

**The Highland Council
No.6 2024/2025**

Minutes of Meeting of the Highland Council held in the Council Chamber, Council Headquarters, Glenurquhart Road, Inverness on Thursday 31 October 2024 at 9.45 am.

Mr B Lobban in the Chair

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

Present:

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

In Attendance:

Chief Executive
Assistant Chief Executive - Corporate
Assistant Chief Executive - People
Assistant Chief Executive – Place
Chief Officer – Legal and Corporate Governance
Joint Democratic Services Managers

Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of Mr J Edmondson, Ms E Knox, Mrs A MacLean, Mr D McDonald, Mrs M Paterson and Mr A Sinclair.

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

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

Items 5, 7, 15 and 16.ii – Mr A Christie and Mr D Gregg

3. Presentation: British Sign Language Taisbeanadh - Cànan-soidhnidh Bhreatainn

Ms Sheila Lundberg, Co-ordinator and Mr Andrew Begg, Sign Tutor, from the Highland Deaf Education Service gave a presentation on British Sign Language (BSL) and what Highland had achieved.

Decision

The Council **NOTED** the presentation.

4. Medium Term Financial Plan 2025/26 to 2027/28 Plana Ionmhasail Meadhan-ùine 2025/26 gu 2027/28

There had been circulated Report No. HC/35/24 by the Chief Officer – Corporate Finance (Section 95 Officer).

During discussion, the following issues were raised:-

- it was important to recognise that the budget setting process for the next financial year was at an early stage;
- the positive achievements around income generation such as the Storr Project and the fact the Council was less risk averse in taking forward initiatives to minimise the impact of any budget reductions was welcomed;
- achieving the income and cost reduction targets would reduce the impact on reserves, however it was important the Council continued to seek best value across all its activities;
- while the funding settlement from the UK Government to the Scottish Government was more favourable than anticipated, the significant financial impact of the increase in national insurance contributions on local authorities needed to be impressed on both Governments;
- there was concern that a ‘flat cash’ funding settlement from the Scottish Government would result in a reduction in the Council’s budget and additional savings having to be made to the level detailed in the report;
- it was proposed that a late report be presented to Council on 12 December 2024 providing initial narrative, data and assumptions on the impact the Scottish Government Budget, scheduled for 4 December 2024, would have on Local Government and the Council;
- Members requested that they be provided with details of the proposals arising from the review to be undertaken of savings options or proposals developed for February 2024, but not taken forward;
- the focus on income generation should not be at the expense of community groups being able to afford to rent Council facilities or result in people being excluded from services;

- it was important the Administration factored in engagement with Opposition Groups given the short window between the Scottish Government's grant settlement being confirmed and the Council setting its budget;
- costed information needed to be provided on the impact of the decrease in inflation on the Council's financial assumptions;
- an assurance was sought, and provided, that the forecasted decrease in bank base interest rates had been factored into the Council's borrowings and opportunities to access funds at more favourable rates were actively monitored on a weekly basis;
- confirmation was sought that the Scottish Government provided funding support to the Council for the Refugee Programme and more detailed information could be provided if required;
- following the Highland Housing Summit, the report set out proposals for the LandBanking Fund to support affordable housing development. The Economy and Infrastructure Committee would also consider measures to support housing development and, in taking these forward, it was hoped partners and private sector developers would follow suit;
- there was concern at the burden future year on year Council tax rises, including the element to support the Highland Investment Plan, would place on constituents in Highland and the importance of listening to their views on this issue;
- the Council had to demonstrate to Council taxpayers that it could manage its funding in a responsible manner, concerns being expressed in relation to the Campervan and Motorhome Scheme;
- the scale of the challenges facing local authorities, and recognised by CoSLA, in terms of taking their local authorities forward whilst trying to protect communities in terms of Council tax rises, was highlighted;
- as part of the budget setting process the Council would take all necessary steps to minimise Council tax rises and contributions from Members on further mitigation measures would be welcomed;
- while seeking to achieve best value outcomes, the Council's reserves strategy provided options in terms of providing for its finances going forward;
- a review was being undertaken on what the budget had delivered in the current year and how this information could be fed back to communities and built on going forward;
- direct conversations continued to be held between officers, the Council Leader and with other Ministers and Cabinet Secretaries on the Council's position and priorities and as to how budget decisions at a national level would impact on the Council; and
- there was a need for the Administration, and through CoSLA ,to impress on the Scottish Government that in terms of its settlement from the UK Government as much of this funding as possible should be directed into local authorities.

