new proposal would act on the lessons learnt elsewhere but it was reassuring that it would be assiduously monitored;
- the performance of Dingwall Fire Station was to be welcomed, especially appliance availability with the 1st appliance showing an impressive 99.83%;
- the recruitment of a female fire fighter was to be applauded;
- it was disappointing that the family centre at Dingwall Fire Station had yet to materialise although it was acknowledged this was due to the Highland Council;
- the refurbishment of Dingwall Fire Station, due to start in September 2023, demonstrated the SFRS's commitment;
- when Highland Council designed properties the location and type of fire and smoke alarms needed to be taken into consideration, although it was pointed out that this was a matter for Planning and Building Control to advise;
- the type of call outs had changed over time. There were now much fewer chimney fires but a higher number of traffic collisions; and
- the SFRS was due to report to the Communities and Place Committee later in the week and it was hoped Dingwall Fire Station's excellent performance could be highlighted.

The Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the Ross and Cromarty Performance Report; and
- ii. **AGREED** that a letter be sent to the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service commending the excellent performance of the Dingwall Station and expressing Members' appreciation of Group Manager Dibble.

**4. Housing Performance Report – 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023
Aithisg Coileanaidh Taigheadais – 1 Giblean 2022 gu 31 Màrt 2023**

There had been circulated Report No DSA/7/23 dated 12 May 2023 by the Executive Chief Officer, Property and Housing.

During discussion, Members raised the following main points:-

- information was sought, and provided, regarding the arrangements surrounding visits to tenants to carry out maintenance;
- the condition of some void properties was poor and the cost of repair often fell to the Service. Where possible it was hoped that these repairs could be recharged to tenants but, when doing so, there were a number of factors to take into consideration;
- whilst 372 homeless presentations were made across Highland at the end of 2022/23, 74 of which were in Ross and Cromarty, it was not possible to break this down to Ward level;
- in response to a question, it was explained that a homeless person/family might or might not wish to be rehomed in the same area for a variety of reasons;
- information was sought, and provided, as to what other support was available to vulnerable tenants;
- similarly information was sought, and provided, as to the number of properties in rent arrears, the average of which was £513. It was important to engage with tenants in rent arrears as soon as possible and to signpost them to the Welfare Support Team etc;
- this highlighted that the Housing Service was now picking up more of a duty of care. These were hidden costs but ones which needed to be highlighted to the Scottish Government as often this was a result of policy changes;
- the arrangements surrounding the offer of properties to tenants was explored but, thankfully, there was a low level of refusal in the Dingwall and Seaforth Ward;
- the substantial improvement on emergency repairs was commended; and
- it was acknowledged that there was now a greater expectation of service delivery.

The Committee **NOTED** the information provided on housing performance in period 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023.

**5. HRA Capital Programme 2023/24 Update and 2023/27 Programme
Cunntas às Ùr mu Phrògram Calpa Cunntas Teachd a-steach Taigheadais
2023/24 agus Prògram 2023/27**

There had been circulated Report No DSA/8/23 dated 10 May 2023 by the Executive Chief Officer, Housing and Property.

During discussion, Members raised the following main points:-

- the life-cycle based approach to major component replacement was explored. It could be argued that those tenants who kept their kitchens, bathrooms etc in good order could be disadvantaged whilst others would

have replacements before them. There were a number of factors to take into consideration determining when a kitchen needed replaced but officers undertook to provide an approximate average cost to Members;

- heating upgrades were seen as a priority by tenants and this element might attract more Government support;
- the resources available for window replacement was hampered due to the increase in the price of materials;
- there were competing demands between increasing housing stock and improving existing stock to meet Government targets; and
- the Council was buying former Council houses back, when appropriate.

The Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the update on the 2022-23 Dingwall and Seaforth HRA Capital Programme at section 5 of the report;
- ii. **NOTED** the resources available to Dingwall and Seaforth at paragraph 6.7 of the report;
- iii. **AGREED** the proposed investment priorities in the HRA Capital Programme for Dingwall and Seaforth 2023-27 as set out in Appendix 1 of the report;
- 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; and
- v. **AGREED** that officers would provide Members with an average cost of a kitchen replacement.

**6. Dingwall Common Good Fund – Variation to Property Budget 2023/24
Maoin Math Coitcheann Inbhir Pheofharain – Atharrachadh do Bhuidseat Seilbh 2023/24**

There had been circulated Report No DSA/9/23 dated 16 May 2023 by the Executive Chief Officer, Communities and Place.

The Dingwall Jubilee Park Road was well used by the Caravan Park and Ross County Football Club and was popular with dog walkers accessing the canal and park area so its improvement, planned to take place at the end of June, was welcomed.

The Committee **APPROVED** an increase of £10,000 to the 2023/24 property budget to enable a contribution towards essential road and carpark maintenance in Common Good ownership at Dingwall Jubilee Park Road.

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

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

(from 2022/23 Budget)

- i. Muir of Ord Community Council : Seniors Christmas Lunch - £1,160
- ii. Windsor Place Residents Association : Sharing Shed - £2,200
- iii. Muir of Ord Community Council – Lighting Muir of Ord Square - £450
- iv. Dingwall Primary School – National Schools Shinty Finals - £147

(from 2023/24 Budget)

- v. Dingwall Community Development Company – Study into Creation of Allotments in Dingwall - £100
- vi. Maryburgh Community Council – Maryburgh in Bloom Project - £400
- vii. The Neil Gunn Trust – Neil Gunn Writing Competition 2023 - £650
- viii. Dingwall Community Council – Dingwall in Bloom Project - £1,500
- ix. Black Isle Farmers' Society – Black Isle Show 2023 - £600

8. **Ross & Cromarty Educational Trust Report** **Aithisg Urras Foghlaim Rois is Chromba**

There had been circulated Report No DSA/10/23 dated 12 May 2023 by the Area Education & Learning Manager.

The Committee-:

- i. **NOTED** the content of the report; and
- ii. **AGREED** to delegate authority to Education officers to explore options to improve investment income and report findings back to the Committee

9. **Minutes** **Geàrr-chunntas**

The Committee **NOTED** Minutes of Meeting of the Dingwall and Seaforth Area Committee held on 30 January 2023 which were approved by the Council on 9 March 2023.

The meeting ended at 12.05 pm

The Highland Council

Minutes of Meeting of the **Communities and Place Committee** held in the Council Chamber, Council Headquarters, Glenurquhart Road, Inverness on Wednesday 24 May 2023 at 10.30 am.

Present:

Mr A Baldrey (remote)	Mr R Gunn
Mr J Bruce	Mrs J Hendry
Mr M Cameron	Mrs B Jarvie (remote)
Ms T Collier (remote)	Mr S Kennedy (substitute)
Mr J Finlayson	Mr P Logue (remote)
Mr L Fraser	Mr G MacKenzie (Chair)
Mr R Gale	Mr H Morrison (Vice Chair)
Mr A Graham	Ms L Niven (remote)
Mr M Green	

Non-Members also present:

Mr M Baird (remote)	Mr R MacKintosh
Dr C Birt (remote)	Ms K MacLean (remote)
Ms S Fanet (remote)	Mr T MacLennan (remote)
Mr K Gowans (remote)	Mr D MacPherson (remote)
Ms M Hutchison (remote)	Mr J McGillivray (remote)
Ms L Johnston (remote)	Mr D Millar (remote)
Mr B Lobban	Mrs T Robertson (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, Contact and Engagement
 Ms E Barrie, Head of HR, Resources and Finance
 Mr A McKinnie, Strategic Lead, Waste Strategy and Operations
 Mr A Yates, Strategic Lead, Environmental Health and Bereavement Services
 Ms P Sheldon, Senior Environmental Health Officer
 Ms I Percy-Bell, Principal Waste Management Officer
 Ms K Ellen, Community Food Growing Coordinator
 Ms S Miller, Corporate Performance Business Partner
 Ms M MacDonald, HR Business Partner
 Ms M Murray, Interim Principal Administrator
 Ms R Ross, Committee Officer

Also in attendance:

Mr M Humphreys, Local Senior Officer for Highland, Scottish Fire and Rescue Service
 Mr M Czerniakiewicz, Detective Superintendent, Highlands and Islands Division, 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 Ms M Nolan and Mr W MacKay.

2. Declarations of Interest Foillseachaidhean Com-pàirt

There were no declarations of interest.

3. Good News Naidheachdan Matha

The Chair spoke to three items of good news as follows:-

Community Operations and Logistics

Ryen Campbell, Play Technician, and Nicole Hardie, Operational Support Officer, had both been successful in achieving the Silver Award in the Association for Public Service Excellence (APSE) Rising Star Awards. All Silver Award Rising Star nominees for the Parks, Grounds and Streets category would be competing for the Gold Award. Presentation of all the awards would be made at APSE's Fleet, Waste and Grounds Services annual seminar which was being held the following day in Aviemore.

Highland Council's Staff Recognition Awards

Ryen and Nicole had also both been shortlisted in the Highland Council Employee of the Year category as part of the Council's annual Staff Recognition Awards, the winners of which would be announced on 9 June.

Other shortlisted applications that included the Communities and Place Service were:

- Cost of Living Support Fund
- Rewilding
- Electric Vehicle Management
- Business Waste
- The Comfort Scheme
- Ukrainian Refugee Resettlement

The Chair extended his congratulations to all involved and thanked them for their outstanding work.

Burial Grounds

Officers were continuing to progress the programme of burial ground extensions and site works were now complete at the new extensions for the Proncynain burial ground

in Dornoch and the Chapelhill burial ground in Easter Ross. Both the new extensions should provide capacity for their communities for at least the next 50 years. A report on the progress of the burial ground extension programme would be taken to the Committee later in 2023.

The Committee **NOTED** the Good News.

4. Scottish Fire and Rescue Service Highland Performance Report Aithisg Coileanaidh Seirbheis Smàlaidh is Teasairginn na h-Alba

There had been circulated Report No CP/08/23 dated 24 May 2023 by the Local Senior Officer for Highland, Scottish Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS).

The Chair highlighted that, since the last meeting, a visit to Invergordon Fire Station had taken place to see the latest recruits go through their training programme, and he looked forward to similar visits in future.

In relation to the Motion to Full Council in December 2022, a letter had been written to the SFRS Board asking for a meeting. To date, a reply had not been received. However, efforts would continue to arrange a meeting and the proposers of the Motion would be invited.

The Local Senior Officer for Highland, SFRS, then introduced the report, highlighting some key areas including the new report format which included sections on questions and community engagement; the numbers of dwelling fires and road traffic accidents; the changing procedure in respect of unwanted fire alarm signals; and the availability of appliances, particularly in rural areas.

During discussion, the following main points were raised:-

- the new report format was very helpful;
- the joint mobilising process was welcomed, and it was queried whether this had been utilised in Tongue and Bettyhill, both of which had low availability figures. It was added that it was necessary to increase the use of joint mobilisation, particularly in rural areas;
- the delivery of Fire Skills Courses was welcomed;
- information was sought on the requirement for firefighters to requalify and whether this had impacted on availability;
- concern having been expressed that solar panels on some Council buildings had had to be switched off for fire safety reasons, it was explained that the Fire Safety Team would be able to provide advice on individual premises;
- in relation to Unwanted Fire Alarm Signals (UFAS), concern was expressed regarding the new procedure, particularly its impact on schools given that teachers and staff often did not live near the schools in which they worked. In addition, information was requested on the procedure in respect of UFAS at commercial properties below or adjacent to residential properties, the action taken in respect of habitual UFAS, and the potential for a licensing scheme with penalties. The Chair commented that the new procedure would present challenges for the Council as a landlord and solutions were being actively explored, and the Local Senior Officer for Highland offered to have an additional meeting to discuss Members' concerns;
- information was sought regarding servicing of defibrillators, and the importance of school visits was emphasised; and

- the impact of the installation of linked domestic smoke alarms was queried; and
- attention was drawn to the diversity of the SFRS and the advantages to employers of having volunteer firefighters on their staff.

The Local Senior Officer having responded to the points raised, the Committee scrutinised and **NOTED** the report.

5. Highland Local Policing Plan 2023-2026

There had been circulated Report No CP/09/23 dated 24 May 2023 by the Divisional Commander, Police Scotland.

Detective Superintendent Czerniakiewicz, Highlands and Islands Division, Police Scotland gave a summary of the report, drawing Members' attention to several key areas including road safety, drug misuse, the 101 service and communication with the public.

During discussion, the following main points were raised:-

- the Chair confirmed that representatives from the 101 service would be invited to attend a future meeting given this was an area of particular concern to Members;
- information was sought on the effects of budgetary constraints on local policing, particularly the reduction in overtime;
- concern was expressed regarding increasing incidents of vandalism, particularly in public conveniences, and information was sought as to how the Local Policing Plan would help to address such anti-social behaviour;
- information was sought on Police Scotland's approach to dealing with recurring incidents involving adolescents;
- the reference to Police visibility in the report was welcomed;
- information was sought on how Police Scotland planned to improve engagement with Elected Members and the public going forward as a lack of feedback had resulted in apathy towards reporting incidents. Superintendent Czerniakiewicz undertook to arrange for officers covering Nairn to contact Ward Members to discuss their concerns in that regard.

Superintendent Czerniakiewicz having responded to the points raised, the Committee **AGREED** the Highland Local Policing Plan for 2023-2026.

6. Workforce Planning Report Aithisg Planadh Feachd-obrach

There had been circulated Report No CP/10/23 dated 24 May 2023 by the Executive Chief Officer, Communities and Place.

During discussion, the following main points were raised:-

- upon concern being expressed at the lack of detail in the report it was explained that it was intended to be a high-level strategic document. Detailed operational action plans sat behind it and progress updates would be taken to future meetings of the Committee;
- more information was requested on the numbers of staff at different pay grades and in different departments; what solutions could be found to address the issue of the age profile within the Service; what could be done to reduce dependency

on temporary and agency staff; and the challenges within the Service and how they were going to be addressed; and

- it was recognised that the budgetary decisions made by the Council in the coming years would have an impact on workforce planning.

The Committee **NOTED** the Communities and Place Service Workforce Plan for 2023–2026.

7. Communities and Place – Service Performance Reporting for Q4 – 1 Jan 2023 – 31 Mar 2023
Coimhearsnachdan agus Àite – Aithris Coileanadh Seirbheis airson C4 – 1 Faoilleach 2023 – 31 Màrt 2023

There had been circulated Report No CP/11/23 dated 24 May 2023 by the Executive Chief Officer, Communities and Place.

During discussion, staff were commended for their approach to dealing with issues and responding in a timely manner, and attention was drawn to the significant amount of work undertaken by the Communities and Place Service, with particular reference to the Freedom of Information requests received.

The Committee scrutinised and **NOTED** the Service’s performance information.

8. Public Conveniences and Comfort Scheme Agreements 2023–2026
Goireasan Poblach agus Aontaidhean Sgeama Cofhurtachd 2023–2026

There had been circulated Report No CP/12/23 dated 24 May 2023 by the Executive Chief Officer, Communities and Place.

During discussion, the following main points were raised:-

- the expansion of the Comfort Scheme to include sites that had previously been funded by the Visitor Management Fund was welcomed;
- information was sought, and provided, as to how many of the 76 Council-operated public conveniences were currently closed due to vandalism, what steps had been taken to re-open them and when the public conveniences in Thurso were likely to re-open. In relation to the latter, there was a need for facilities for tourists and, whilst a Comfort Scheme alternative was available, its opening hours were limited;
- Members commended the Head of Community Operations and Logistics and her team for the work they did under extremely difficult circumstances and their positive and innovative approach;
- the Comfort Scheme was essential given anticipated visitor numbers in places such as Skye, and it was important that officers continued to engage in a positive way with providers. It was a low-cost alternative for the Council, and businesses that operated Comfort Scheme facilities benefited from additional footfall;
- thanks were expressed to officers for supporting a community group to build toilet facilities in Elgol and Broadford, and the partnership working that had taken place to ensure that Council public conveniences remained open until the community facilities were ready was commended;
- it was highlighted that staff had been nominated for a Staff Recognition Award in relation to the success of the Comfort Scheme, and Members wished them all the best;

- concern was expressed regarding recent incidents of vandalism in public conveniences throughout Highland. On the point being raised, it was explained that there was no recommendation in the report in respect of public conveniences as there were no proposed changes in that regard. However, there was no doubt that vandalism was a significant issue and it was necessary to put a marker down. Public convenience provision was a non-statutory service that the Communities and Place Service aimed to continue but there would come a point where the repairs would be unaffordable. It was emphasised that everyone involved was disappointed in the behaviour taking place and officers were doing all they possibly could to reduce the level of vandalism and keep facilities open. Members commended the resilience of staff in the face of the issues being experienced;
- in response to a question regarding Comfort Scheme provision at Dores, it was explained that the pricing matrix was based on the facilities offered rather than footfall; and
- in relation to the recent closure of Ballachulish public conveniences due to vandalism, information was sought, and provided, as to whether more could be done in terms of community-led surveillance and webcam provision. It was commented that the village hall had tried to offer an alternative but the £200 payment was not sufficient given the demand on the facilities due to Ballachulish being on the A82 and a key stop for tourists and tour buses. The village hall relied on volunteers, and it would be helpful if the Council could redeploy cleaning staff whilst nearest public conveniences were closed. In addition, advice from the Council on matters such as insurance would be appreciated as opening the village hall toilets to the public would be an opportunity for the community to raise revenue. The Head of Community Operations and Logistics undertook to ask the local Manager to contact Councillor Fanet regarding the local issues raised.

The Committee **NOTED**:-

- i. the number of Comfort Scheme providers to increase from 42 to 55;
- ii. the expansion of the scheme to include sites that had been funded by the Visitor Management Fund for the past 2 years;
- iii. three-year agreements to provide the Comfort Scheme had been issued to previous providers wishing to continue to participate in the scheme; and
- iv. the results of the survey undertaken with Comfort Scheme providers.

9. Community Food Growing – Annual Report Fàs Bìdh Coimhearsnachd – Aithisg Bhliadhnaid

There had been circulated Report No CP/13/23 dated 24 May 2023 by the Executive Chief Officer, Communities and Place.

During discussion, the following main points were raised:-

- concern was expressed that implementation of the Food Growing Strategy might stall when the fixed-term Community Food Growing Coordinator post came to an end in July 2023 and information was sought, and provided, as to whether any other funding streams had been explored; and
- it was important to provide more allotments to meet the substantial unmet demand, and attention was drawn to the Council's aim, as set out in the current Allotment Policy, to provide allotments within walking distance of as many residents as possible. It was confirmed that these points would be incorporated into the review of allotment provision.

The Committee **NOTED** the progress made to implement the food growing strategy and deliver the community food growing action plan to date and the subsequent benefits to the Highland region.

10. Equality Mainstreaming and Equality Outcomes Progress Report 2023 Aithisg Adhartais Àbhaisteachadh Co-ionannachd is Toraidhean Co-ionannachd 2023

There had been circulated Report No CP/14/23 by the Executive Chief Officer, Communities and Place.

The Chair paid tribute to Rosemary Mackinnon, Principal Policy Officer – Equality, who had retired from the Council at the end of April after 20 years' service. On behalf of the Committee, he thanked her for her hard work in providing advice and support to officers and Members and wished her a happy retirement.

Having commended the significant amount of work that had gone into the Progress Report, the Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the Equality Outcome and Mainstreaming Progress Report for the Highland Council (and incorporating the Education Authority and Licensing Board) as detailed in Appendix 1 of the report; and
- ii. **APPROVED** the addition of a new equality outcome as outlined at section 9.4: *Increase the Council's understanding of Children's Rights (UNCRC) and how to implement a rights based approach by embedding the articles within it across all Council services.*

11. Private Water Supply Improvement Grants Tabhartasan Leasachaidh Solar Uisge Priobhaideach

There had been circulated Report No CP/15/23 dated 12 May 2023 by the Executive Chief Officer, Communities and Place.

During discussion, information was sought, and provided, on the timeframe over which water scarcity was measured and whether site visits would be carried out in respect of applications for enhanced grants.

The Committee **APPROVED** the amended policy as shown in Appendix 2 of the report.

12. Update on Waste Strategy Cunntas às Ùr mu Ro-innleachd Sgudail

There had been circulated Report No CP/16/23 dated 24 May 2023 by the Executive Chief Officer, Communities and Place.

In introducing the report, the Chair commended the Strategic Lead, Waste Strategy and Operations, and his team for the meticulous way in which the application to the Recycling Improvement Fund had been put together. It was unusual for an application to be accepted in full, and the award was one of the highest in Scotland.

In addition, he highlighted that a number of Members had taken up the opportunity to visit the new Inverness Waste Transfer Station before it came into use. Now that the facility was operational, a further visit had been arranged on 28 June 2023 and he hoped as many Members as possible would take up the invitation.

During discussion, the following main points were raised:-

- with regard to the forthcoming waste collection service changes, education and communication were vital and the emphasis thereon in the report was welcomed;
- in relation to long-term waste management, there was an issue with capacity and it was necessary to consider the amount of waste being transported outwith Highland via the A9 or by rail. In that regard, the Chair, Executive Chief Officer, Communities and Place, and Strategic Lead, Waste Strategy and Operations, had met with the Minister for Green Skills, Circular Economy and Biodiversity. A productive conversation had taken place, and she had accepted an invitation to visit Highland;
- clarification was sought, and provided, regarding the proposed bin collection arrangements;
- a small incinerator in Highland would considerably reduce the amount of waste being transported outwith the area. It having been queried whether this remained an option, it was explained that, whilst an independent review on the future of Energy from Waste (EfW) capacity in Scotland had concluded there should be no new EfW facilities, there were some exceptions. It was understood Highland fell within the exception category and establishing an EfW facility was still worthwhile pursuing as an option;
- the improvements that had been made in respect of charging for garden waste bin collection were welcomed; and
- in relation to the recent press release on waste composition analysis, it was confirmed that the figures were by weight, not volume.

The Committee **NOTED**:-

- i. the contents of the report;
- ii. that the application to the Recycling Improvement Fund had been successful and would enable investment in collection services to improve recycling within Highland;
- iii. the updated position on waste transfer station infrastructure in Inverness and Fort William;
- iv. that Highland Council support funding for mobile shredders for treating bulky waste had been approved; and
- v. that work was underway to provide an updated perspective on the feasibility and viability of long-term waste management options for The Highland Council.

13. Minutes of the Waste Strategy Working Group Geàrr-chunntas Buidheann Obrach Ro-innleachd Sgudail

The Committee **APPROVED** the Minutes of the Waste Strategy Working Group held on 24 March 2023.

The meeting concluded at 12.50 pm.

The Highland Council

Minutes of Meeting of the **Badenoch and Strathspey Area Committee** held in **Courtroom, Grantown Courthouse, Grantown-on-Spey/Remotely** on 29 May 2023 at 10.30 am

Present:

Mr J Bruce
Mrs M Cockburn

Mr R Jones
Mr B Lobban

In attendance:

Mr L Hannah, Ward Manager (Nairn, Badenoch and Strathspey)
Ms L Johnston, Elections Manager
Ms S MacLennan, Housing Manager
Ms S James-Gaukroger, Conservation Area Project Officer
Mr A McInnes, Senior Committee Officer
Ms R Ross, Committee Officer

Also in attendance:

Mr N Nethercott, Station Commander, Nairn, Badenoch and Strathspey, Scottish Fire and Rescue Service

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

Mr R Jones in the Chair

Business

1. Apologies for Absence Leisgeulan

There were no apologies for absence.

2. Declarations of Interest/Transparency Statement Foillseachaidhean Com-pàirt/ Aithris Fhollaiseachd

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

Item 4 – Mr B Lobban

Item 6 – Mr B Lobban and Mr R Jones

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

There had been circulated Report No BSAC/08/23 dated 29 May 2023 by the Local Senior Officer for Highland, Scottish Fire and Rescue Service.

During discussion, the following main points were raised:-

- confirmation was sought and given that automatic alarms at Council premises and schools would no longer be attended to without confirmation of fire;
- attention was drawn to the consequences that the new policy could have for the Council especially as not all appropriate officers lived near the premises they were responsible for;
- on the point being raised, it was confirmed that this was a National Policy;
- information was requested as to whether there had been consultation with Head Teachers to ensure that appropriate policies had been put into place;
- it was queried whether any secondary protections, for example ranger patrols, would be available;
- attention was drawn to the fact that there had been an average of less than 2 false alarms a week across 6 fire stations in the Badenoch and Strathspey area;
- it was requested that the Council be given more time to ensure that all premises have policies and strategies in place;
- information was sought on the current situation pertaining to recruitment of personnel; and
- it was queried if the work between the Fire Service and the NHS promoting domestic safety had restarted after Covid.

The Committee:-

- **NOTED** the Report;
- **NOTED**, with concern, that the SFRS from 1 July 2023 would not attend automated fire alarm call outs to commercial business and workplace premises unless a fire had been confirmed by the property Responsible Premises Officer, including schools and office buildings;
- **AGREED** the Head of Property & Facilities Management ensure that the Council had RPO systems in place to deal with this SFRS change in responding to alarm activations

4. Ward Discretionary Budget Buidseat fo Ùghdarras Uàird

Transparency Statement: Mr B Lobban declared a connection to this item as a member of the Grantown Museum Trust but, as the item was just for noting, did not consider that he had an interest to declare.

The Committee **NOTED** that the following Ward Discretionary Fund applications have been approved since 1 April 2023:-

Organisation	Project	Amount
Grantown Museum and Heritage Trust	Landseer – A Highland Romance	£1,500

During discussion, it was confirmed that there was £14,500 left in The Ward Discretionary Budget to be spent by March 2024

**5. Grantown's Conservation Area Management Plan
Plana Stiùiridh Sgìre Ghlèidhteachais Bhaile nan Granddach**

Transparency Statement: Mr B Lobban and Mr R Jones declared a connection to this item due to their involvement with the Caingorm National Park Association, but having applied the objective test, did not consider that they had an interest to declare.

There had been circulated Report No BSAC/09/23 dated 29 May 2023 by the Executive Chief Officer

During discussion, the following main points were raised:-

- information was sought on how the public consultation was promoted;
- the inclusion of green energy and solar panels in the plan was welcomed;
- clarification was requested on the restrictions surrounding the installation of solar panels on buildings;
- it was suggested that some aspects of the plan may have needed to be looked at again; and
- concern was expressed about some areas of the plan being too restrictive.

The Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the public comments;
- ii. **AGREED** the Council response within Appendix 1; and
- iii. **AGREED** to recommend to the Economy and Infrastructure Committee that it formally approve and adopt the Grantown-on-Spey Conservation Area Management Plan within Appendix 2 of the report at their meeting on 17 August 2023.

**6. Housing Performance Report – 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023
Aithisg Coileanaidh Taigheadais – 1 An Giblean 2022 gu 31 Am Mart 2023**

There had been circulated Report No BSAC/10/23 dated 23 May 2023 by the Executive Chief Officer Housing and Property.

During discussion, the following main points were raised:-

- concern was expressed over the issue of rent arrears;
- attention was drawn to the work done by the welfare team to support those in rent arrears;
- on the point being raised, it was clarified that although the Council did not have a policy regarding pet ownership in its properties, any problems arising from pet ownership would be addressed as an anti-social behaviour issue; and
- it was queried whether there was an increased number of anti-social behaviour issues in relation to pet ownership.

The Committee **NOTED** the information provided on housing performance for the period 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023.

**7. Minutes
Geàrr-chunntas**

The Committee **NOTED** Minutes of Meeting of the Badenoch and Strathspey Area Committee held on 6 February 2023 which were approved by the Council on 9 March 2023.

8. Review of Scottish Parliamentary Boundaries: Initial Proposals
Ath-sgrùdadh air Crìochan Parlàmaideach

There had been circulated Report No BSAC/11/23 dated 25 May 2023 by the Elections Manager.

- it was suggested that the whole of Badenoch and Strathspey should be in one constituency rather than being split across two constituencies as outlined in the report; and
- on the point being raised, it was confirmed that the Cross Council Boundary Group would meet on Wednesday 31 May to discuss these proposals.

The Committee **AGREED** that the Chair issue a letter on behalf of the Area Committee to the Boundaries Commission for Scotland requesting that the entirety of Badenoch and Strathspey should remain within in one constituency rather than be split across 2 constituency areas.

The meeting concluded at 11.20 am

**The Highland Council
Caithness Committee**

Minutes of Meeting of the Caithness Committee held REMOTELY on Monday 29 May 2023 at 10.00am.

Present:

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

Mr S Mackie
Mr M Reiss
Mr K Rosie

Officials in attendance:

Mr M Sutherland, Ward Manager
Mr F Macdonald, Head of Property & Facilities Management
Mr R Campbell, Service Lead – Capital Planning & Estates Strategy
Mr A Byrne, Housing Policy Officer
Ms M Ross, Principal Housing Officer
Mr C Sharp, Housing Repairs Manager
Ms A Jansson, Area Education & Learning Manager
Mr S Sandecki, Head Teacher, Wick Joint Campus
Ms M Garson, Quality Improvement Officer
Ms A Macrae, Senior Committee Officer

Also in attendance:

Mr P Faccenda, Focus North Programme Manager

Mr R Gunn in the Chair

Preliminary Item

The Chair advised that the Caithness Committee gave the public the opportunity to observe how Members and officers worked together and how decisions were made. He thanked officers for providing reports to the Committee and coordinating the issue of the papers. Difficulties were being experienced around some of the standing items being presented to the Committee and discussions on this matter were ongoing.

In discussion, concern was expressed that the agenda for the meeting did not reflect the strategic approach being taken by Members on a range of issues and topics relevant to the area. There was a need to give the public assurances in relation to the commitment Members had made in the election period to work together and it was suggested that an outline plan for future agendas be developed.

An assurance was provided that the Chair and Vice Chairs were meeting to consider future plans for Committee agendas. It was important that standing items were presented regularly for Member scrutiny. It was also important the papers presented to the Committee were contemporary and relevant and had a visible decision attached to them and there was the opportunity for Members to influence strategy to achieve better outcomes for constituents. Members input to the Committee agendas would also be welcomed.

1.	<p>Apologies for Absence Leisgeulan</p> <p>An apology for absence was intimated on behalf of Ms J McEwan.</p>
2.	<p>Declarations of Interest/Transparency Statement Foillseachaidhean Com-pàirt/ Aithris Fhollaiseachd</p> <p>Item 7: Mr R Bremner Item 10. Mr R Bremner Item 11: Mr S Mackie</p>
3.	<p>Minutes Geàrr-chunntas</p> <p>There was circulated and NOTED the Minutes of the Caithness Committee held on 6 February 2023, which were approved by the Council on 9 March 2023.</p>
4.	<p>Thurso High School - Update Àrd-Sgoil Inbhir Theòrsa – Cunntas às Ùr</p> <p>There had been circulated Report No. CC/13/23 by the Executive Chief Officer Housing and Property.</p> <p>In discussion, Members raised the following main points:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the development of a masterplan for a new campus in Thurso was at an early stage and would take a long period of time to be realised. The right course of action would be to agree Option 4 set out in the report to demolish and rebuild Block A. This would achieve the best return from a relatively modest investment in comparison with other schools capital projects; • the above option be progressed on the basis the new build could be tied into any longer term vision. This option would enable the social spaces for pupils that had been lost due to the failure of the block to be restored. The modular build classrooms being deployed to replace the accommodation could be redeployed to relieve pressure at other schools in Highland; • a masterplan for Thurso would have to compete with all other areas in Highland where there was a need for school estate investment. There were concerns as to whether Thurso would be a high priority given that other parts of the school estate could be considered to be adequate; • it would have been helpful for Members to have more information at this stage prior to making a decision including progress on the action to have discussions with UHI who had indicated a willingness to engage; • while all Members were supportive of the need for a masterplan for a new campus, in reality there were issues as to how this could be funded. Thurso High School was not included in the Council's 15 year medium term financial plan, LEIP funding had not yet been confirmed and it was projected the level of Council reserves would reduce. It was also unclear as to what sources of external funding would be available;

- agreeing Option 4 would demonstrate to the public that the Council was committed to Caithness and Thurso High School and to tackling depopulation in one of its remotest areas;
- there was no other school in Highland which had part of its estate condemned unexpectedly and therefore this was a special case that distinguished it from other school projects;
- further clarity was sought and provided that it was important to have a masterplan bid ready to be considered alongside other priorities if funding opportunities became available;
- further clarity was sought and provided that there were concerns around the other buildings on the campus in terms of condition, suitability and life expectancy and that the campus would need to be replaced within the next 15 years. It was therefore key to have the masterplan developed on potential opportunities to be delivered on a future site. There were concerns as to how a rebuild would integrate into a masterplan in terms of the potential relocation of the campus to an adjacent site;
- the need to explore in greater detail the way forward for Thurso High School, including whether its current footprint was appropriate. Officers had repeatedly made it clear to Members that the School had reached its design lifespan. There was a need to be innovative and think out of the box to find different solutions to better support children's ongoing education in Thurso and in relation to additional funding sources;
- decisions on capital funding and priorities for schools was a matter for the full Council. The current financial climate was challenging for the Council and other local authorities and there was to be a review of the current Capital Programme;
- the option recommended by the Caithness Committee in respect of Thurso High School and financial implications would be considered by the Council along with the other capital projects and Caithness Members would have the opportunity to feed into the decision making process; and
- it was clear in section 5.4 of the report that Option 4 would not be the best value option if Members considered a new build to replace all the buildings was the preferred long-term solution. Therefore, Option 1 detailed in the report to demolish the block and make good the site and adjoining blocks should be the recommended preferred option on the basis there be a clear commitment to engage with external stakeholders going forward.

Thereafter, Mr A Jarvie seconded by Mr M Reiss **moved** that the Committee agree to recommend Option 4 detailed in the report (Demolish and rebuild Block A) as the preferred option for Thurso High School.

Mr K Rosie seconded by Mr R Bremner moved as an **amendment** that the Committee agree to recommend Option 1 detailed in the report (Demolition of the block and make good the site and adjoining blocks) as the preferred option for Thurso High School with an addition that there be a clear commitment to engage with external stakeholders going forward.