Decision

The Council:-

NOTED:-

- i. the update provided regarding the Council's Medium Term Financial Plan;
- ii. that a rolling three-year revenue budget planning approach was being adopted, and an updated Medium Term Financial Plan would cover the three years 2025/26 to 2027/28;

- iii. the financial context and financial outlook as described in the report, and the financial risks and uncertainties;
- iv. the need to plan for additional budget savings and other measures to address the financial outlook over the period of the plan;
- v. the outline timetable of key dates;
- vi. the work being taken forward regarding development of saving proposals, consideration of the process of budget engagement, and review of earmarked reserves;

AGREED:-

- vii. that a late report would be submitted to Council on 12 December 2024 providing initial narrative, data and assumptions of the impact the Scottish Government Budget as presented by the Cabinet Secretary (scheduled for 4 December 2024) would have on Local Government and the Highland Council; and
- viii. to the repayment into the LandBanking Fund of £6.308m from funds set aside.

**5. Highland Investment Plan – Progress Update
Plana Tasgaidh na Gàidhealtachd – Cunntas Adhartais**

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

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

There had been circulated Report No. HC/36/24 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Place, who gave a presentation in amplification of the report.

During discussion, the following main points were raised:-

- the Highland Investment Plan (HIP) was a sustainable programme that would provide investment in community Points of Delivery (PODs), roads and infrastructure, with reference to procurement, delivery, sustainability and ongoing care and maintenance for the immediate, intermediate and long-term future, and it would be delivered as quickly as possible;
- it was uncertain, at present, what effect the recent budget announcement by the Chancellor in terms of capital funding might have, and what, if any, direct benefit there might be to the Council;
- it was now six months since the launch of the HIP and, ahead of the agreed report to the Council in December, the interim report reminded Members of the overall plan and provided updates on substantive parts of the plan, particularly the Dingwall and Thurso workstreams. Section 5.1 of the report set out the previously agreed categories of projects, and the focus was on better and more efficient use of buildings, co-location of services, and accommodation that could include partners and stakeholders as well as take into account the views of communities. Appendix 1 of the report included information on the developing form of the PODs;
- the Council Leader confirmed the commitment to continue with diarised updates for Local Members, where appropriate, in respect of the local aspects of the various phases of the HIP;
- Members welcomed the positive and ambitious report and looked forward to seeing the outcomes, and the options that would be presented to the Council in December;

- attention having been drawn to section 5.2.4 of the report which stated that full engagement with communities and partners would take place, Members requested sight of an engagement plan, including what engagement was going to be carried out, when it was going to be carried out and what outcomes were expected. In addition, more detail was needed about specific stakeholder groups;
- concern was expressed regarding financial sustainability. The Council's ceiling for debt had previously been set at 10% of revenue turnover, and an analysis of what that ceiling might be in absolute terms in future years would be useful;
- reference was made to instances of secondary school pupils having to eat their lunch outside in inclement weather due to a lack of space in the school building, with particular reference to Inverness Royal Academy and Millburn Academy. It was essential for children's wellbeing that they could eat in a safe, warm and dry environment, and it was intended to move an amendment seeking a survey of the lunch arrangements in secondary schools with the findings to be reported to the next meeting of the Council so they could be built into the HIP. Other Members voiced their support in that regard;
- it was important not to lose sight of St Clement's school in Dingwall, and to recognise the delays that had taken place in that regard. Local Members responded that there was a clear commitment in the HIP, not just to St Clement's School but to the wider educational and other provision in Dingwall, which was very welcome. Communication with Members, the St Clement's stakeholder group and the Parent Councils of both Dingwall Academy and Dingwall Primary School had been excellent. In terms of siting, all those involved were aware of the options and were excited by the potential plans that had come forward;
- information was sought, and provided, as to whether the proposals for the new Beauly Primary School included a POD and, if so, whether that would delay the plans;
- in relation to Broadford Primary School, one of the conditions of the Learning Estate Investment Programme (LEIP) funding award was that the school had to be occupied by the end of 2025. It was clear the new school was not going to be delivered in time to meet that criterion and an assurance was sought, and provided, that the Council would be requesting an extension to the deadline to ensure the Council was not burdened with more debt. Other Local Members added that stakeholders and the wider community were happy with the timeline and the progress that had been made;
- the significant amount of work that had already taken place was recognised, and information was sought, and provided, on the capacity of the staff involved;
- the importance of keeping Local Members informed was emphasised, and a request was made that regular updates be provided to Ward Business Meetings so Members could keep constituents up-to-date;
- it was requested that Inverness East be considered first when looking at the Inverness area. Despite significant housing development in recent years in terms of the Inverness East Development Brief there had been no increase in services, and there was land available;
- in relation to the Thurso workstream, Local Members commended the early discussions that had taken place and the speed of response by officers, and looked forward to regular diarised updates as indicated by the Council Leader. There were unique and transformational opportunities that could be taken by not working in isolation, and it was important to be even more ambitious than set out in the report and get the community to engage with the process as much as possible;