On a vote being taken, the **motion** received 4 votes, the **amendment** received 3 votes with no abstentions. The **motion** was therefore **carried**, the votes having being cast as follows:-

For the Motion

Mr R Gunn, Mr A Jarvie, Mr S Mackie, Mr M Reiss

	<p>For the Amendment Mr R Bremner, Mr W Mackay, Mr K Rosie</p> <p>Decision The Committee AGREED to RECOMMEND Option 4 detailed in the report (Demolish and rebuild Block A) as the preferred option for Thurso High School.</p>
5.	<p>Caithness Area Housing Allocations Riarachaidhean Thaisgean Sgìre Ghallaibh</p> <p>There had been circulated Report No CC/08/23 by the Executive Chief Officer Housing and Property.</p> <p>In discussion, Members raised the following main points:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • further clarity was sought and provided that the Housing Team could elect not to suspend tenants who refused a reasonable offer if they were under exceptional pressure in terms of housing need; • the policy sought to provide a solution to address the high number of refusals and void properties in Caithness and associated lack of rental income and the significant staff time involved in dealing with refusals; • the policy amendment be reviewed within a period of six months and a report brought back to the Committee in November 2023. In the interim, the implementation of the policy could be monitored at the monthly housing meetings; and • the Housing Team proactively contact new applicants to make them aware of the policy at the outset on the basis this could reduce the grounds for challenge and the staff time involved in dealing with appeals. <p>The Committee:-</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. NOTED the unique housing allocation system used within Caithness and the challenges that exist in allocating properties within the area; ii. APPROVED the amendment to the suspension rule for housing applicants within Caithness. Applicants who refuse one reasonable offer of housing will have their housing application suspended for 6 months. Currently, this suspension only takes place after an applicant refuses two reasonable offers of housing; and iii. AGREED that the policy amendment be reviewed within a period of six months and a report brought back to the Committee in November 2023.
6.	<p>Housing Performance Report – 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023 Aithisg Dèanadais a thaobh Taigheadais – 1 Giblean 2022 gu 31 Màrt 2023</p> <p>There had been circulated Report No CC/09/23 by the Executive Chief Officer Housing and Property.</p> <p>In discussion, Members raised the following main points:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the importance of the emergency repairs figures in the report being accurate and a reflection of actual performance and an update was sought and provided on the measures being taken to ensure trades/contractors were providing the correct data in completion reports;

- there was a broader issue in regard to how the above performance was being measured and the potential for the system to be reviewed by the Redesign Board to flag up automatically where performance was outwith the target range and to reduce staff time in having to manually check for errors;
- the need to address performance on the time taken to complete emergency repairs in Wick and East Caithness and prior to the next housing performance report being presented to the Committee in six months time;
- in addition to the average figures provided in the performance report, it would be helpful to have the lowest and highest figures within the range. It was confirmed that the potential to include these figures in future reports would be considered;
- confirmation was sought and provided that an improvement was being observed in relation to the sourcing and supply of materials, albeit there continued to be significant delays in some areas, details of which were provided;
- an explanation was sought and provided on the action being taken around early intervention in relation to rent arrears in Caithness and in response to changes in legislation. Tenants were finding the current cost of living crisis difficult and it was expected the spike in arrears would continue; and
- an update was sought and provided on the proactive approach taken in relation to homeless persons who may be reluctant to accept help from the local Housing Team.

The Committee **NOTED** the information provided on housing performance in the period 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023.

7. Focus North Partnership - Update
Com-pàirteachas Fòcas a' Chinn a Tuath – Cunntas às Ùr

Mr R Bremner made a Transparency Statement in respect of this item in his capacity as a Council representative on the Focus North Advisory Board. 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 briefing paper had been circulated in connection with this item.

In discussion, Members raised the following main points:-

- the rebranding and refocusing event held in Thurso had been excellent, noting there had been a high level of engagement and exchange of ideas between the attendees;
- the level of opportunity in Caithness and engagement with both the private and public sector and progress towards the development of a masterplan was highlighted;
- the partnership approach being taken around the Peatlands was welcomed and reference made to this being a significant piece of work in terms of climate change;
- the significant opportunities around offshore wind at Scrabster Harbour and the potential for further engagement in respect of Wick Harbour;
- the wider opportunities around offshore wind and the potential to work further with organisations such the UHI for example in relation to STEM learning to develop and deliver these opportunities in Caithness and address the skills gap;

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the opportunities and development of new technologies around aviation including the potential for a bus stop model for aviation in Caithness; • the proposals relating to the nuclear industry and how they could transition, broadband connectivity and hydrogen power were exciting opportunities; • in relation to transport, concern at the sustainability of bus services in Caithness going forward. It was explained the focus of the Partnership was on there being a single vision on a future integrated solution including hydrogen power; and • an update was sought and provided on the engagement being undertaken with SSE on renewables. <p>Thereafter, the Committee NOTED the update.</p>
8.	<p>Education HMI Update - Caithness Cunntas às Ùr mu Fhoghlam Luchd-sgrùdaidh an Rìgh – Gallaibh</p> <p>There had been circulated Report No. CC/10/23 by the Executive Chief Officer Education and Learning.</p> <p>In discussion, Members raised the following main points:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the Head Teacher of Wick Joint Campus be congratulated on being singled out in the report for his leadership and creating an aspirational culture at Wick High School, supported by senior staff, and the fact this was underpinning the achievements and progress being made at the School; • the HMI report highlighted the complexity of issues that had to be dealt with in terms of the size of the School, located in a remote and rural area; • further information was sought and provided on the re-establishment of the student representative council, its composition and role; • further clarity was sought and provided that the report recognised that the School did not deal with a huge number of issues in relation to bullying, behavioural problems, or exclusions in comparison with other schools. However, these issues were taken seriously for the minority involved and reference was made to the range of additional resources deployed in tackling these matters; • information was sought and provided on the extent to which there was engagement and collaboration with external partners and employers outwith the School environment on preparing younger people for future life. An update was also provided on the initiatives being undertaken within the School environment in relation to this issue; • the Head teacher, staff and pupils be commended on the significant improvements delivered at the School over the period from 2017 and through the pandemic; and • it would be helpful for Ward 2 Members to visit Wick High School to learn from its experiences. <p>The Committee NOTED the key strengths and next steps for Wick High School as reported by Education Scotland on 21 March 2023</p>

9.	<p>My Future, My Success M' Àm ri Teachd, Mo Shoirbheachas</p> <p>There had been circulated Report No. CC/11/23 by the Executive Chief Officer Education and Learning.</p> <p>There was a short presentation from Ms S MacPhee, mentee and Ms T Young mentor on their experiences in relation to the My Future, My Success programme.</p> <p>In discussion, Members thanked Ms Macphee and Ms Young for their presentation and all those involved the programme. Thereafter, specific reference was made to the successes and achievements of the programme and the opportunities created for young people, for example through the NHS Highland pathways. It was important for Members to hear from the young mentees and support the programme in any way possible.</p> <p>The Committee NOTED and:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. congratulated the progress made on My Future, My Success on the difference they have made; ii. thanked the MFMS Mentors from the local community; and iii. acknowledged and celebrated the young people on future destinations.
10.	<p>Community Asset Transfers Gluasadan So-mhaoin Coimhearsnachd</p> <p>Declarations of Interest:- Mr R Bremner declared an interest in this item as Vice Chair of Thrumster Community Development Association and he left for the remainder of the meeting, taking no part in the determination of this item.</p> <p>There had been circulated Report No. CC/12/23 by the Head of Community Support and Engagement.</p> <p>The Committee APPROVED the:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. sale of the Garages and Land at Loch Street, Wick for £1 To St Fergus Bowling Club on the terms set out in the report; and ii. sale of Land/park located opposite Thrumster Primary School for £1, to Thrumster Community Development Company on the terms set out in the report.
11.	<p>Ward Discretionary Awards Duaisean fo Ùghdarras Uàird</p> <p>Mr S Mackie made a Transparency Statement in respect of this item in his capacity as a non- executive director of Ormlie Community Association who had been the beneficiary of an award. He advised that he had taken no part in the discussion or determination of the application by and award to Ormlie Community Association.</p> <p>The Committee were advised that the undernoted Ward Discretionary Budget applications were approved in the 2022/23 Financial Year.</p>

In discussion, the Chair welcomed the level of awards and the financial support provided to a range of organisations across Caithness. In these financially challenging times, it was good news that the Ward Discretionary funds had been protected for a further year.

The Committee **NOTED** the following awards:-

Ward 2: Thurso and Northwest Caithness

Organisation	Grant	Date
Chamber of commerce	£ 500.00	07/04/2022
Thurso in colour	£ 500.00	10/06/2022
Castletown CC flower baskets	£ 200.00	10/06/2022
Budding Engineers - replacement parts for re worked computers	£ 375.00	10/06/2022
1x Poppy Wreath Lord Lieutenant -1x PW Wreath HC	£ 70.00	15/11/2022
Surf competition - mark boyd	£1,500.00	
Thurso Hockey Club - £4000.00 for goals and equipment	£1,000.00	30/03/2023
ACCC Village officer funding	£1,750.00	30/03/2023
Ormile association - kitchen instal	£ 315.00	27/03/2023
Thurso Youth club - improvements to building and staffing costs to assist during holidays for providing childcare opportunities - big Thurso employability issue!	£4,000.00	29/03/2023
RBWCC New flag pole	£1,000.00	30/03/2023
Thurso Community benefit - Socially Growing – Growing Young People’s Employability and Skills Confidence	£4,000.00	29/03/2023
Thurso Community Development Trust - Thurso Harbour Toilets – Youth Volunteer Engagement/Socially Growing	£1,500.00	30/03/2023

Ward 3: Wick and East Caithness

RBWCC - Wick Community Market - Funding towards Wick Community Market	£1,500.00	04/04/2022
Chamber of Commerce - Funding towards Caithness Transport Forum	£ 500.00	07/04/2022
Wick Paths group - Materials - Path clearing at South Head Quarries, Wick	£1,500.00	01/07/2022
Budding Engineers - Funding towards recycling of IT equipment - with Ward 2	£ 375.00	10/06/2022
1 Lord Leiuutenant Wreath + 1 HC Crest Wreath	£ 120.00	22/11/2022
HLH - Wick High School Youth Hub Christmas Lunch	£ 100.00	23/12/2022
RBWCC New flag pole	£1,000.00	30/03/2023
Thurso Hockey Club - £4000.00 for goals and equipment	£1,000.00	30/03/2023

	Scottish Surfing Federation:- Scottish National Surfing Championships 2023 - Mark Boyd	£1,500.00	13/02/2023
	Wick CDT – replace the fence around the wooded area	£4,600.00	28/03/2023
	ACCC Village Officer funding	£1,750.00	30/03/2023
	Caithness KLICS SCIO - Gardening Project	£2,000.00	30/03/2023
	RBWCC Wick town centre revival	£2,500.00	30/03/2023
12.	Concluding Items		
	In conclusion of the meeting, the Chair commented as follows:-		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the additional capital funding of £1.8m allocated towards roads in Caithness be welcomed. Work had started on schemes and the public should see improvements in the roads over the next few months. An update on roads would be presented to the next Caithness Committee; • at the previous Caithness Committee it had been agreed to recommend that the Council write to the Scottish Government highlighting the urgent need for additional capital roads investment in Highland, but particularly in Caithness. This had been approved by the full Council and a letter had been sent to the Minister for Transport. A reply had been received and whilst he had not yet seen the full text, it was understood the request had been unsuccessful; and • all parties involved be commended on their timely response to the recent masonry collapse from a building in Thurso. Specific thanks were extended to Police Scotland, Transport Scotland, BEAR Scotland, the Council's Roads Team, contractors and the owners of the property. The outcome of the inspection by the Council's surveyors of the property and the neighbouring property should be known soon. If the public had any concerns about potentially dangerous buildings then they should report this to the Council. 		
	The Committee NOTED the updates.		
	The meeting ended at 1.40pm.		

The Highland Council

Minutes of Meeting of the **Gaelic Committee** held in the Council Chamber, Council Headquarters, Glenurquhart Road, Inverness on Wednesday 31 May 2023 at 10.30 am.

Present:

Mr C Aitken (Remote)	Mr S Kennedy (Substitute)
Mr R Bremner (Remote)	Mr P Logue (Remote)
Mr I Brown	Mr D Millar (Remote)
Mrs I Campbell (Remote)	Mr C Munro
Ms S Fanet	Ms L Niven (Remote)
Mr J Grafton	Mrs M Paterson (Remote)

Non-Members also present:

Mr J Finlayson
Mr R MacKintosh

In attendance:

Mr P Nevin, Interim Executive Chief Officer – Performance and Governance
Ms C Macklin, Head of Early Years & Primary Education
Ms L Walker, Gaelic Development Manager
Ms M A MacLeod Mitchell, Gaelic Development Officer
Ms E Rodgers, Gaelic Policy Officer
Mr I Jackson, Education Officer
Mr R MacKay, Education Officer/Teacher (Glenurquhart High School)
Miss J MacLennan, Joint Democratic Services Manager
Miss R Ross, Committee Officer

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 C Munro in the Chair

Business

1. Calling of the Roll and Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of Mr W Mackay, Ms M Nolan and Mr R Stewart.

2. Declarations of Interest/Transparency Statement

There were no Declarations of Interest/Transparency Statements

3. Good News

The Chair conveyed the following items of good news:-

- a Head Teacher had been recruited to Bun-Sgoil Ghàidhlig Inbhir Nis;
- the outcome of a recent inspection of Glenurquhart School had been very positive;

- a number of key Gaelic Senior Executive Officers were moving on and retiring, all of whom had been very supportive of the Gaelic Committee and had engaged with Members and Council Officials during their tenure;
- the final round of Cuach na Cloinne – the Gaelic Medium Primary Schools' National Football Competition - was taking place at Canal Park, Inverness. The two teams which were battling for the Cuach were Bun-Sgoil Ghàidhlig Phort Rìgh and Craighill Gaelic Medium, Tain;
- funding applications were being submitted to Bòrd na Gàidhlig and it was anticipated that the decisions on whether or not they had been successful would be known next week;
- successful drop-in sessions had taken place for Gaelic Language Plan 4 in Inverness, Portree and Fort William;
- the Council was continuing to work positively with FC Sonas to deliver footballing camps; and
- a major step forward was that Gaelic was now included as a STEM subject.

4. Draft Gaelic Language Plan 4

There had been circulated Report No. G/8/23 dated 10 May 2023 by the Interim Chief Executive and Executive Chief Officer Performance and Governance. A draft version of the Draft Gaelic Language Plan was also circulated separately as Booklet A.

A short presentation was provided highlighting the key themes in the Plan. The Draft Gaelic Language Plan (GLP) 4 had built on the success of previous Plans and would span the years 2023–28. The consultation undertaken had helped to strengthen the Plan and its aim was to increase the use and learning of Gaelic.

During discussion, Members made the following points:-

- the hard work of officers was commended;
- the implementation of GLP 4 started now but it would need the cooperation and joint working of communities and other agencies;
- GLP 4 was a strategic document which would focus the Council's work going forward. All parts of the Council would need to consider it and how they would help deliver the stated outcomes;
- the purpose was to increase the use and learning of Gaelic in areas such as communities, businesses, the Arts etc and therefore the Council had to strengthen its commitment that it be absorbed into everyday life;
- Gaelic should be promoted as a heritage;
- in determining how GLP 4 would be resourced, it was important that it had goals set at the right level;
- Members would be kept informed of progress and advised of any areas of slippage; and
- concern was expressed around the strategic priority agreed with Bòrd na Gàidhlig to continue to deliver promotion and growth in GME and Gaelic Learner Education at all levels including delivery of Gaelic as a modern language, with 70% of primary schools providing Gaelic as an L2 and L3 to increase the provision of Gaelic across the authority. The aim of this priority was to be commended but the target of 70% was ambitious. It was acknowledged that L2 and L3 were fundamental to grow Gaelic but targets also had to be achievable.

The Committee **AGREED**:-

- * i. to **RECOMMEND** to the full Council that it homologate the submission of the draft Plan to Bord na Gàidhlig; and
- ii. in submitting the Plan a letter also accompanies it informing Bòrd na Gàidhlig of the Committee's concern that the target of 70% of primary schools providing Gaelic as an L2 and L3 was challenging.

5. Gaelic Language Plan – Public Consultation

There had been circulated Report No. G/9/23 dated 18 May 2023 by the Interim Executive Chief Officer Performance and Governance.

Assurances were sought, and provided, that stakeholder profiling had been considered so that the views of pupils, parents, teachers and Gaelic organisations could all be taken into account. In fact, the approach adopted by Highland had been highlighted as a model of good practise. The Chair himself had attended three consultation events and the role Astar Media had played had also generated excellent feedback.

The Committee **NOTED** the report.

6. Performance against Gaelic Language Plan 3

There had been circulated Report No. G/10/23 dated 15 May 2023 by the Interim Executive Chief Officer Performance and Governance.

Officers were commended for their excellent report, particularly the detail of the action plan, but it would also be useful for start and completion dates to be incorporated. This information was currently presented in the annual report to Bòrd na Gàidhlig but, if it was in the public domain, it would highlight ongoing activity.