- every person, regardless of where they were in Highland, should have the appropriate settings to learn, live and feel like a valued citizen and, given the recent budget announcements by the Chancellor and the unprecedented tax burden, there should be an expectation of renewal rather than dilution of services and degradation of assets;
- the HIP committed the Council to ongoing investment in roads and transport infrastructure, which was a priority on Skye and across Highland. It was exciting to see the approach to developing new generation community facilities, using PODs, which would see upgrades to the high number of schools that required investment in the years ahead. Members were particularly pleased to see in the report reference to the distinct types of community PODs that might be considered, which included urban and rural examples as well as regional facilities. Thanks were expressed to officers for their hard work to date, and Members voiced their support for the ambitious and aspirational vision of the HIP. It was important to ensure that the aspirations articulated in the report were also being fully integrated into shovel-ready projects such as the LEIP Phase 2 projects including Broadford Primary School and Nairn Academy as well other well-advanced school plans for places like Dunvegan and Beauly. These projects would provide an early opportunity to showcase the innovative work being taken forward, and the learning from them would inform future work. It was an exciting time for Highland, and Members endorsed the positive direction of travel in terms of the development of the HIP;
- in response to comments regarding the 3D POD designs which had formed part of the presentation, it was explained that they were intended to demonstrate the concept and were not definitive. They would be fleshed out as work progressed, and the elements included in the final designs would be driven by what the community wanted and what was affordable;
- in relation to PODs, whilst the practical benefits of having a pharmacy and a care home, for example, on the same site were evident, it was questioned whether having a secondary school and a GP and/or pharmacy on the same site would be acceptable to teenagers seeking contraceptive advice, and it was necessary to include teenagers in the planned engagement; and
- in responding to points raised, the Council Leader explained that there would be continued and ongoing review of the HIP, and the issues raised could be incorporated into future reports to the Council or the appropriate Strategic Committee. The ongoing updates would include updated financial models that would inform the decision-making process, and he undertook to reflect on the comments regarding community engagement.

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

As an **AMENDMENT**, Mr A Christie, seconded by Mr D Gregg, moved that an analysis of all secondary schools be initiated detailing which schools could not presently provide a sheltered, dry, warm, and safe space for our young people to take lunch, and that the findings of this analysis be reported to Council as part of the next update on the Highland Investment Plan together with options as to how to address the matter.

On a vote being taken, the **MOTION** received 34 votes and the **AMENDMENT** received 28 votes, with no abstentions. The **MOTION** was therefore **CARRIED**, the votes having been cast as follows:-

For the Motion:

Ms S Atkin, Dr C Birt, Mr B Boyd, Mr R Bremner, Mr I Brown, Mr M Cameron, Mrs I Campbell, Mrs G Campbell-Sinclair, Mrs M Cockburn, Mr S Coghill, Ms L Dundas, Ms S Fanet, Mr J Finlayson, Mr D Fraser, Mr L Fraser, Mr K Gowans, Mr M Green, Mrs J Hendry, Ms M Hutchison, Ms L Johnston, Mr R Jones, Mr S Kennedy, Ms L Kraft, Mr B Lobban, Mr D Loudon, Mr W MacKay, Mr G MacKenzie, Ms K MacLean, Mr T MacLennan, Mr H Morrison, Ms L Niven, Mr P Oldham, Mr K Rosie, Ms M Ross.

For the Amendment:

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

Decision

The Council **NOTED** the progress in developing the place-based master planning approach and the option appraisal process for delivering new Community Points of Delivery across Highland, and the further updates that would be reported to the Council meeting on 12 December 2024.

6. Council Motion on Renewables – Follow Up Report Gluasad Comhairle air So-ùrachaidhean – Aithisg Leanmhainn

There had been circulated Report No. HC/37/24 by the Assistant Chief Executive - Place.

Members welcomed the original motion, and thanked officers for the prompt preparation and presentation of the report, given the tight timescales. It was hoped the cost of the project might be reflected in future planning application fees and, in relation to the joint UK and Scottish government consultation on removing barriers to the creation of electricity infrastructure, it was suggested that an extension to the 30 November 2024 deadline be requested to allow the matter to be considered by the South and North Planning Applications Committees.