The Committee **NOTED** the report.

7. Gaelic Education

There had been circulated Report No. G/11/23 dated 5 May 2023 by the Interim Executive Chief Officer Performance and Governance. In amplification of the report a presentation was provided on the background on the 1 plus 2 approach to Gaelic Learner Education across Highland schools, explaining how this had been developed, the next steps and the development work being planned and piloted in line with the Strategic Priorities set out in GLP 4 for L2 and L3.

During discussion, Members made the following points:-

- teaching a second or third language in a primary school setting was challenging and some pupils might not have developed the necessary skills;
- it was important to clearly define what was trying to be achieved when a second and third language was introduced at primary school level and that there was coordination between primary and secondary school teachers;
- the data contained within the report detailing the provision of L2 and L3 Gaelic highlighted how ambitious the 70% target set out in GLP4 was;
- Gaelic education put in context what the Council needed to do to meet the aspirations of GLP 4 and it was important to increase the number of primary schools taking on L2 and L3 Gaelic; and

- information was sought, and provided, as to what support was in place for neurodiverse pupils who might struggle to learn L2 or L3 Gaelic.

The Committee **NOTED**:-

- i. the provision of Gaelic Medium and Gaelic Education across Highland;
- ii. the areas of current and future development for 1 plus 2; and
- iii. the catchment consultation process and update for Bun-Sgoil Ghàidhlig Inbhir Nis, Dingwall and Nairn Gaelic Medium provisions.

8. Community Learning and Development Key Updates

There had been circulated Report No. G/12/23 dated 11 May 2023 by the Interim Executive Chief Officer Performance and Governance.

The project underway in conjunction with Alzheimer Scotland West Highland to bring Gaelic into care home settings was progressing well but it was hoped this could be extended so that those still living at home, whose first language was Gaelic, could also be supported.

The Committee **AGREED** to continue the initiatives detailed in the report.

9. World Gaelic Week 2023

There had been circulated Report No. G/13/23 dated 2 May 2023 by the Interim Executive Chief Officer Performance and Governance.

The report provided an opportunity for Members to reflect the range of activities which people had engaged in. Particular mention was made of an event in Fort William and which had not just highlighted the language but the spirit of Gaelic. There was considerable interest in Gaelic and those that encouraged the use of the language were to be applauded. In addition, Members welcomed those participants from Nova Scotia and discussions were ongoing with them exploring how they ran their Month of Gaelic.

The Committee **NOTED** the report.

The meeting ended at 12.15 pm.

Comhairle na Gàidhealtachd

Geàrr-chunntas coinneamh **Comataidh na Gàidhlig** a chumadh ann an Seòmar na Comhairle, Prìomh Oifis na Comhairle, Rathad Ghlinn Urchadain, Inbhir Nis air Diciadain 31 Cèitean 2023 aig 10.30m.

An làthair:

Mgr C Aitken (air astar)

Mgr R Bremner (air astar)

Mgr I MacIlleDhuinn

A' Bh-uas I Chaimbeul (air astar)

A' Bh-uas S Fanet

Mgr I Grafton

Mgr S Ceanadach (neach-ionaid)

Mgr P Logue (air astar)

Mgr D Mac a' Mhuilleir (air astar)

Mgr C Rothach

A' Bh-uas L Niven (air astar)

A' Bh-uas M NicPheadrais (air astar)

Neo-bhuill cuideachd an làthair:

Mgr I MacFhionnlaigh

Mgr R Mac an Tòisich

A' frithealadh na coinneimh:

Mgr P Nevin, Àrd-Oifigear Gnìomhach Eadar-amail – Coileanadh is Riaghlachas

A' Bh-uas C Macklin, Ceannard Thràth-bhliadhnaichean is Foghlaim Bun-sgoile

A' Bh-uas L Walker, Manaidsear Leasachaidh na Gàidhlig

A' Bh-uas M A NicLeòid Mitchell, Oifigear Leasachaidh na Gàidhlig

A' Bh-uas E Rodgers, Oifigear Poileasaidh Gàidhlig

Mgr I Jackson, Oifigear Foghlaim

Mgr R MacAoidh, Oifigear Foghlaim/Tidsear (Àrd-Sgoil Ghlinn Urchadain)

A' Bh-uas S NicIlleoin, Manaidsear Cho-Sheirbheisean Deamocratach

A' Bh-uas R Ros, Oifigear Comataidh

Tha rionnag air iomall na duilleige a' comharrachadh moladh a thèid chun na Comhairle. Tha co-dhùnidhean gun chomharra fo ùghdarras na Comataidh.

Mgr C Rothach anns a' Chathair

Gnothach

1. Gairm a' Chlàir agus Leisgeulan

Ghabhadh leisgeulan às leth Mhgr U MhicAoidh, na M-uas M Nolan agus Mhgr R Stiùbhart.

2. Foillseachaidhean Com-pàirt/Aithris Fhollaiseachd

Cha robh Foillseachaidhean Com-pàirt/Aithrisean Follaiseachd sam bith ann.

3. Naidheachdan Matha

Thug an Cathraiche seachad na naidheachdan matha a leanas:-

- chaidh ceannard a chur an dreuchd airson Bun-Sgoil Ghàidhlig Inbhir Nis;
- bha an sgrùdadh a chaidh a dhèanamh air Àrd-Sgoil Ghlinn Urchadain o chionn ghoirid air a bhith soirbheachail dha-rìribh;
- bha grunn àrd-oifigearan gnìomhach Gàidhlig a' gluasad air adhart is a' leigeil dhiubh an dreuchdan agus bha iad uile air a bhith fìor thaiceil do Chomataidh na Gàidhlig agus air ceangal a thogail le Buill agus le oifigearan na Comhairle rè an dreuchdan;
- bha cuairt dheireannach Cuach na Cloinne – farpais nàiseanta ball-coise bun-sgoiltean Foghlam tron Ghàidhlig – a' gabhail àite aig Pàirc a' Chanàil, Inbhir Nis. Bha Bun-Sgoil Ghàidhlig Phort Rìgh agus FtG Chnoc na Creige ann am Baile Dhubhthaich a' farpais airson na Cuaiche;
- bhathar a' cur iarrtasan maoinachaidh a-steach gu Bòrd na Gàidhlig agus bhathar an dùil gum biodh co-dhùnaidhean a thaobh co-dhiù a bha no nach robh iad soirbheachail rim faotainn an-ath-sheachdain;
- chaidh seiseanan tadhail soirbheachail a chumail airson Plana Gàidhlig 4 ann an Inbhir Nis, ann am Port Rìgh agus sa Ghearasdan;
- bha a' Chomhairle a' dèanamh obair mhath còmhla ri FC Sonas gus campaichean ball-coise a libhrigeadh; agus
- chaidh ceum mòr air adhart a ghabhail seach gun robh a' Ghàidhlig a-nis air a gabhail a-steach mar chuspair STEM.

4. Dreachd Plana Gàidhlig 4

Chuartaicheadh Aithisg Àir. G/8/23 le ceann-latha 10 Cèitean 2023 leis an Àrd-Oifigear Ghnìomhach Eadar-amail airson Coileanadh agus Riaghlachas. Chaidh an Dreachd Plana Gàidhlig a chuartachadh fa leth, mar Leabhran A.

Chaidh taisbeanadh goirid a thoirt seachad a' comharrachadh prìomh chuspairean a' Phlana. Bha an Dreachd Plana Gàidhlig (PG) 4 air togail air soirbheachasan nam Planaichean roimhe agus bhiodh am Plana seo a' còmhach nam bliadhnaichean 2023–28.

Bha an co-chomhairleachadh air cuideachadh gus am Plana a neartachadh agus b' e amas a' Phlana cleachdadh is ionnsachadh na Gàidhlig a mheudachadh.

Rè na deasbaireachd, thog na Buill na puingean a leanas:-

- chaidh moladh a dhèanamh air obair chruaidh nan oifigearan;
- bha buileachadh PG4 a-nis air tòiseachadh ach bhiodh feum air co-obrachadh eadar coimhearsnachdan agus buidhnean-gnìomha eile;
- b' e sgrìobhainn ro-innleachdail a bh' ann am PG4 a bhiodh a' fòcasadh obair na Comhairle a' dol air adhart. Dh'fheumadh gach pàirt dhen Chomhairle beachdachadh air agus air na dòighean anns am b' urrainn dhaibh cuideachadh gus na builean ainmichte a libhrigeadh;
- b' e an t-adhbhar cleachdadh agus ionnsachadh na Gàidhlig a mheudachadh ann an raointean a leithid coimhearsnachdan, gnothachasan, na h-ealain is eile, agus mar sin dh'fheumadh a' Chomhairle an gealltanais aice gun deidheadh a thoirt an lùib beatha làitheil a neartachadh;
- bu chòir dhan Ghàidhlig a bhith air a cur air adhart mar dhualchas;
- ann a bhith a' dèanamh a-mach ciamar a bhiodh PG4 air a ghoireasachadh, bha e cudromach gun robh na h-amasan air an suidheachadh aig an ìre cheart;
- dheidheadh fiosrachadh a chumail ri Buill mu adhartas agus dheidheadh innse dhaibh mu raointean sam bith far an robh sleamhnachadh; agus

- chaidh dragh a thogail mun phrìomhachas ro-innleachdail a chaidh aontachadh le Bòrd na Gàidhlig gus adhartas is fàs a libhrigeadh ann am FtG agus Foghlam Luchd-ionnsachaidh na Gàidhlig aig gach ìre, a' gabhail a-steach libhrigeadh na Gàidhlig mar nuadh-chànan, le 70% de bhun-sgoiltean a' toirt seachad Gàidhlig mar C2 agus C3 gus solar na Gàidhlig a mheudachadh thar an ùghdarras. Bha amas a' phrìomhachais seo ri mholadh ach bha an targaid de 70% gu math àrd-amasach. Thathar ag aithneachadh gu bheil C2 agus C3 riatanach a thaobh a bhith a' fàs na Gàidhlig ach dh'fheumadh targaidean a bhith ruigsinneach cuideachd.

DH'AONTAICH a' Chomataidh:-

- * i. **MOLADH** dhan Làn-Chomhairle gum bu chòir dhi aontachadh gun tèid an dreachd Plana a chur a-steach gu Bòrd na Gàidhlig; agus
- ii. ann a bhith a' cur a-steach a' Phlana gun tèid litir na chois a' leigeil fhaicinn do Bhòrd na Gàidhlig gu bheil dragh air a' Chomhairle gu bheil an targaid de 70% de bhun-sgoiltean a' toirt seachad Gàidhlig mar C2 agus C3 gu math dùbhlach.

5. Plana na Gàidhlig – Co-chomhairleachadh Poblach

Chuartaicheadh Aithisg Àir. G/9/23 le ceann-latha 18 Cèitean 2023 leis an Àrd-Oifigear Ghnìomhach Eadar-amail airson Coileanadh agus Riaghlachas.

Chaidh barantasan a shireadh, is a thoirt seachad, gun deach beachdachadh air diofar luchd-ùidhe airson 's gum b' urrainnear ealla a gabhail de bheachdan sgoilearan, phàrantan, thidsearan is bhuidhnean Gàidhlig. Gu dearbh, bha an dòigh-obrach aig Comhairle na Gàidhealtachd air a chomharrachadh mar dheagh mhodail de chleachdadh math. Bha an Cathraiche air a bhith an làthair aig na trì tachartasan co-chomhairleachaidh agus bha an dreuchd aig Astar Media air deagh fhios air ais a chosnadh cuideachd.

THUG a' Chomataidh **FA-NEAR** dhan aithisg.

6. Coileanadh Mu Choinneimh Plana na Gàidhlig 3

Chuartaicheadh Aithisg Àir. G/10/23 le ceann-latha 15 Cèitean 2023 leis an Àrd-Oifigear Ghnìomhach Eadar-amail airson Coileanadh agus Riaghlachas.

Chaidh moladh a dhèanamh air oifigearan airson sàr-aithisg, gu h-àraid am fiosrachadh mionaideach a bha sa phlana-ghnìomha, ach bhiodh e feumail nam biodh cinn-latha tòiseachaidh is crìochnachaidh air an toirt na lùib. Bha e na chleachdadh a bhith a' toirt an fhiosrachaidh do Bhòrd na Gàidhlig mar aithisg bhliadhnail, ach nam biodh seo san àrainn phoblaich bhiodh gnìomhan leantainneach air an toirt am follais.

THUG a' Chomataidh **FA-NEAR** dhan aithisg.

7. Foghlam Gàidhlig

Chuartaicheadh Aithisg Àir. G/11/23 le ceann-latha 5 Cèitean 2023 leis an Àrd-Oifigear Ghnìomhach Eadar-amail airson Coileanadh agus Riaghlachas.

Mar thaic dhan aithisg, chaidh taisbeanadh a thoirt seachad le cùl-fhiosrachadh mu dhòigh-obrach 1+2 a thaobh Foghlam Luchd-ionnsachaidh na Gàidhlig thar sgoiltean

na Gàidhealtachd, a' mìneachadh mar a chaidh seo a leasachadh, na h-ath cheumannan agus an obair leasachaidh a bhathar a' planaigeadh is air an robhar a' dèanamh deuchainn a rèir nam Prìomhachasan Ro-innleachdail a tha air am mìneachadh ann am PG4 airson C2 agus C3.

Rè na deasbaireachd, thog na Buill na puingeann a leanas:-

- bha e dùbhlannach a bhith a' teagasg dàrna no treas cànan ann an suidheachadh bun-sgoile agus math dh'fhaodte nach robh na sgilean riatanach fhathast air an leasachadh aig cuid de na sgoilearan;
- bha e cudromach mìneachadh soilleir a thoirt seachad a thaobh na bhathar a' feuchainn ri choileanadh nuair a bha dàrna agus treas cànan ga thoirt a-steach aig ìre na bun-sgoile agus gun robh co-òrdanachadh ann eadar tidsearan bun-sgoile is àrd-sgoile;
- bha an dàta a bha air a thoirt an lùib na h-aithisge, a' toirt fiosrachadh mu sholar C2 agus C3 Gàidhlig, a' sealltainn cho àrd-amasach 's a bha an targaid 70% a bha air a mhìneachadh ann am PG4;
- bha foghlam Gàidhlig a' cur ann an co-theacsa na dh'fheumadh a' Chomhairle a dhèanamh airson coinneachadh ri miannan PG4 agus bha e cudromach an àireamh bhun-sgoiltean a bha a' dèanamh C2 agus C3 Gàidhlig àrdachadh; agus
- chaidh fiosrachadh a shireadh, agus a thoirt seachad, mu thaic do sgoilearan le feumalachdan sònraichte agus a dh'fhaodadh a bhith a' strì le bhith ag ionnsachadh C2 agus C3 Gàidhlig.

THUG a' Chomataidh **FA-NEAR**:-

- i. do sholar Foghlam tron Ghàidhlig agus Foghlam Gàidhlig air feadh sgìre na Gàidhealtachd;
- ii. do na raointean leasachaidh làithreach is teachdail airson 1+2; agus
- iii. dhan phròiseas cho-chomhairleachaidh airson sgìrean-sgoile agus dhan chunntas às ùr airson solaran Foghlam tron Ghàidhlig Bun-Sgoil Ghàidhlig Inbhir Nis, Inbhir Pheofharain agus Inbhir Narann.

8. Prìomh Aithrisean Ionnsachadh is Leasachadh Coimhearsnachd

Chuartaicheadh Aithisg Àir. G/12/23 le ceann-latha 11 Cèitean 2023 leis an Àrd-Oifigeir Ghniomhach Eadar-amail airson Coileanadh agus Riaghlachas.

Bha am pròiseact a bha a' dol air adhart ann an com-pàirteachas le Alzheimer Alba Taobh Siar na Gàidhealtachd gus a' Ghàidhlig a thoirt a-steach gu dachaighean-cùraim a' dol air adhart gu math, ach bhathar an dòchas gum b' urrainnear seo a leudachadh gus am biodh cothrom ann cuideachd taic a thoirt dhaibhsan a bha fhathast a' fuireach san dachaigh aca fhèin, agus aig an robh a' Ghàidhlig mar chiad chànan.

THUG a' Chomataidh **FA-NEAR** gun deidheadh leantainn air adhart leis na h-ìomairtean a tha air am mìneachadh san aithisg.

9. Seachdain na Gàidhlig 2023

Chuartaicheadh Aithisg Àir. G/13/23 le ceann-latha 2 Cèitean 2023 leis an Àrd-Oifigear Ghnìomhach Eadar-amail airson Coileanadh agus Riaghlachas.

Thug an aithisg cothrom do Bhuill meòmhrachadh air an raon thachartasan anns an robh daoine air a bhith an sàs. Chaidh iomradh sònraichte a dhèanamh air tachartas anns a' Ghearasdan a bha air cànan agus spiorad na Gàidhlig a thoirt am follais. Bha ùidh mhòr sa Ghàidhlig agus bha iadsan a bha a' brosnachadh cleachdadh na Gàidhlig airidh air moladh. A bharrachd, chuir Buill fàilte air com-pàirtichean à Alba Nuadh agus bha còmhraidhean a' leantainn air adhart leotha a thaobh mar a bha iad a' cur Mios nan Gàidheal air dòigh.