Decision

The Council:-

- i. **NOTED** the commitment to expand the real time live mapping to include all types of energy generating applications and for this to be updated on a monthly basis;
- ii. **AGREED** to the funding of this mapping as an in-year budget pressure funded from reserves, with a need to consider the provision of longer term funding as part of the 2025/26 budget setting process;
- iii. **NOTED** the difference in what community engagement could be undertaken by the Council, depending on who was the determining authority for the application;
- iv. **AGREED** to the funding of further community engagement resources separate from the Planning Service as an in-year budget pressure funded from reserves, with a need to consider the longer term funding as part of the 2025/26 budget setting process;

- v. **AGREED** that additional community council training be progressed with reference to electricity generation and renewable proposals, with the cost pressures arising met from reserves as an in-year pressure, and the need to consider longer term funding as part of the 2025/26 budget setting process; and
- vi. **NOTED** that the Leader would write to the Scottish Government to ensure that the full cumulative aspect of developments, including the potential grid connection, was considered within the submission of an application under section 36 of the Electricity Act for an energy generation station, and for all Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) applications of whatever scale.

7. Review of the Scheme of Delegation
Ath-sgrùdadh dhen Sgeama Thiomnaidh

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 General Manager of Inverness Badenoch and Strathspey Citizens Advice Bureau
Mr D Gregg – as an employee of NHS Highland

There had been circulated Report No. HC/38/24 by the Chief Officer – Legal and Corporate Governance.

The Chief Officer – Legal and Corporate Governance drew Members' attention to a suggested update to paragraph 128 which would be extended to include "*to deal with misconduct up to and including dismissal raised by and in relation to the Chief Executive and Assistant Chief Executives*".

Decision

The Council:-

AGREED:-

- i. the changes to the Scheme of Delegation to Committees and Sub-Committees as detailed in Appendix 1 to the report, including the suggested update to paragraph 128;
- ii. that the Scheme of Delegation including its format be reviewed, brought forward and be reported to March 2025 Council;
- iii. that amendments to post titles could continue to be made without recourse to Council as long as the level of delegation remains unchanged;

NOTED:-

- iv. that the authority currently delegated to Executive Chief Officers within the current Scheme would be exercised principally by Chief Officers and, when necessary, Assistant Chief Executives; and
- v. page references would be updated once the substantive changes to the Scheme had been approved.

8. Question Time
Àm Ceiste

The following Questions had been received by the Chief Officer - Legal and Corporate Governance –

Public Questions

(i) Mr W Morrison

To the Leader of the Council

As it has been decided by Council that the bollards on Academy St be removed together with the ones on Eastgate, I would be obliged to know the proposed timescale for same to be completed?

As the busy Festive season will soon be upon us I feel that this should be carried out as a matter of urgency with no further delay.

The response had been circulated.

Member Questions

(i) Mr A Christie

To the Leader of the Council

How many fines/penalty notices including total value and geographical location has the Highland Council issued on the following subject areas between April 2024 and September 2024?

- Penalty Charge Notice car parking on restricted road markings or overstaying in car park.
- Penalty Charge Notice vehicles parking on a pavement?
- Fly tipping
- Dropping litter
- Dog fouling
- Smoking fines
- Environmental health

The response had been circulated.

In terms of a supplementary question, it was asked how enforcement could be resourced in terms of litter and dog fouling.

In response, the Leader confirmed this would be discussed in due course.

(ii) Mr A Christie

To the Leader of the Council

In the Budget passed on the 29 February 2024 a saving was included (CS:29) Redesign of Adult Social Care of £12,600,000 of which £7,000,000 was in 24/25. Please could the Leader list, as we are past the half way stage of the financial year,

the potential areas identified for delivering this saving together with the value as well as including a copy of the detailed draft/final integrated impact assessment?

The response had been circulated.

In terms of a supplementary question, it was asked when Councillors would receive details of the savings/transformation proposals.

In response, the Leader confirmed this would be discussed once further information was available.

(iii) Mr A Graham

To the Leader of the Council

Charleston Academy has been included in the Highland Investment Plan as a "Phase One, Years 1-10 Project" with potential delivery within 3 to 5 years, subject to the availability and profiling of funding.

Can you advise of the main steps that require to be taken to progress from the project status at the date of this meeting to the award of contract to the successful bidder?

The response had been circulated.

In terms of a supplementary question, a schedule of works carried out at Charleston Academy during the 2022/23 and 2023/24 financial years, including work in relation to RAAC concrete issues was requested.

In response, the Leader confirmed that this information would be circulated.

(iv) Mrs H Crawford

To the Leader of the Council

At the continued Full Council of 30 September 2024, a majority of Highland Councillors approved Motion item 22 (3), entitled Major Electricity Development Applications and Community Engagement. Can you please confirm the anticipated timelines for implementation of the respective outstanding actions referred to in that Motion?