THUG a' Chomataidh **FA-NEAR** dhan aithisg.

Chriochnaich a' choinneamh aig 12.15f.

The Highland Council

Minutes of Meeting of the **Education Committee** held in the Council Chamber, Council Headquarters, Glenurquhart Road, Inverness on Thursday 1 June 2023 at 10.35 am.

Present:

Ms S Atkin	Mr J Grafton
Mr M Cameron (substitute)	Mr D Gregg
Mrs I Campbell	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	Mrs I MacKenzie
Mr J Finlayson (Chair)	Mrs P Munro
Mr R Gale (substitute)	Mrs M Reid

Religious Representatives (non-voting):

Ms S Lamont

Youth Convener (non-voting):

Ms C Munro

Non-Members also present:

Mr M Baird (remote)	Mrs A MacLean
Mr D Fraser (remote)	Mr D Macpherson (remote)
Mr A Graham (remote)	Mr J McGillivray (remote)
Mr B Lobban (remote)	Mr A Rhind
Mr A MacKintosh (remote)	Ms K Willis (remote)

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
 Ms A MacPherson, Interim Head of Resources
 Ms A Jansson, Area Education and Learning Manager (North)
 Mrs F Shearer, Area Education and Learning Manager (South)
 Ms B Brown, Senior Lead Manager, Developing the Young Workforce 3-18
 Ms M Garson, Senior Lead, Skills, Employability and Prosperity 3-18
 Ms H MacGillivray, My Future My Success Development Officer
 Ms J Douglas, Care and Learning Alliance (Third Sector)
 Ms S Fowler, Thriving Families (Third Sector)
 Ms M Murray, Interim Principal Administrator
 Ms R Ross, Committee Officer

Also in attendance:

Mr S Walsh, Chief Executive, High Life Highland
 Ms R Mackenzie, My Future My Success participant
 Mr A Main, My Future My Success participant

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

Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of Ms M MacCallum, Mr D Millar, Mr I MacDonald and Mr W Skene.

2. Declarations of Interest/Transparency Statement Foillseachaidhean Com-pàirt/ Aithris Fhollaiseachd

There were no Declarations of Interest.

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

Item 6: Mr A Christie and Mr D Gregg

Mr J Grafton made a general Transparency Statement on the basis that his partner was a secondary school teacher in Highland but, having applied the objective test, he did not consider that he had an interest to declare.

Mr M Cameron made a general Transparency Statement on the basis that his wife was a secondary school teacher in Highland but, having applied the objective test, he did not consider that he had an interest to declare.

3. Good News/Outstanding Achievements Naidheachdan Matha/Coileanaidhean Air Leth

A presentation on Outstanding Achievements had been circulated to Members in advance of the meeting. To formally recognise the many achievements since the last Committee and to mark the end of another school session, which was just a month away, the presentation was shown.

The Chair added that, since the presentation had been prepared, he had been made aware of another achievement in that Fiona Shearer, Area Education and Learning Manager (South), was a finalist in the Proud Scotland Awards. Mrs Shearer was one of six finalists for the Education Award which related to the recognition that education was the key to reducing and eradicating all forms of discrimination including homophobia, biphobia, transphobia, bigotry and racism. He wished her every success at the award ceremony in Glasgow the coming weekend.

During discussion, the following points were raised:-

- the children who had taken part in the Baillie Cup earlier in the week were commended and thanks were expressed to all staff involved for their hard work;
- it was highlighted that it was Pride month, and the Council was praised for setting an example by flying the flag. For decades people had worked hard to ensure that Highland was a great, inclusive place to live, and it was important that young people carried on the good work;

- a Millburn Academy pupil, Matthew McCreddie, had been selected to represent Great Britain at the European Down Syndrome Swimming Championships in Italy in September;
- support was expressed for the pupils of Cannich Primary School who had lost many of the trees they had planted with the Forestry Commission as a result of the current wildfire in the area; and
- congratulations were expressed to Kerrie Laird, Head Teacher, Glenurquhart High School, and her staff for achieving a grade of “very good” against every indicator in a recent Education Scotland inspection report. It was a commendable achievement, and it was hoped it could be replicated in all primary schools in Highland.

The Committee otherwise **NOTED** the presentation.

4. Collaborative Improvement Framework Frèam Leasachaidh Co-obrachail

There had been circulated Report No EDU/9/23 dated 20 April 2023 by the Executive Chief Officer, Education and Learning.

The Chair thanked those Members who had attended the recent workshop at which detailed information had been provided on the ongoing work to support and challenge 3-18 educational establishments. Information had also been provided on school inspections.

The report built on the presentations and engagement that had taken place at the workshop and, as had been requested previously by Members, clearly articulated what was happening in terms of moving forward continuous improvement as well as setting out consistent expectations and guidelines for all those working in Highland schools and involved in supporting the Education and Learning improvement agenda.

During discussion, the following main points were raised:-

- the informative and useful workshop was commended;
- in response to a question, it was confirmed that all teaching and officer staff would have access to the dashboard tools referred to in section 4.12 of the report;
- in relation to the stated expectation that all stakeholders would co-construct the priorities in School Improvement Plans, information was sought, and provided, as to how it was intended to meaningfully engage with parents;
- it having been queried whether one Collaborative Lead Officer (CLO) was sufficient to cover all 29 secondary schools in Highland, it was confirmed that officers were looking at appointing another secondary CLO;
- an assurance having been sought that vacant Additional Support Needs (ASN) Manager posts would be filled, it was explained that, in accordance with the staffing structure agreed by the Committee in February 2023, ASN resource would be allocated to Associated School Groups thereby empowering Head Teachers to make decisions in that regard. There would therefore no longer be ASN Managers;
- if the draft Collaborative Improvement Framework (CIF) was for both primary and secondary schools, additional pages were required as section 6 referred only to Early Learning and Childcare (ELC) and primary schools;
- the draft CIF was a useful document and the layout was commended. However, it could be improved by including how it was going to be evaluated and how it was intended to promote it to parents. In terms of evaluation, the Chair commented that

there could be mention of the universal framework for evaluation as well as the national toolkit “How good is our school?”;

- it was suggested that a preface be added to the draft CIF setting out the purpose of the document, namely, to drive up inspection results, attainment and positive destinations. The Chair welcomed the helpful suggestion;
- the use of terms such as “bespoke” and “forensic analysis” was welcomed;
- it was queried how the CIF was going to be driven forward given the considerable reduction in the Education and Learning budget;
- thanks were expressed to the Executive Chief Officer, Education and Learning, for her responsiveness to Members’ queries;
- it was questioned whether eight CLOs was sufficient to cover the number of schools in Highland. In that regard, the Chair commented that Head Teachers were the leaders of learning and they and their staff were continuously driving improvement;
- information was sought, and provided, on the daily analysis taking place in schools and whether improvements were starting to be seen in terms of literacy and numeracy;
- all learners mattered, and that needed to be embedded in everything the Education and Learning Service did going forward;
- further information was sought, and provided, on the improvement cycles referred to in the CIF, including the frequency at which they took place and who instigated them. In relation to the latter, the need for a bottom-up approach was emphasised;
- many people and groups found it difficult to engage with Council consultations and it was queried what was going to be done to make it easier, particularly for those who might be less likely or have less time to engage;
- the Care Inspectorate Quality Framework was an additional level of inspection in ELC settings, and it was highlighted that inspection requirements could cause stress and anxiety amongst staff;
- the most important thing that could be done for children was to give them a high-quality early start to life; and
- disappointment having been expressed that the Committee’s religious representatives had not been invited to attend the Members’ workshop, the Executive Chief Officer, Education and Learning, apologised for the oversight and confirmed that invitations would be extended to future workshops.

The Committee:-

- i. **AGREED** the purpose and principles to support continuous improvement through the draft Collaborative Improvement framework (CIF);
- ii. **NOTED** the planned collaborative engagement in the form of support, challenge and review provided to schools as outlined in the CIF including the agreed universal support given to all schools; and
- iii. **NOTED** that an informative Member workshop had been held prior to Committee to update Members on the progress of the CIF to date, including the support and challenge provided to all schools and Early Learning and Childcare settings through continuous improvement.

5. Education and Learning Service – Service Performance Reporting for Q4 – 1st January to 31st March 2023
Seirbheis an Fhoghlaim agus an Ionnsachaidh – Aithris Coileanaidh Seirbheis airson C4 – 1 Faoilleach gu 31 Màrt 2023

There had been circulated Report No EDU/10/23 dated 10 May 2023 by the Executive Chief Officer, Education and Learning.

The Chair explained that all Services were producing Performance Reports and the format was evolving. The report brought together information from the Education and Learning Service Plan and allowed Members the opportunity to offer support and engage in scrutiny.

During discussion, the following main points were raised:-

- the clear, easy-to-read report was welcomed, and it was positive that most indicators were on target;
- in relation to complaint response times, information was sought, and provided, on the reasons for the difference in performance between the Service and the Council as a whole, both in respect of 5 days frontline resolution and 20 days investigation. With regard to 20 days escalation, it was cause for concern that only a third of complaints were handled correctly, in line with the Council as a whole, and the contributing factors were queried;
- with regard to Freedom of Information (FOI) response times, it was concerning that 37% of FOIs were not being dealt with within the legislative timescale. It was queried what had contributed to the significant reduction in performance, how performance could be improved and what could be done to pre-empt FOI requests, such as releasing data proactively rather than reactively;
- in relation to current areas of slippage, information was sought, and provided, as to what had prevented wider consultation taking place before now on the development of a Learning and Teaching Policy for secondary schools;
- Committee dates for the remainder of the year were not well-placed in terms of looking timeously at quarterly reports and, when looking at dates for 2024, it was necessary to try to synchronise them with the four quarters. The Chair concurred that this was an important point;
- FOIs often spiked before an election, and it would be helpful to carry out a one-off exercise to establish how many FOI requests originated from political party officers;
- in relation to teacher absence, it would be helpful to benchmark against other local authorities as opposed to non-teaching staff within the Council. Similarly, benchmarking complaints against other local authorities would give a better indication of how the Service was performing. The Interim Head of Resources provided national data on teacher absence in 2021/22 and, as previously requested the average age of teaching staff in Highland; and
- it having been commented that it would be helpful to see information on teacher absence at Ward level, the Interim Head of Resources undertook to liaise with the performance team in that regard. However, it was highlighted that it would not be possible to distil the data down to school level as this could lead to individual staff members being identified.

The Committee scrutinised and **NOTED** the Service's performance information.

6. Positive Destinations and Key Transitions Cinn-uidhe Dheimhinneach agus Prìomh Eadar-ghluasadan

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 EDU/11/23 dated 11 May 2023 by the Executive Chief Officer, Education and Learning.

The Chair stated that this was an exciting report which showed the work being done to support young people to focus on careers along with more holistic aspects of life, as well as the key transitions involved with moving into positive destinations irrespective of the types of qualifications youngsters had achieved.

Highland did very well in terms of Developing the Young Workforce (DYW) and supporting young people in many different ways, and the report not only provided information on DYW but highlighted what was happening in terms of employability and mentoring.

Maxine Garson, Senior Lead, Skills, Employability and Prosperity 3-18, gave a presentation in amplification of the report. In addition, two young people, Regan Mackenzie and Allan Main, supported by Heather MacGillivray, My Future My Success (MFMS) Development Officer, spoke to their experiences as participants in the MFMS programme and shared how it had helped prepare them for their future. Councillor Angela MacLean also spoke to her experience as a MFMS mentor.

The Chair encouraged any other Members who were interested in becoming a MFMS mentor to contact the Senior Lead, Skills, Employability and Prosperity 3-18.

During discussion, Members commended Regan and Allan for what they had achieved and for having the confidence to come and speak to the Committee. Both young people responded to questions about their experience of school, what had made the biggest difference and how things had improved. The success of the MFMS programme was welcomed and it was hoped it would continue.

The Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the continuing progress made on our Developing the Young Workforce, employability and mentoring programmes; and
- ii. **APPROVED** the updated draft Developing the Young Workforce strategic implementation plan for 2022-2023, including the key outcomes identified in section 4.1.2 of the report.

7. Presentation: Youth Convener Term in Office
Taisbeanadh: Teirm Neach-gairm na h-Òigridh san Dreuchd

The Chair explained that the Youth Convener, Caitlyn Munro, would shortly be coming to the end of her term in office. Caitlyn had had a very busy year and he thanked her for all her hard work. She had visited every corner of the Highlands and had engaged and worked with young people on many fronts whilst also promoting opportunities for young people to have their voices heard.

Caitlyn Munro then gave a presentation on her term in office, during which detailed information was provided on her personal priorities as Highland Youth Convener; the

Youth Convener Roadshow; the Highland Children and Young People's Charter; the Lead to Succeed Conference; the Sutherland Easter Event; the Highland Youth Parliament Education Conference 2023; the use of social media to engage with young people; and organisations and groups she had worked with during her tenure.

During discussion, the following main points were raised:-

- Members commended the Youth Convener for what she had achieved during her term in office and being a fantastic ambassador for young people in Highland, and wished her well in whatever she went on to do next;
- the Highland Youth Parliament Education Conference on 23 June was an exciting event and Members were encouraged to attend. On the point being raised, it was confirmed that representatives of other public sector organisations such as NHS Highland and UHI had been invited. It having been queried whether improving access to the outdoors, particularly water-based activities, for young people would be discussed, it was explained that it would depend what questions/concerns were raised on the day. However, this was something the Youth Convener was keen to promote. It was added that the issues raised at the conference would drive the following year's youth work; and
- it would be helpful if the Youth Convener could provide some feedback on the concerns young people had raised in respect of vaping and transport.

The Committee otherwise **NOTED** the presentation.

8. Devolved School Management (DSM) Stiùireadh Sgoiltean Tiomnaichte

There had been circulated Report No EDU/12/23 dated 11 May 2023 by the Executive Chief Officer, Education and Learning.

The Chair explained that this report presented the latest draft DSM Scheme which a steering group comprising Education Managers, Trade Union representatives and, importantly, Head Teachers, had been working on for some time. The new Scheme covered many areas of responsibility including changes to staffing for secondary schools which Head Teachers had been instrumental in shaping. Other aspects had yet to be finalised and, with the Committee's approval, the steering group would continue its hard work next session.

During discussion, the following main points were raised:-

- in response to a question, it was explained that the school roll determined the number of primary teachers;
- clarification having been sought in relation to the Capitation Budget Allocation Calculation in Appendix 2 of the DSM Scheme, it was confirmed that "less apportionment of approved savings" referred to historical savings, and officers would look at how that was presented in the Scheme to ensure there was no confusion amongst Head Teachers;
- for the benefit of new Members in particular, further information was sought, and provided, on the DSM Scheme and whether, and to what extent, it was giving Head Teachers more autonomy over local spending;
- attention having drawn to Appendix 1 of the DSM Scheme which indicated that staffing costs in respect of ASN teaching staff and Pupil Support Assistants was an

area of expenditure not devolved to schools, an explanation was provided as to how ASN resource was funded and allocated;

- large primary schools missed out, compared to secondary schools, in terms of clerical and management support, and it was queried whether there was any flexibility in that regard. The Chair emphasised the need to ensure there was clarity in the Scheme as to how administrative staffing was allocated;
- reference was made to a recent situation where it had been unclear who should pay, and the need for clarity in terms of landlord/tenant responsibilities was emphasised. In that regard, the Chair explained that there was an itemised list. In addition, there was a Property Maintenance Officer in each area who covered schools and whom Members could contact if required;
- formulas on their own were quite abstract, and it would be helpful to provide examples of how they applied to schools of different sizes. In addition, it would be useful to highlight what changes had been made;
- the Education and Learning budget was going to be stretched and, given that secondary school teacher numbers were going up, it was questioned where savings were going to be made;
- the current energy budget arrangements were unfair and unequitable, energy bills being much higher in older less efficient school buildings, and this needed to be looked at. The Chair concurred, commenting that it was an issue that needed to be discussed with the Housing and Property Service;
- the table on Primary School Teaching Entitlements in Appendix 4 of the scheme referred to school rolls of 400 and more, and it was queried whether there were any primary schools of that size in Highland; and
- information was sought, and provided, as to whether there was a geographical limit in respect of cluster arrangements.

The Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the changes to the staffing formula for secondary schools;
- ii. **AGREED** that the draft DSM Scheme should be formally adopted; and
- iii. **APPROVED** the continuation of the DSM review group in Session 2023-24 to allow further updates to the manual.

9. High Life Highland Progress Report Aithisg Adhartais High Life na Gàidhealtachd

There had been circulated Report No EDU/13/23 dated 15 May 2023 by the Chief Executive, High Life Highland (HLH).

The Chair explained that this bi-annual report was one of the few opportunities Members had to hear about HLH and how it was delivering the Council's Public Service Obligations in Leisure, Sport and Culture across the region. In addition to reporting on the Service Delivery Contract and performance against the Council's Corporate Plan, the report provided a short update on the post-pandemic recovery of customer engagements and income from the Highlife membership scheme.

During discussion, the following main points were raised:-

- HLH had become part of the fabric of the Highlands and it was great to see it recovering from the pandemic;

- in relation to Black Isle Leisure Centre, reference was made to the recent open day, and the new equipment and rise in membership were welcomed;
- the Leisure Link Partnership, which allowed HLH members to access leisure facilities in other areas at no extra cost, was welcomed. On the point being raised, it was confirmed that the scheme was informed by a business case and the figures were monitored consistently to ensure value for money;
- different HLH sites had different rules regarding under 16s using the gym, and it was queried whether there was any scope for making the rules more uniform;
- some carers, due to circumstances such as their age or the number of hours they worked, did not qualify for Carers' Allowance, and it was queried whether they could be included in the budget membership plan;
- the work HLH did to support health and wellbeing in local communities was commended, and it was hoped they could be encouraged to do more;
- the increase in the number of customer engagements to pre-pandemic levels and beyond was welcomed but it was recognised it was necessary to close the gap in terms of pay pressure and inflation;
- information was sought, and provided, on the purpose and scope of the review of the Service Delivery Contract with HLH, and the Chair confirmed that the outcome of the review would be reported to Full Council;
- examples were sought, and provided, of recruitment controls and where they had impacted service delivery;
- it was good to see the variety of services being delivered by HLH;
- concern was expressed regarding the reference, in section 6.2 of the report, to a likely reduction in public services, and the potential impact on children's wellbeing in particular;
- it having been queried whether it was possible to provide detailed information on the services being delivered in a specific Ward, the Chief Executive, HLH, confirmed that he was happy to engage with Members at any time and invited them to get in touch with him or one of his officers;
- Members expressed an interest in the intergenerational aspect of the Time to Talk day and undertook to liaise with the Chief Executive, HLH, regarding how HLH was engaging with people of all ages;
- reference was made to increasing incidents of vandalism and the need to get young people off the streets and out of trouble, and it was queried how HLH engaged with young people to encourage them to take up more healthy habits. In addition, getting from one side of Inverness to the other could be challenging for young people, and it was queried whether a breakdown could be provided of what areas of Inverness people who used Inverness Leisure were coming from;
- whilst the services provided by HLH were excellent and contributed to the Council's Corporate Plan, the financial position was worrying, and the report was a missed opportunity to provide more detail on the issues and how it was intended to close the budget gap. In particular, information was sought, and provided, on property rationalisation, and an assurance was sought that, should HLH cease to manage valuable community facilities such as Raigmore Community Centre and Hilton Community Centre, community groups would have first refusal in terms of their future management;
- appreciation was expressed to the Chief Executive, HLH, for his responsiveness to Members' queries;
- reference was made to concerns regarding the increasing cost of school lets and the associated impact on the services HLH provided on school premises, and information was sought, and provided, as to what mitigation had been put in place

to ensure that services continued to be delivered, both in Inverness and remote and rural areas;

- some leisure centres, such as those in Mid Ross, were not open at weekends and on Bank Holidays when families had time together, and the need for equity and a strategic approach to opening hours was emphasised;
- it was questioned why Inverness Museum and Art Gallery was closed on a Sunday; and
- Countryside Rangers were commended for the support they had provided in terms of visitor management in and around Morar and Mallaig.

The Committee **NOTED**:-

- i. the performance of High Life Highland (HLH) during the operating period to 31 March 2023, including HLH's contributions to the implementation of the Council Corporate Plan as set out in Appendix A of the report;
- ii. the general updates provided in section 2 of the report;
- iii. that HLH continued to deliver Public Service Obligations on behalf of the Council as set out in the Service Delivery Contract;
- iv. the success of HLH's work to recover customer numbers despite the challenges of the post-pandemic operating environment; and
- v. that there had been correspondence between the Council Leader and HLH Chair to initiate the Service Delivery Contract Review as outlined in section 7 of the report.

10. Statutory Consultation – Gaelic Medium Catchments for Bun-sgoil Gàidhlig Inbhir Nis, Dingwall Primary School, Millbank Primary School, Inverness Royal Academy, Dingwall Academy and Nairn Academy
Co-chomhairleachadh Reachdail – Sgìrean-sgoile Foghlam tron Ghàidhlig airson Bun-Sgoil Ghàidhlig Inbhir Nis, Bun-Sgoil Inbhir Pheofharain, Bun-Sgoil Bruach a' Mhuilinn, Acadamaidh Rìoghail Inbhir Nis, Acadamaidh Inbhir Pheofharain agus Acadamaidh Inbhir Narann

There had been circulated Report No EDU/14/23 dated 1 May 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.

11. Membership of Local Negotiating Committee for Teachers
Ballrachd Comataidh Barganachaidh Ionadail do Thidsearan

The Committee **AGREED** that Mr P Logue replace Mr A Jarvie on the Local Negotiating Committee for Teachers.

At this stage, the Chair highlighted an item of good news that had just been received. The Young Enterprise Scotland Company Programme Awards had been held in Glasgow the previous evening and Thurso High School had achieved awards for Marketing, Creativity, Innovation, Best Company Report and, most importantly, Scottish Company of the Year. He commended the young people involved who would be representing Scotland at the UK finals the following week.

The meeting concluded at 1.30 pm.

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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 5 June 2023 at 10.00am.

Present:

Mr C Aitken	Mrs J Hendry
Mr C Ballance	Ms E Knox (Remote)
Mr B Boyd	Mrs I MacKenzie
Mr I Brown	Mr R MacKintosh (Remote)
Mr M Cameron	Mr A MacKintosh
Mrs G Campbell-Sinclair	Ms K MacLean
Mr A Christie	Mr D Macpherson
Mr D Fraser	Mrs M Reid
Mr K Gowans	Mrs T Robertson
Mr A Graham	Mr A Sinclair (Remote)
Mr D Gregg	

Officials in Attendance:

Mr D Haas, Inverness City Area Manager, Communities and Place
Mr G Munro, Revenues Manager, Resources & Finance
Ms L Mateer, Principal Housing Officer, Housing & Property
Mr E Marsh, Principal Repairs Officer, Housing & Property
Miss J MacLennan, Joint Democratic Services Manager, Performance & Governance
Mrs O Bayon, Committee Officer, Performance and Governance

Also in attendance:

Mr R King, Station Commander Inverness, Scottish Fire & Rescue Service
Mr C MacFarlane, Manager of Victorian Market

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

On behalf of the Committee the Chair expressed condolences to Councillor McAllister and Councillor Boyd on the recent sad losses both had experienced within their families.

Praise was also expressed to Inverness Caledonian Thistle on reaching the Scottish Cup final. Although losing against Celtic Football Club, a team who competed at European level, it had been a valiant attempt. Some Members had attended the match and highlighted how well the team had played. They had done the City of Inverness proud and hopefully next season they would be promoted to the Premier League.

Business

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

Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of Ms H Crawford and Mrs B McAllister.

2. Declarations of Interest/Transparency Statement Foillseachaidhean Com-pàirt/ Aithris Fhollaiseachd

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

Item 7: Mr A Christie and Mr Gregg
Item 8a: Mr A Christie and Mr Gregg

3. Scottish Fire and Rescue Service – Area Performance Report Seirbheis Smàlaidh is Teasairginn na h-Alba

There had been circulated Report No CIA/13/23 dated 22 May 2023 by the Local Senior Officer for Highland.

During discussion, the following issues were raised:-

- Members unanimously thanked and praised the bravery of the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS) across Highland who had worked tirelessly over the last few days tackling a major wildfire near Cannich. The impact on the village was acknowledged, as was the assistance the community, gamekeepers, local sports clubs and landowners had provided. Firefighters would have experienced physical as well as mental trauma and particular mention was made of the two firefighters who had been hospitalised with the Committee sending their best wishes for a full and speedy recovery. Going forward, with Climate Change and the potential for similar instances occurring, the Committee offered any assistance they could provide;
- the wildfire in Cannich had highlighted the difficulty in recruiting retained firefighters in rural areas such as Cannich and an offer was made of any help Members could give to address this. It was important to increase the availability statistics for Cannich and Members were informed of potential ideas how this could be achieved;
- initial training for retained firefighters was a considerable undertaking and the recent wildfire had demonstrated the commitment of personnel;
- it was important to emphasise to the Westminster and Scottish Governments, despite a relatively low population, the vast geographical size of Highland and that resources were required accordingly;
- many properties had installed interlocked fire systems and Members asked for information as to the direct impact this had had on accidental dwelling fires;
- demographics on age in relation to accidental dwelling fires was also requested and how the elderly could be made aware of how they could contact the (SFRS) for advice and information;
- from 1 July 2023 the SFRS's proposal not to attend automatic fire alarm call outs to commercial businesses was of concern; and
- as a result of a recent road traffic accident it had been necessary to close the A9 and this has caused additional pressure on other roads and confirmation was sought that the consequent impact of these detours were taken into consideration.

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

4. Victorian Market Update Cunntas às Ùr mun Mhargadh Bhictòrianach

There had been circulated Report No. CIA/14/23 dated 23 May 2023 by the Executive Chief Officer Communities and Place.

A presentation was undertaken by the Manager of Victorian Market, Mr C MacFarlane. During the presentation an update was provided on the progress that had been made with the Victorian Market new development and the strong marketing planning in place such as a renewed website, planned local events and social media advertisements.

Following the presentation and during discussion, the following issues were raised:-

- it was queried if the Victorian Market had displayed public toilet signage to inform customers of the available facilities;
- it was emphasised the need to accurately measure footfall within the Market to be able to gauge its success with tangible data;
- the continued promotion of the Market on social media platforms was encouraged;
- Members welcomed responses provided to negative reviews and expressed appreciation for the positive reviews on social media as it was felt that this created further engagement. In this regard it was queried if there was a customer comment box placed within the Market;
- it was felt that acoustic live music would benefit from a form of amplification due to the general background noise generated from the restaurant facilities;
- information was sought on what steps were previously taken to try to fill the vacant Retail Units before opening and what work was currently being undertaken to fill the vacant Retail Units within the Market;
- information was sought regarding what could be carried out to make the Church Street entrance area more attractive to customers. In this regard Members requested information regarding the footfall numbers using the Church Street entrance;
- it was queried if the portable space heaters were being paid for out of the Common Good Fund or being paid for from the tenant communal charges;
- an update was requested on how the Market performed during the summer period, what were the plans for the winter period and were there any lessons learned. In this regard it was requested to change the date for the report on the review and associated recommendations to November 2023;
- Members queried what discussions had taken place with the private owners regarding the Queensgate entrance area to remove buckets from the corridor;
- it was queried when the model train would be reinstated within the Market;
- the flexible units were welcomed as it was felt that these would encourage more fledgling businesses to utilise the provision;
- the need to encourage a variety of vendors within the Market was stressed as this would attract more customers;
- it was felt that there was insufficient management information being acquired to lead and direct the Market in the right direction, such as footfall at certain times of the week, the demographics of the visitors and how these were being targeted with strategic advertisements;

- it was highlighted that the advertisement colour scheme for newspaper advertisements did not lend itself well to newsprint. In this regard it was suggested that the advertisements be reviewed and consider adding additional colour and brightness;
- it was suggested that recycling the heat from the cooking facilities be considered to heat other areas of the facility, potentially providing hot water for the public toilets. In this regard it was also suggested that additional solar panels could be considered for the pyramid roof;
- it was queried if a deposit return scheme unit would be considered for the Market, as it was felt that this would attract additional footfall;
- regarding the food court opening at the Eastgate Shopping Centre, it was queried what impact this has had on the Victorian Market food court opening;
- as the UHI facilitated professional cookery classes, it was queried if UHI had been approached to discuss potential use of the vacant stalls to give experience to students in a commercial setting; and
- in response to a query, it was confirmed that the Market Manager was based in an office at the Victorian Market.

The Committee:-

- NOTED** the progress in respect of the work agreed through the Victorian Market Action Plan since the last report to the City Committee and the work ongoing to progress the letting of all new units in the Market;
- AGREED** that the current management arrangements were extended for a further year to enable a review to be undertaken to establish future management and commercial development requirements; and
- NOTED** that a report on the review and associated recommendations would come to the City Committee by 20 November 2023.

5. **Inverness Wards Repurposing COVID-19 Fund** **Maoin Ath-adhbharachaidh COVID-19 Uàrdan Inbhir Nis**

There had been circulated Report No. CIA/15/23 dated 15 May 2023 by the Executive Chief Officer Communities and Place.

The Committee **AGREED** the repurposing of the following COVID-19 funds:-

- **Ward 12 – Aird & Loch Ness**
£1,145 to support Amenity Services with repairs and improvements to play parks in the Ward.
- **Ward 14 – Inverness Central**
£2,000 to support Amenity Services with repairs and improvements to play parks in the Ward.
- **Ward 16 – Inverness Millburn**
£1,800 to support Amenity Services with repairs and improvements to play parks in the Ward
- **Ward 17 – Culloden & Ardersier**
£10,350 to support Amenity Services with repairs and improvements to play parks in the Ward.

**6. City of Inverness Ward Discretionary Budget Approvals
Aontaidhean Buidseat fo Ùghdarras Uàird Cathair-bhaile Inbhir Nis**

**a) Ward Discretionary Budget Applications Approved - 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023
Iarrtasan Buidseat fo Ùghdarras Uàird air an Aotachadh – 1 Giblean 2022 gu 31 Màrt 2023**

There had been circulated, for noting, Report No CIA/16/23 by the Executive Chief Officer, Communities & Place detailing the Ward Discretionary Budget applications approved since 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023.

The Committee **NOTED** the Ward Discretionary Budget applications approved since 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023.

**b) Ward Discretionary Budget Applications Approved since 1 April 2023
Iarrtasan Buidseat fo Ùghdarras Uàird air an Aotachadh bho 1 Giblean 2023**

The Committee **NOTED** that the following City of Inverness Ward Discretionary Budget applications had been approved since 1 April 2023:-

Ward 12

- Orchard Play Park Beauty - £864.80
- Glen Urquhart Men's Shed: Purchase of Laser Cut / Engraving Machine - £500

Ward 13

- Charleston Academy Community Complex: Gala Fun Day - £1,500

Ward 14

- Inverness Royal Academy: Outward Bound Targeted Intervention and Nurture Course - £420
- 12th Inverness Boys Brigade (Dalneigh): National Table Tennis Final Travel & Accommodation - £372

Ward 16

- Inverness Royal Academy: Outward Bound Targeted Intervention and Nurture Course - £420

Ward 15,17 and 19

- No spend to date

**7. Housing Performance Report –1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023
Aithisg Coileanaidh Taigheadais – 1 Giblean 2022 gu 31 Màrt 2023**

Mr A Christie and Mr D Gregg made Transparency Statements in respect of this item in their capacity as General Manager and Board Member of Inverness, Badenoch and Strathspey Citizens Advice Bureau respectively. However, having applied the objective test, reviewed their position in relation to the item and any personal connection, they did not consider that they had an interest to declare.

There had been circulated Report No CIA/17/23 dated 5 June 2023 by the Executive Chief Officer Housing and Property.

During discussion, the following issues were raised:

- further clarification was sought, and provided, as to the assistance provided by the local housing team to offer advice and assistance to tenants signposting them to specialist services to prevent rent arrears getting out of control;
- it was queried if the increase in rent arrears was impacting on the ability to carry out repairs;
- with regard to rent arrears it would be useful to see historic trends as well as a protectory looking forward so resources could be planned to meet demand. In addition, additional information would enable greater analysis of the root causes of rent arrears and to refocus work;
- information was sought as to the number of tenants who were in arrears for one month, two months etc as well as the number who had been helped to pay off their arrears;
- it was difficult to engage with some tenants who might not want to admit they were in debt, given the stigma that was attached, but the earlier the intervention the better the outcome was;
- the pattern of rent arrears was sadly mirrored elsewhere in Scotland;
- often those presenting as homeless had no connection to Highland;
- information was sought, and provided, as to how homelessness data was gathered;
- the Housing Team were commended for their work in supporting people who were often in crisis;
- concern was expressed at reports of illegal entry to properties in Inverness to change electricity meters;
- it was suggested future housing performance reports could focus on specific topics;
- clarification was sought if the average length of time taken to complete emergency repairs over each Quarter was cumulative. In this regard, it was noted that the time taken to complete emergency repairs in Quarter 4 was considerably less than that in Quarter 3. Quarter 3 figures were, in fact, markedly higher than all the other Quarters and it was queried if this had occurred in previous years;
- the definition of what constituted an emergency repair was sought;
- the Scottish Housing Network (SHN) target to complete emergency repairs was 4.2 hours while the Highland Council target was 14. In comparison, the time taken to complete non-emergency repairs, particularly in Quarter 3, was ahead of the SHN target, Whilst this was to be commended, it was important that the emergency repairs were targeted for improvement;
- details as to the number of emergency and routine repairs were requested;
- information was sought, and provided, as to the process followed when a property was re-let to ensure repairs were carried out as quickly as possible. Where there was a delay in re-letting a property, it was important to inform Ward Members as they were often as by constituents what was happening;
- at times individuals were reluctant to move into properties until they were able to afford basic furnishings and it was important that these were directed towards the Council's Welfare team;
- in regard to a query it was confirmed that the Council was, where appropriate, buying properties back at the valuation price; and

- similarly to private landlords, the Council aimed to carry out yearly inspections of its properties.