The response had been circulated.

There was no supplementary question.

(v) Mr M Reiss

To the Chair of Health, Social Care and Wellbeing Committee

Overnight Respite care is a vital service to some of our most needy families. This service has not been available in any practicable sense for several years in the Far North. SDS payments are not an effective alternative.

Can you provide a straightforward, cast-iron assurance to residents in Sutherland and Caithness that the Highland's Council's recent public commitment to reinstate Respite services at Thor House, Thurso or it's replacement, will include overnight care?

The response had been circulated.

There was no supplementary question.

(vi) Mr D Gregg

To the Leader of the Council

The Inverness and Ross and Cromarty access panels are listed as inactive on the council website.

Access panels provide a keyway for people with disabilities to engage with changes to their streets and towns.

Please can the council detail any actions it has taken to help reactivate either of these panels within the last 6 months?

The response had been circulated.

In terms of a supplementary question, it was asked if an update on the progress of reinstating the access panels could be added to relevant area committee agendas.

In response, the Leader confirmed that he would speak with the relevant Chairs.

(vii) Ms K Willis

To the Chair of Economy and Infrastructure

The Council is responsible for coordinating Bikeability training in Highland. Please can the Chair provide a breakdown of the number of schools and children participating in Bikeability training for each area in Highland last year, including the number of children who achieved Level 1, 2 and 3 awards.

The response had been circulated.

In terms of a supplementary question, it was asked how the Council planned to increase participation in Bikeability in Highland going forward.

In response, the Chair of Economy and Infrastructure stated that further detailed information would be shared in due course.

(viii) Mr R Mackintosh

To the Leader of the Council

Highland Council's Net Zero Strategy was launched in October last year. The Net Zero Strategy replaces the 2014 Carbon CLEVER programme and Action Plan, so when does Council plan to replace the implications section heading 'Climate Change / Carbon Clever' with 'Climate Change / Net Zero' in all Council reports?

The response had been circulated.

There was no supplementary question.

**9. Membership of Committees etc
Ballrachd Chomataidhean msaa**

As a result of the By-Elections the political make-up of the Council was as follows:-

SNP – 21 / Highland Independent – 16 / Scottish Liberal Democrats – 13 / Highland Alliance – 7 / Scottish Conservative and Unionist – 6 / Scottish Green Party – 4 / Labour – 2 / Alba – 1 / Non-Aligned - 3.

The formula in respect of the number of places on Strategic Committees was 6/4/4/2/2.

On that basis, revised Committee memberships were tabled at the meeting.

**10. Appointment of Office Bearers
Cur an Dreuchd Luchd-oifis**

The Council **AGREED** that Mr D Loudon be appointed as Chair of the Pensions Committee

**11. Appointments to Companies - Highland Opportunity (Investments) Limited
Cur an Dreuchd gu Companaidhean - Cothrom dhan Ghàidhealtachd
(Tasgaidhean) Earranta**

The Council **AGREED** that Mrs I Campbell be appointed as a new Director for Highland Opportunity (Investments) Limited.

**12. Timetable of Meetings
Clàr-ama Choinneamhan**

During discussion, the following issues were raised:

- with reference to the importance of the work of the Climate Change Committee (CCC), it was proposed that coupling the CCC with the Economy and Infrastructure Committee was not appropriate, given the significant issues considered by both. The CCC would be better paired with either the Communities and Place Committee or with the Housing and Property Committee, to facilitate proper scrutiny and discussion;
- attention was drawn to the new Audit Committee dates not being compatible with the timetables of the external auditors; and
- it was queried whether appropriate consultation had been undertaken with the Planning Applications Committee (PAC) Chairs and Planning officials on the feasibility of holding North and South PACs on consecutive days.

Mr B Lobban, seconded by Mr R Bremner, **MOVED** the Timetable of Meetings for 2025 as circulated, with the exception of the Climate Change Committee being coupled with the Communities and Place or Housing and Property Committees, this to be confirmed in due course.

Mrs T Robertson, seconded by Mrs J McEwan, moved as an **AMENDMENT** that, as the Audit Committee had reports from Auditors, some of which had statutory times for submission, the dates in the timetable did not correspond with the relevant dates and might result in late reports requiring a special meeting of the Committee. Revised dates proposed were 19 February, 19 June, 25 September and 26 November.

On a vote being taken, **MOTION** received 34 votes and the **AMENDMENT** received 24 votes, with 3 abstentions, and the **MOTION** was therefore **CARRIED**, the votes having been cast as follows:-

For the Motion: Ms S Atkin, Dr C Birt, Mr B Boyd, Mr R Bremner, Mr I Brown, Mr M Cameron, Mrs I Campbell, Mrs G Campbell-Sinclair, Mrs M Cockburn, Ms L Dundas, Ms S Fanet, Mr J Finlayson, Mr D Fraser, Mr K Gowans, Mr M Green, Mrs J Hendry, Mrs M Hutchison, Ms L Johnston, Mr R Jones, Mr S Kennedy, Ms L Kraft, Mr B Lobban, Mr D Loudon, Mr J McGillivray, Mr G MacKenzie, Mr W MacKay, Ms K MacLean, Mr T MacLennan, Mr D Millar, Mr H Morrison, Ms L Niven, Mr P Oldham, Mrs M Reid, Ms M Ross.

For the Amendment: Mr M Baird, Mr A Baldrey, Mr J Bruce, Mr A Christie, Mr S Coghill, Mrs H Crawford, Mr R Gale, Mr R Gunn, Mr J Grafton, Mr A Graham, Mr D Gregg, Dr M Gregson, Mrs B Jarvie, Mr P Logue, Ms M MacCallum, Mrs I MacKenzie, Mr A MacKintosh, Mrs J McEwan, Mr M Reiss, Mrs T Robertson, Mr K Rosie, Mrs L Sagger, Mr R Stewart, Ms K Willis.

Abstentions: Mr C Balance, Mr S Mackie, Mr R MacKintosh.

Decision

The Council:

- i. **AGREED** that a Special meeting of the:
 - a. Pensions Committee be held on 6 December 2024 at 2pm;
 - b. Highland Council be held on 12 December 2024 at 9.30am;
- ii. **APPROVED**, following a vote, the Timetable of Meetings for 2025 as circulated, with the exception of the Climate Change Committee being coupled with the Communities and Place or Housing and Property Committees, this to be confirmed in due course; and
- iii. **AGREED** to discuss with Planning Officers and the Planning Applications Committee Chairs whether it was feasible to hold North and South Planning Applications Committees on consecutive days and, if not, to reschedule them.

13. Deeds Executed Sgrìobhainnean Lagha a Bhuilicheadh

The Council **NOTED** the list of deeds and other documents executed on behalf of the Council since the meeting held on 19 September 2024.

Additional Urgent Items (14 and 15)

14. Exclusion of the Public

The Council **RESOLVED** that, under Section 50A(4) of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973, the public should be excluded from the meeting for item 15 only on the grounds that it involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraphs 6 and 9 of Part 1 of Schedule 7A of the Act.

**15. Lochaber Care Provision
Solar Cùrain - Loch Abar**

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

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

There had been circulated Report No. HC/39/24 by the Assistant Chief Executive – People.

The Council **AGREED** the recommendations as set out in the report.

**16. Notices of Motion
Brathan Glusaid**

The following Notices of Motion had been received by the Chief Officer - Legal and Corporate Governance -

(1) Since the regionalisation of local government in 1973, Community Councils form the most local tier of statutory representation in the Highland region.

Bridging the gap between the local authority and the 156 communities they represent, Community Councils provide a vital forum for putting forward local opinions and community needs.

Although the vast majority of Community Councillors make positive contributions and represent their community to a standard befitting public office, it is regrettable that the local authority must deal with infrequent incidents where that is not the case.

Despite publishing a cohesive Code of Conduct within the Highland Council's scheme of establishment, instances of improper interactions with the local authority (its elected Councillors and Staff), community groups and the general public have and will continue to arise.

When an issue of Community Councillor conduct (either collectively or as an individual) is raised, the guidance refers the matter to the Community Council to address in the first instance, with the only recourse in escalating the matter through the Ward Management structure (now Local Community Development Manager). Even where clear breaches of the Code of Conduct can be demonstrated, there is no such mechanism for the local authority to exert enforcement action.

It is evident that these isolated, but no less significant, incidents therefore present significant challenges to the cohesiveness of Community Council groups, the reputation and credibility of Community Councils with unresolved standards matters and the likelihood of members of the public putting forward their names for future consideration.

This Council therefore agrees to make representation to the Minister for Local Government, asking that Community Councillors be considered within the Ethical Standard in Public Life (Scotland) Act.

Signed: Mr S Mackie Mr A Christie Mr R Stewart Mr M Reiss

The proposer of the Motion highlighted that the Council did not have a satisfactory mechanism to adequately and transparently deal with complaints that might come from members of the public, community councillors or community councils. This applied not only to the complainant but also to those subject to a complaint. This was of no fault of the Council or officers many who were called away from their core roles to try and deal with complaints, grievances and general issues that might arise with Community Councils. Community Councillors' roles could be made more difficult when disputes and complaints could not be resolved satisfactorily. As a result, the attractiveness of the role of a Community Councillor could be diminished. It was therefore important that representation be made to the Minister for Local Government asking that this matter be addressed. It was also welcomed that the Council had an ongoing review and might well impact on its Community Council arrangements and this activity would supplement the Motion.