The Committee **NOTED** the information provided on housing performance in the period 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023.

8. Inverness Common Good Fund (ICGF) Maoin Math Coitcheann Inbhir Nis

a) Inverness Winter Payments 2022/23 Pàighidhean Geamhraidh Inbhir Nis 2022/23

Mr A Christie and Mr D Gregg made Transparency Statements in respect of this item in their capacity as General Manager and Board Member of Inverness, Badenoch and Strathspey Citizens Advice Bureau respectively. However, having applied the objective test, reviewed their position in relation to the item and any personal connection, they did not consider that they had an interest to declare.

There had been circulated Report No. CIA/18/23 dated 10 May 2023 by the Executive Chief Officer Communities and Place.

In the previous two years one-off increases had been made in recognition that some individuals were struggling but it was acknowledged that this might not be possible to replicate. It was important to ensure the Inverness Common Good Fund was sustainable going forward but it was suggested that a review could take place at the next meeting of the City of Inverness and Area Committee on 20 November 2023 to gauge if there was any underspend that could be reallocated.

The Committee **AGREED**:-

- i. to provide an Inverness Winter Payments Discretionary Scheme for 2023/24 having regard to the financial support available from the Department for Work and Pensions and Social Security Scotland as set out in sections 6 and 7 of the report;
- ii. to accept applications from 1 December 2023 to 29 February 2024 inclusive;
- iii. to provide a budget of £0.200m for the 2023/24 Scheme noting that payments for Landward Areas would be sourced from available income within the Inverness Benevolent Funds first, with the ICGF being utilised for the Landward Areas, in the event that officers decide it financially prudent to do so;
- iv. to apply a Consumer Price Index (CPI) increase to the original £97 award rate for 2022/23 in order to determine the 2023/24 single tier payment rate;
- v. to apply a CPI increase as set out in (iv) above, agree to use the annual CPI of 8.9% (March 2023 rate), noting this would establish the 2023/24 award amount at £106 for eligible applicants;
- vi. that the criteria utilised for the 2022/23 scheme as set out in paragraphs 9.2 to 9.6 of the report be used as the basis for the 2023/24 Scheme;
- vii. that this discretionary scheme was to be made available to residents in the City of Inverness and the Landward areas of the seven City Wards;

- viii. that BACS payments were to be used for this discretionary scheme as this was the most secure method of payment for recipients of the payment and the Council alike
- ix. to re-review the Inverness Winter Payment Scheme at its meeting on 20 November to look at repurposing any underspend in the Inverness Common Good Fund into an increased payment award for the Inverness Winter Payment Scheme as done in the previous two years.

**b) Grants Applications over £10,000
Iarrtasan Tabhartais thar £10,000**

There had been circulated Report No. CIA/19/23 dated 22 May 2023 by the Executive Chief Officer Communities and Place. In this connection, there had been circulated separately a copy of supporting documentation as Booklet A.

1. FLOW Photofest

The Committee **APPROVED** a grant of £12,100.

2. Highland Third Sector Interface

The Committee **NOTED** that this application had been withdrawn

3. Flexible Childcare Services Scotland

The Committee **REFUSED** a grant of £15,578 noting the potential for a precedent to be set which could not be sustainable for the ICGF.

**9. Appointments to Outside Bodies
Cur an Dreuchd gu Buidhnean air an Taobh A-muigh**

i. Highlanders Museum – Board of Directors

Following a request from the Highlanders Museum Board of Directors, the Committee **AGREED** to appoint the Provost as a Board Director.

ii. Inverness Women’s Aid Board of Directors

The Committee **AGREED** to appoint Ms E Knox to the Inverness Women’s Aid Board of Directors.

**10. Minutes
Geàrr-chunntas**

The following Minutes were circulated for noting or approval as appropriate:-

- i. **NOTED** the City of Inverness Area Committee held on 13 February 2023 and 23 March 2023 for noting;
- ii. **APPROVED** the Inverness Events and Festivals Working Group held on 27 February 2023, 23 March 2023 and 13 April 2023 for approval. In relation to the Red Hot Highland Fling it was highlighted that information was still awaited as to the breakdown of the number of attendees;

- iii. **APPROVED** the Inverness Common Good Fund Grants Sub-Committee held on 6 March 2023 and 15 May 2023 for approval; and
- iv. **APPROVED** the Inverness East Sports Facilities Working Group held on 21 March 2023 for approval.

The meeting ended at 12.15pm.

The Highland Council

Minutes of Meeting of the **Corporate Resources Committee** held in the Chamber, Council Headquarters, Inverness on Thursday 8 June 2023 at 10.30 am.

Present:

Mr M Baird	Mr D Louden
Mr R Bremner	Mr A MacDonald
Mr J Bruce (Remote)	Mr G Mackenzie (Remote)
Mrs G Campbell-Sinclair (Remote)	Mr S Mackie (Remote)
Mr A Christie	Mr D Millar
Mr R Gale	Mr C Munro
Mr S Kennedy	Mr P Oldham
Mr B Lobban	Mr R Stewart

Non-Members also present:

Mr C Ballance (Remote)	Mr K Gowans (Remote)
Mr J Finlayson	Mr J McGillivray (Remote)
Ms S Fanet (Remote)	

Officials in Attendance:

Mrs K Lackie, Interim Chief Executive
 Mr M MacLeod, Interim Depute Chief Executive
 Mr P Nevin, Interim ECO Performance and Governance
 Mr B Porter, Head of Corporate Finance and Commercialism, Resources and Finance
 Mrs S McKandie, Head of Revenues and Customer Services, Resources and Finance
 Mr F MacDonald, Head of Property and Facilities Management
 Ms E Barrie, Interim Head of HR, Resources and Finance
 Ms G Falconer, Occupational, Health, Safety & Wellbeing Manager, Resources & Finance
 Mr S Fraser, Head of Legal and Governance, Performance and 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 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 Statement: Item 5c – Mr A Christie

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

The Chair referred to the following items of good news:-

Carer Positive Policy – It was highlighted that this week was Carers' week and the Council had formally launched its Carer Positive Policy. The policy recognised the valued role its employees had with caring responsibilities. The policy would better support the needs of staff with caring responsibilities and sought to encourage staff to join a carer support network. Staff would be eligible for up to 5 day's paid leave to undertake caring responsibilities.

Staff Recognition Awards – the Staff Recognition Awards Ceremony was to be held on 9 June, 2023. It was great to see staff being recognised for their dedicated work and valuable input to the range of services to the public as well as internal customers. A selection of shortlisted nominations from the Services were highlighted as – Project Dochas - ICT; Livestreaming of Elections; Ukrainian Refugee Resettlement; Green Freeport and Preventing Poverty through Partnerships.

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

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 £30.60 mileage for the months of January and February 2023; and
- ii. Mr Thomas MacLennan £1,116.90 mileage for the months of May, June, August, September, October, November and December 2022 and January 2023.

5. **Performance Monitoring - 1 January 2023 to 31 March 2023** **Sgrùdadh Coileanaidh – 1 Faoilleach 2023 gu 31 Màrt 2023**

a. **Depute Chief Executive's Service** **Seirbheis an Iar-Àrd-Oifigeir**

There had been circulated Report No RES/10/23 by the Interim Chief Executive/Interim Depute Chief Executive.

In discussion, it was highlighted that there was a lack in consistency in the 3 Services performance reports on how the information was presented and it would be preferable to see them in the same format to make it easier for Members to compare performance among the three Services. It was confirmed that the Interim Executive Chief Officer Performance & Governance was currently reviewing consistency of performance reporting.

It was welcomed that staff absences were being well managed. Also, in relation to Freedom of Information (FOI) requests performance was quite varied, and it was queried if this was a result of some requests being more complex to answer than others. Also, in order to minimise work for staff it was queried if publishing information online in

an open data format would reduce the number of FOI requests and it was confirmed that this was something that was being looked at.

In relation to the statistics on ICT services it was highlighted that the focus was always on customer satisfaction and other statistical information shown was more likely to be used inhouse to look at, for example, trends in the service provided. In relation to the number of incidents, these had reduced significantly since 2019 and the reason incidents were still showing as Amber was that the easier incidents had been dealt with quickly, leaving more complex incidents to be resolved which by their nature took a longer period of time to deal with. Further, there was an ICT Strategy Programme and one strand of this dealt with how to improve processes. Also, the annual ICT Services survey was currently taking place and the outcomes from this would be reported to a future Committee meeting.

The Committee **NOTED** performance information provided in the report.

b. Performance and Governance Service
Seirbheis a' Choileanaidh agus an Riaghlachais

There had been circulated Report No RES/11/23 by the Interim Executive Chief Officer Performance and Governance.

The Committee **NOTED** the performance information provided in the report.

c. 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/12/23 by the Interim Chief Executive.

In particular, it was noted that the Council Tax collection rate had increased despite the cost of living crises. The Non Domestic Rate collection rate had also increased and was a reflection on how businesses had not fallen behind on their payments and this was commended.

There was a large number of freedom of information (FOI) requests and it was queried where the majority of these came from. It was advised that they tended to come from a variety of sources such as media, members of public and a breakdown of where FOIs came from would be provided to Councillor C Munro. If there was more information the Council could provide proactively, then FOI requests could be pointed in the direction of where that information was available and the FOI performance results would be better.

The Committee **NOTED** the:

- i. the Service's performance information; and
- ii. the update provided regarding the People and Finance Systems Programme.

6. **Treasury Management - Summary of Transactions** **Rianachd Ionmhais - Geàrr-chunntas Ghnothaichean**

There had been circulated Report No RES/13/23 by the Head of Corporate Finance and Commercialism,.

Following commentary on the report by the Head of Corporate Finance and Commercialism, Members raised the following main points:-

- there was a requirement in the Code of Practice for Treasury Management that there was a programme of Elected Member training on treasury matters and training sessions for Members would be arranged;
- It was queried if the Public Works Loan Board were comfortable with the Council's level of borrowing. Also, if other lenders were raising any questions about the Council's level of borrowing. It was advised that the Prudential Code gave discretion to the Council to set its level of borrowing in line with the Code and borrowing should be prudent, affordable and sustainable. Members were aware of the financial challenges facing the Council and the affordability of the capital programme was a significant risk to the Council and there had been an acknowledgement by the Council that the capital programme had to be reviewed.

The Committee **NOTED** the Treasury Management Summary of Transactions reports for the period from 1 January to 31 March 2023.

7. **Financial assessment of Notices of Motion** **Measadh Ionmhasail air Brathan Glusaid**

a. **Lets** **Màil**

There had been circulated Report No RES/14/23 by the Head of Corporate Finance and Commercialism.

It was highlighted that it was the Committee's role to assess the financial information as set out in the report and any wider matters in accordance with Standing Orders relating to the Conduct of Meetings were matters for the Council. There was a review of governance arrangements which would go before Council later in the year.

Members raised the following main points:-

- It was queried how the financial impact to communities from services being slowly eroded due to punitive charges to Lets activity could be quantified. Also, it was queried that if charitable organisations stopped using the range of facilities currently on offer through letting activity, what impact would there be on income. A point was made that the correct place to discuss the impact of charges on letting activity was at full Council. The Committee's role was to assess the financial information provided.
- The Scottish Government had announced a £4m programme for after school care and Officers were engaging with the Government on the detail of this. A report on this would be reported to the Education Committee.
- The likely costs of the Notice of Motion was from £128,000 to £192,000 per annum. It was confirmed an assessment of savings opportunities had not been undertaken as this was not the purpose of the financial assessment on the Notice of Motion.

The Committee **NOTED**:-

- i. the financial assessment of the Notice of Motion relating to lets;
- ii. the financial implications of the Notice of Motion which were assessed as in the region of £128,000 to £192,000 per annum;
- iii. the financial risks and implications as set out in the report, and that a clear and agreed funding solution would need identified for the Notice of Motion to progress; and
- iv. that the Notice of Motion and the financial assessment will be considered by Council on 29 June.

**b. NC500 Waste Collection
Togail Sgudail NC500**

There had been circulated Report No RES/15/23 by the Head of Corporate Finance and Commercialism.

In discussion, the following main points were raised by Members:-

- It was queried if any modelling had been undertaken on increased costs to the Council for clearing up fly tipping due to a lack of provision of waste bins. It was advised that the financial assessment related to the additional direct costs of service delivery for waste collection and it did not reflect any costs relating to clearing up fly tipping.
- It was queried what additional costs there had been to deal with fly tipping and overflowing bins and the financial implications to the Council for the reputational damage of overflowing bins. It was advised that this had not been financially assessed as part of the financial assessment of the notice of motion.
- A point was made that Standing Orders should be changed in order that financial assessments of notice of motions did not have to be referred to the Corporate Resources Committee, but could instead be considered at full Council along with the wider implications of notice of motions.

The Committee **NOTED**:-

- i. the financial assessment of the Notice of Motion relating to NC500 Waste Collection;
- ii. the financial implications of the Notice of Motion which were assessed as £110,000 for 2023 and a reduced 17 week period, or £150,000 on a recurring basis for an annual 22 week period;
- iii. the financial risks and implications as set out in the report, and that a clear and agreed funding solution would need identified for the Notice of Motion to progress; and
- iv. that the Notice of Motion and the financial assessment will be considered by Council on 29 June.

**8. Changes to SFRS response to Unwanted Fire Alarm Signals (UFAS)
Seirbheis Smàlaidh & Teasairginn na h-Alba – atharrachadh ann a bhith a' freagairt ghlagan/ghairmean fèin-obrachail**

There had been circulated Report No RES/16/23 by the Executive Chief Officer Housing and Property.

In discussion, there was concern regarding the change to Scottish Fire and Rescue

(SFRS) responses to workplace automatic fire detection signals. For example, there were schools in remote areas and the Responsible Premises Officers could live some distance from these sites and by the time they reached the site schools could already have been destroyed by fire. The number of false alarms in Highland was not excessive and it seemed this was a financially driven policy to stop responding to automatic fire detection signals which was inappropriate for a large area like Highland. This change could lead to substantial financial implications to the Council and ultimately cost lives. It was requested that the Committee respond to the SFRS that it felt the policy was inappropriate for Highland.

It was advised that there would not be any financial implications from the Council's insurers as a result of this change in policy. Also, there was a review of the Responsible Premises Officer function and refreshing RPOs for all buildings. Therefore, there was a package of measures on how to deal with this issue.

Given the strength of feeling by Members against the SFRS change in policy, it was Members' view that a letter be sent on their behalf to the SFRS expressing the concerns of the Committee, the impact the change in policy would have and to ask that dialogue on this matter be kept open. It was also decided to remove the recommendation to take Fire Alarm auto diallers offline during normal working hours.

Thereafter, the Committee:-

- i **NOTED** the change to SFRS responses to workplace automatic fire detection signals;
- ii **NOTED** the changes to be made to the programming of automatic fire detection systems, i.e. Alarm Receiving Centre (ARC) to be notified when single heat detector, two smoke detectors or sprinkler system activated;
- iii **NOTED** the various implications set out in the report in section 3, in particular the Resource implications regarding options for a suitable Highland-wide out of hours callout process, including potential to contract a security company to provide a 24hr keyholder response service;
- iv **AGREED** to remove the recommendation to take Fire Alarm auto diallers 'offline' during normal working hours;
- v **AGREED** the actions coming out of the Next Steps section at section 6 of the report; and
- vi **AGREED** that a letter be sent on behalf of the Committee to the SFRS expressing the concerns the Committee has to the changes to the SFRS response to Unwanted Fire Alarm Signals, the impact this would have and to ask that dialogue is kept open on this matter particularly on the impact it would have in rural areas.

9. **Non Domestic Rates Appeals Committee** **Comataidh Ath-thagraidhean nan Reataichean Neo-dhachaigheil**

There had been circulated Report No RES/17/23 by the Head of Legal and Governance.

The Committee **AGREED**:-

- i. the creation of a second, stand-alone Non Domestic Rates Appeal Committee to consider and determine a current appeal; and
- ii. the appointment of Mrs G Campbell-Sinclair; Mr P Oldham; Mr B Lobban, Mr M Green, Mr R Gale to serve on the stand-alone Non Domestic Rates Appeals Committee.

**MINUTES OF MEETINGS
GEÀRR-CHUNNTAS CHOINNEAMHAN**

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

The following Minutes of Meetings had been circulated and:

- i. **APPROVED** - Central Safety Committee – 17 March 2023;
- ii. **APPROVED** - Staff Partnership Forum – 25 May 2023;
- iii. **NOTED** - Appeals & Disputes Committee – – 19 May 2023;
- iv. **NOTED** - Non Domestic Rates Appeals Committee – 23 May, 2023; and
- v. **NOTED** - Employment Release Sub Committee – 29 March 2023

The meeting was closed at 11:50 am.

The Highland Council

Minutes of Meeting of the **Wester Ross, Strathpeffer and Lochalsh Committee** held remotely on 12 June 2023 at 10.30 am.

Present:

Mrs I Campbell
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 D Manson, Principal Housing Officer, Housing and Property
Mr C Sharp, Repairs Manager, Housing and Property
Ms S James-Gaukroger, Infrastructure Environment and Economy
Ms R Ross, Administrative Assistant, Corporate 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.