In discussion, there was general support for the Motion and the intent and consideration behind it was well meant. The Council was supportive of Community Councillors, who were volunteers, who did their best in contributing to the role of governance in this country. Community Councils faced several challenges in terms of membership, financial and operational sustainability and representing community views. All organisations, whether voluntary or not, required a code of conduct that had to be adhered to and a system in place that was robust when conduct undermined those basic principles.

Thereafter, the Council **APPROVED** the Motion as presented.

Transparency Statements: the undernoted Members declared connections to the following Motion 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**

- (2) This Council notes that Highland Council has been a major beneficiary of the Nature Restoration Fund (NRF), disbursing £676,000 in the last year alone to community groups, and notes that;
- Highland Council itself received over £21,000 to deliver biodiversity enhancement and habitat restoration projects such as replacing trees killed by ash dieback;
 - The nature and biodiversity crisis particularly affects rural and wildland areas such as Highland;
 - Scotland is one of the most nature-depleted countries in the world, as highlighted in the 2023 State of Nature Report, with 1 in 9 species threatened with extinction,

75% of our peatlands degraded, swift, curlew, lapwing and kestrel populations declined by more than 50% in the last 30 years;

- Action to tackle the ecological crisis and reverse biodiversity loss is urgently needed.

Whilst recognising the right of public service workers to receive a fair pay settlement, this Council therefore condemns the Scottish Government decision to divert money from this capital fund to revenue spending and asks the Council leader to write to the Cabinet Secretary to the Treasury Kate Forbes MSP to request that the Nature Restoration Funding be reinstated.

Signed: Mr C Ballance Ms K Willis

The proposer to the Motion provided a summary and highlighted that, despite a long period of austerity in the country, there were always choices to be made and, given that the Nature Restoration fund had much to offer communities in the biodiversity of the Highlands, this fund should be reinstated. An amendment to the Motion had been proposed to amend paragraph 3 which the proposer was happy to accept. Paragraph 3 would now read "*Whilst recognising the right of public service workers to receive a fair pay settlement, the Council Leader write to the Cabinet Secretary for Finance Shona Robison MSP to request that the Scottish Government consider the reinstatement of the Nature Restoration Fund as part of their December budget statement*".

In discussion, it was queried where the money would come from to fund this proposal as it was known how difficult it was to make tough choices. Also, if the Nature Restoration Fund could make Highland a more attractive place for visitors and local communities this was to be commended. The Ranger Service had ceased this year and they had done a tremendous job in terms of the natural environment in Highland. If there was any way to reinstate this service this should be supported.

Continuing, 75% of species at risk were located in the Highlands and even in urban areas there were many diverse species to be seen. Biodiversity was an essential part of our quality of life and the motion should be supported.

The Council **AGREED** the Motion as amended.

- (3) This Council notes the difficulties that can be caused when complex amendments are presented during a debate and suggests that amendments to motions should be shared with the motion proposers at least 24-48 hours before the commencement of Council meetings, so that the motion proposers have time to understand the implications and to discuss them with the amendment proposers.

Furthermore, that where motions have to be accompanied by a financial assessment and an integrated impact assessment, it is only sensible that amendments be subject to the same requirements.

Council therefore calls for the group which to consider appropriate changes to standing orders, and to recommend them to Full Council at the 2025 annual review.

Signed: Ms K Willis Mr C Ballance

The proposer of the Motion provided a summary and was happy to accept an amendment to the final sentence to read '*Council therefore calls for the Governance Review Group to consider appropriate changes to Standing Orders, and to recommend them to Full Council at the December 2025 Council meeting*'.

The Council **AGREED** the Motion as amended.

**17. 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 19 September 2024 as contained in the Volume which has been circulated separately – which were **APPROVED**.

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

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

Audit Committee	26 September 2024
Pensions Committee	9 October 2024

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

- i. Highland and Western Isles Valuation Joint Board held on 20 June 2024 (approved by the Board on 23 September 2024) which were **NOTED**;
- ii. Community Planning Partnership Board held on 5 June 2024 (approved by the Board on 20 September 2024) which were **NOTED**;
- iii. Chief Officer Recruitment Panel held on 30 September 2024 which were **NOTED**; and
- iv. * Redesign Board held on 2 October 2024 which were **APPROVED**.