Business

1. Apologies for Absence Leisgeulan

An apology for absence was intimated on behalf of Dr C Birt.

2. Declarations of Interest/Transparency Statement Foillseachaidhean Com-pàirt/ Aithris Fhollaiseachd

There were no Declarations of Interest or Transparency Statements.

3. Minutes Geàrr-chunntas

There had been circulated Minutes of Meeting of the Wester Ross, Strathpeffer and Lochalsh Committee held on 20 February 2023 which were approved by the Council on 9 March 2023.

The Committee **NOTED** the minutes.

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

There had been circulated Report No WRSL/006/23 dated 12 June 2023 by the Local Senior Officer for Highland, Scottish Fire and Rescue Service.

The Committee **NOTED** that the Local Senior Officer was unable to attend the meeting.

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

There had been circulated Report No WRSL/007/23 dated 12 June 2023 by the Executive Chief Officer – Housing and Property.

During the discussion the following points were raised:-

- on the point being raised, it was clarified that certain areas such as Laide and Aultbea were classed as low demand areas for housing and therefore available properties in those areas took longer to allocate;
- information was sought on what help was available for tenants who struggled with garden upkeep due to disability; and
- thanks were expressed for the work of the housing team.

The Committee:-

- i) **NOTED** the information provided on housing performance in the period 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023; and
- ii) **AGREED** that the Principal Housing Officer would contact the Community Payback Team to get an update of their capacity to assist with garden upkeep for tenants who are unable to do this themselves.

6. **Strathpeffer Conservation Area Appraisal & Management Plan – Update Measadh & Plana Stiùiridh Sgìre Ghlèidhteachais Shrath Pheofhair – Cunntas às Ùr**

There had been circulated Report No WRSL/008/23 dated 17 May 2023 by Executive Chief Officer – Infrastructure and Environment.

During discussion the following issues were raised:-

- concerns were raised about changes made to properties that would be included in the extended conservation area;
- the relaxation of the planning policies was welcomed;
- the importance of concentrating on eco-friendly solutions for heating homes was emphasised;
- concerns were raised over the state of MacKay's hotel and information was sought on how concerns over the disrepair of such buildings could be reported; and
- the Conservation Area Project Officer undertook to investigate the available actions that could be taken by concerned members of the community and to report these back to the Ward Members.

The Committee:-

- i) **NOTED** the public comments and agree the Council response; and
- ii) **RECOMMENDED** that the Economy and Infrastructure Committee formally approve and adopt the Strathpeffer Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan, including the amended Conservation Area boundary on 17 August 2023.

7. **Allocation Process for Area Share of Invitation to Pay Income**

Pròiseas Riarachaidh airson Co-roinn Sgìreil a thaobh Cuireadh Teachd-a-steach a Phàigheadh

There had been circulated Report No WRSL/009/23 dated 24 May 2023 by Executive Chief Officer – Communities and Place.

During discussion the following issues were raised:-

- information was sought on what would happen in the case that the Community Council and Community Trust did not agree on which project should be funded from the Invitation to Pay income;
- on the point being raised, it was confirmed that the funds could be used for match funding towards larger projects and that, if there were funds left over after any allocations, these would roll forward to the following year; and
- money from visitors coming back into community was welcomed.

The Committee:-

- APPROVED** the proposed process for the area allocation of invitation to pay income;
- NOTED** that the process will be reviewed after the first year of implementation;
- NOTED** that the delegated powers for the authorisation of spend up to £10,000 would be assigned to the Senior Ward Manager and over £10,000 would be subject to Committee approval.

8. Ward Discretionary Grants 2023/24 Tabhartasan fo Ùghdarras Uàird 2023/24

The Committee **NOTED** the following Ward Discretionary Fund Grants for Ward 5 in the financial year 2022/23 and to date for 2023/24:-

Financial Year 2022/23

Organisation	Project	Amount
CALA	Childcare provision, Ullapool	£2700
Headway Highland	Support vulnerable adults with an acquired brain injury (ABI)	£71.43
Lochalsh Community Council	Purchase of barrels for use as planters	£445
Wester Loch Ewe Community Council	Improving WLECC area	£1047
Auchtertyre Primary School Parent Council	Installation of equipment at Auchtertyre Primary School	£1300
Balmacara Community Trust	Balmacara Gala	£510
Drumbuie Common Grazings	Furniture for new bus shelter at Drumbuie	£450
Lady Haig Poppy Wreaths	5 Wreaths	£143.89

Lochbroom Community Council	Remembrance Parade Wreaths	£80
Loch Duich Community Council	Installation of Defibrillator in Ratagan Village	£500
Plockton & District Community Council	6 Replacement Defibrillation equipment	£1320
Wester Ross Radio Ltd (broadcasting as "Two Lochs Radio" & "Lochbroom FM")	Community Radio digital playout system	£2650
Skye & Lochalsh Community Sport Hub - High Life Highland in collaboration with Lochalsh and Skye Housing Association	Community Football Project	£1602
North West Highlands Geopark Ltd	North West Highlands Geopark Information Leaflet	£500
Strathpeffer Community Development Trust	To provide funds to carry out a Science Fair Event	£1829
Lochalsh Community Council	Continue provide attractive floral displays across the Lochalsh CC area	£500
Lochcarron Parent Council	Purchase a Basketball Hoop for the playground	£350

Financial Year 2023/24

Organisation	Project	Amount
Lochbroom Community Council	Beach Cleaning & Litter Picking	£800
Strathpeffer Primary School Parent Council	Creation of a multi-sensory learning zone – The Den	£1808
Loch Duich Community Council	Kings Coronation Community Celebration	£500
Wester Ross Fisheries Trust	River Catchment Management Workshop	£800

The meeting concluded at 11am.

The Highland Council

Minutes of Meeting of the **Audit and Scrutiny Committee** held in the Council Chamber, Council Headquarters, Glenurquhart Road, Inverness on **Thursday 15 June 2023** at **10.30am**.

Present:

Mr M Baird	Mr P Logue (Remote)
Mr C Ballance	Mr G MacKenzie
Mr D Fraser	Ms J McEwan
Mr L Fraser	Mr P Oldham
Mr R Jones	Mrs T Robertson
Mr S Kennedy	

Non Members in attendance:

Mr J Bruce	Mr D Macpherson (Remote)
Mr R Gale (Remote)	Mr A Sinclair (Remote)
Mr A Graham (Remote)	

Also in attendance:-

Ms E Scoburgh, Audit Scotland
Ms C Gardiner, Audit Scotland

Officials in Attendance:

Ms K Lackie, Interim Chief Executive
Mr P Nevin, Interim Executive Chief Officer, Performance and Governance
Ms E Barrie, Head of Human Resources, Resources & Finance, Health & Social Care
Ms M McIntyre, Head of Service (Children Young People and Families)
Mr I Kyle, Service Lead, Strategy, Performance and Quality Assurance, Health & Social Care
Mr P Adlinton, Commissioning Officer, Health & Social Care
Mr B Cameron, Service Lead, Housing Policy & Performance, Property & Housing
Mrs D Mackenzie, Housing Policy & Investment Manager, Property & Housing
Mr B Porter, Head of Corporate Finance, Resources & Finance
Miss D Sutherland, Strategic Lead (Corporate Audit & Performance), Performance and Governance
Mr M Waters, Corporate Performance & Information Governance Manager, Performance and Governance Service
Mr J Campbell, Senior Auditor, Performance and Governance
Mr P Hankinson, Senior Auditor, Performance and Governance
Miss J Maclennan, 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 T Robertson in the Chair

1. Apologies for Absence Leisgeulan

Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of Mr B Boyd, Mr K Rosie, and Mr A Sinclair.

2. Declarations of Interest Foillseachaidhean Com-pàirt

There were no declarations of interest.

3. External Audit Report – 2021/22 Aithisg Sgrùdaidh bhon Taobh A-muigh – 2021/22

There had been circulated a final external audit report prepared by the Council's External Auditors (Grant Thornton):-

- a) Annual Report 2021/22 to Elected Members and the Controller of Audit; and
- b) Letter of representation.

This was an updated report, with the September 2022 Committee having considered a final external audit report and approved the letter of representation, pending conclusion of the outstanding audit work. With the audit work now concluded, and the annual accounts for the year audited and signed, this report concluded reporting relating to the external audit for 2021/22.

An assurance was sought that the Climate Change Committee had been able to consider the Accounts Commission publication. Once this had been established Members would be informed accordingly.

The Committee **NOTED** the position.

4. Audited Accounts 2021/22 Cunntasan Sgrùdaichte 2021/22

The Committee **NOTED** that the Audited Annual Accounts for 2021/22 were signed and authorised for issue on 20 April 2023, and were available from the following Council website link: [Annual accounts | Audited Accounts April 2021 to March 2022 \(highland.gov.uk\)](https://www.highland.gov.uk/annual-accounts-audited-accounts-april-2021-to-march-2022)

Members commended officers, recognising the work involved in preparing the Audited Accounts within the necessary timescale.

5. Internal Audit Reviews and Progress Report and Update on 2023/24 Audit Ath-sgrùdaidhean In-sgrùdaidh agus Aithisg Adhartais agus Cunntas às Ùr mu Phlana Sgrùdaidh 2023/24

There had been circulated Report No. AS/6/23 dated 5 June 2023 by the Strategic Lead (Corporate Audit & Performance).

This update included copies of the following final reports issued:-

- a) Housing & Property – Housing Rent Collection (Substantial Assurance)
- b) Resources & Finance – Review of Absence Management Arrangements (follow-up) (Reasonable Assurance)

Assurances were sought, and provided, that Managers were equipped to deal with absences to ensure staff were given the best possible chances of returning to work.

- c) Health & Social Care – Review of Commissioned Children’s Services (Limited Assurance).

During the discussion the following main points were raised:-

- the detail contained within the report demonstrated the value of having an effective and competent Internal Audit Team in place;
- concern was expressed that the commissioning cycle for Health and Social Care was not operating as intended and details were sought, and provided, as to the reasons for this. There was an expectation that necessary care would be provided and it was important this expectation was met;
- considerable work had taken place over the previous 18 months to overcome the deficiencies identified in the audit report and restoring confidence in the system;
- it was important to bear in mind that the commissioning process had been out with the Council until 2022;
- the Service needed to set target dates to ensure progress was achieved; and
- annual progress reports would be brought back to the Health and Social Care Committee; and
- Members sought an update to the Audit and Scrutiny Committee in 6 months time.

The Committee **NOTED**:-

- i. the Final Reports referred to in Section 4.1 of the report;
- ii. the current work of the Internal Audit Section outlined at sections 5 and 6, and the status of work in progress detailed at Appendix 1 of the report;
- iii. the update on the 2023/24 audit plan;

and **AGREED**:-

- iv. a progress report on the Review of Commissioned Children’s Services be considered by the Audit and Scrutiny Committee in 6 months time.

6. Internal Audit Annual Report 2022/2023 Aithisg Bhliadhnaidh In-Sgrùdaidh 2022/2023

There had been circulated Report No. AS/7/23 dated 1 June 2023 by the Strategic Lead (Corporate Audit & Performance).

The Committee **NOTED** the content of the report, the audit opinion provided and to raise any relevant points with the Strategic Lead (Corporate Audit & Performance).

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

There had been circulated Report No. AS/8/23 dated 1 June 2023 by the Strategic Lead (Corporate Audit & Performance).

During the discussion the following main points were raised:-

- Risk CR29, Lack of Occupational Health Provider – as was to be reported to the Central Safety Committee the following day, an Occupational Health Provider had now been commissioned;
- Risk CR30, Ash Dieback – a progress report and timescale were sought;
- CR31, Vacancies in Children’s Services – information was sought, and provided, as to how this would be rectified;
- a number of Risks were RAG’d as red and this raised concern that there had been no significant progress since the Committee’s last meeting;
- in light of recent wildfires in Highland and that the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service would, from 1 July 2023, no longer be attending automatic fire alarm calls, it was suggested that fire emanating on Council owned land or affecting Council buildings should be added as a risk. However, it was explained as there were a number of actions being undertaken by officers to address the issue and it was therefore not considered a risk at present;
- Highland Council was now the Responsible Authority for the Inverness and Cromarty Firth Green Freeport and would have to account to the Westminster and Scottish Governments for the expenditure of considerable amounts of public and private money and this should be considered as a significant corporate risk. This point was acknowledged but there was still significant work ongoing on this matter and progress would be reported to Council on 29 June;
- CR7, Climate Change and the Ecological Emergency – the Interim Chief Executive had agreed that there was now a legal requirement for Net Zero and “legal” needed to be added to the risk type;
- there were workforce difficulties in finding enough home carers to keep individuals at home for as long as possible and it was important to look at innovative ways of recruitment and to make the role more attractive. This had been discussed at the last Health and Social Care Committee and a lot of work was taking place. However this was a national problem, not just a Highland one;
- CR28, UK Parliamentary Boundary Changes – it was questioned when Members would get an opportunity to see the Action Plan;
- CR9, Safe and Effective Property – a target date of December 2022 was included and this now needed to be revised and the remaining amber risks needed to have target dates set as opposed to “on-going”; and
- with “Country Bumpkins” closing information was sought from the Education Service as to the effect this would have on the provision of free childcare.

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

8. Public Service Improvement Framework (PSIF) Programme Reviews Ath-sgrùdaidhean Prògram Frèam Leasachaidh Seirbheis Poblach

There had been circulated Report No. AS/9/23 dated 12 May 2023 by the Strategic Lead (Corporate Audit & Performance).

Disappointment was expressed that the Programme for 2023/24 was not yet in place, although it was supposed to be following the Local Government elections in May 2022 and it was hoped Members would be able to consider this in the near future.

However, it was reassuring reviews were taking place and more detailed reports would be forthcoming to give the Committee a better understanding.

The Committee **NOTED** the planned approach to self-assessment reviews and that the outcomes would be reported to the relevant Strategic Committees.

9. Action Tracking Report Aithisg Tracadh Ghniomhan

There had been circulated Report No. AS/10/23 dated 30 May 2023 by the Strategic Lead (Corporate Audit & Performance).

During the discussion the following main points were raised:-

- regarding the review of award of ward fund schemes, information was sought if the target date of 31 May 2023 had been met. In this regard an update would be provided, however it was confirmed that in general some target dates may have been over ambitious, although high-grade actions would be completed more promptly due to their nature. In addition, it was also confirmed that a process had been put in place to review whether upcoming target dates would be met;
- it was suggested that on larger projects when one target date had passed it could be action tracked rather than waiting for all dates to pass before the audit actions were tracked;
- in relation to the governance of arms-length external organisations and partnerships (ALEO's) it was queried, and confirmed, that this referred to just Eden Court and High Life Highland; and
- it was queried whether the ALEO's audit report would be presented to the Committee by the end of the year. In this regard it was confirmed that Members would be updated on the audit actions including the planned actions for the new 2023/24 financial year.

The Committee **NOTED** the action tracking information provided including the revised target dates for the completion of outstanding actions.

10. Whistleblowing Annual Report Aithisg Bhliadhnaid Innsireachd

There had been circulated Report No. AS/11/23 dated 1 June 2023 by the Strategic Lead (Corporate Audit & Performance).

The Committee **NOTED**:-

- i. and scrutinised the information at section 4.1 of the report including the low number of whistleblowing concerns received;
- ii. that where a whistleblowing investigation identified any control weakness, fraudulent activity or areas for improvement this would be addressed through an Internal Audit report which would be provided to Committee to scrutinise. There was 1 such report during the year; and
- iii. that this report together with the Whistleblowing policy would be provided to the next meeting of the HR Sub Group on 21 June 2023 to consider whether any changes were required to the policy.

The meeting ended at 11.35 am.

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, 26 June, 2023** at **10.30 am**.

Present:

Mr J Finlayson
Mr D Millar

Mr C Munro
Mr R Stewart

Participating Officials:

Mr W MacKinnon, Ward Manager, Communities & Place

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

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

Mr A MacInnes, Interim Senior 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. Community Regeneration Fund Assessment of Applications Measadh Iarrtasan Maoin Ath-bheòthachaidh Coimhearsnachd

There was circulated Report No. SR/15/23 by the Interim Depute Chief Executive.

There was an introduction to the report following which the Committee were invited to consider 2 applications for Community Regeneration Fund (CRF) funding. The total grant requests amounted to £63,072.16 and available funding was £484,888.

The Committee considered applications for CRF. Members were of the view that these were very strong applications that would provide significant benefit to the community and the visitor economy. Members noted that landowner consent had now been received in respect of the Elgol Path Project. In relation to the Electric Vehicle (EV) chargers project at the Storr, it was important that these charges were maintained so that they were operational throughout the year. There should be guarantees sought in similar applications that chargers will be maintained. It was highlighted that a report had been requested from Officers in relation to EV charges across Skye which would be shared with Members.

Members agreed CRF as shown below. In total 2 applications were approved amounting to £63,072.16.

Broadford and Strath Community Company – Elgol Path Project

APPROVED £11,910.16

The Highland Council – The Storr – Electric Vehicle chargers

APPROVED £51,162.00

The meeting ended at 10.38 a.m.