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

Redesign Board, 2 October 2024

*Starred Item 4 – Customer Experience Strategy

The Council **AGREED** that the Strategy be adopted.

The meeting concluded at 2.30pm.

The Highland Council

Minutes of Meeting of the **Black Isle and Easter Ross Area Committee** held remotely on Monday 4 November 2024, at 10.30 am.

Present:

Sarah Atkin
Sinclair Coghill
Laura Dundas
Lyndsey Johnston

Derek Louden
Morven-May MacCallum
Maureen Ross

Participating Officials:

Ms H Ross, Senior Community Development Manager
Ms L Bauermeister, Community Development Manager
Ms I MacMillan, Project Manager, Climate Change and Energy
Mr A Byrne, Principal Housing Officer – East Ross
Ms F MacBain, Senior Committee Officer

Also in Attendance: Station Commander Paul Young, Scottish Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS)

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

Ms L Johnston in the Chair

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

Apologies were intimated on behalf of Tamala Collier, John Edmondson, and Maxine Smith.

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

Item 4: Mr D Louden Declaration of interest
Ms S Atkin Transparency Statement

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

There had been circulated Report No BIER/21/24 by the Local Senior Officer for Highland.

During discussion the following issues were raised:

- assurance was sought and provided that reference in the report to ‘Black Isle’ should have been to Black Isle and Easter Ross;

- the improved SFRS response rate in Fortrose was welcomed and a summary was provided of the recruitment and training situation there, including the role of on-call support services;
- information was sought and provided on home fire safety visits and the community response units;
- it was hoped more female SFRS officers would be recruited;
- Members felt Balintore station should be upgraded in light of the industrial development that was being undertaken in the area;
- once the retrofit of housing being undertaken in Balintore was completed, fire safety visits and / or education would be beneficial;
- the new fire appliance at Balintore was welcomed;
- information was sought and provided on the level of information being shared between agencies such as the SFRS and the Council's welfare team following home safety visits;
- efforts being undertaken to educate on the dangers of speeding and the prevention of road traffic collisions were summarised, with particular reference to the Biker Down programme;
- a commemorative service had been held in Fortrose on 23 June 2024 in memory of James Braidwood, described as the 'father of British firefighting';
- the engagement being undertaken with schools was welcomed; and
- clarification was sought and provided on terminology in the report, such as appliance availability and medium weight rescue pumps.

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

**4. Housing Performance Report – 1 April 2024 to 30 September 2024
Aithisg Coileanaidh Taigheadais – 1 Giblean 2024 gu 30 Sultain 2024**

Mr D Louden, as the owner of a third share of a rented property, declared an interest and left the meeting for the duration of Item 4.

Ms S Atkin declared a connection to Item 4 as her partner was a private landlord but, having applied the objective test, did not consider that she had an interest to declare.

There had been circulated Report No BIER/22/24 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Place.

During discussion the following issues were raised:

- in relation to tackling rent arrears, assurance was sought that a supportive approach was employed and that efforts were made to pursue low levels of arrears, to try to prevent tenants increasing their level of arrears to an unmanageable level. Referrals were made to the Council's welfare team, or Citizen's Advice Bureau, as appropriate. Reference was made to the possible existence of an app to assist with rent management;
- it was important to ensure housing tenants felt able to report incidences of anti-social behaviour and that a multi-agency approach was taken;
- there was significant demand for one-bed properties and it was hoped this information was provided to housing developers; and
- good working relations between Council and private landlords was beneficial to all.

The Committee **NOTED** the information provided on housing performance in the period 1 April 2024 – 30 September 2024.

5. Utilising the Great British Insulation Scheme to tackle fuel poverty in Black Isle & Easter Ross Social Housing
A' Cleachdadh Sgeama Teas-ghleidhidh Mòr Bhreatainn gus dèiligeadh ri bochdainn connaidh ann an Taigheadas Sòisealta an Eilein Duibh agus Rois an Ear

There had been circulated Report No BIER/23/24 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Place.

During discussion, the following issues were raised:

- the prioritisation of Black Isle and Easter Ross for this initiative was welcomed;
- an explanation was sought and provided of the various acronyms in the report; and
- an explanation was sought and provided on some of the eligibility criteria and, due to their complexity, people were advised to email their application for assessment, with one email address for Council tenants, and one for private tenants, both of which would be shared with the Committee after the meeting.

The Committee:

- i. **NOTED** the contents of this report; and
- ii. **AGREED** to support the development of externally funded projects and the opportunity to scale up; and
- iii. **AGREED** the email addresses to be used to check eligibility be shared with the Committee.

6. Waste Management
Stiùireadh Sgudail

This agenda note provided Members with updated information on the phased implementation of the Recycling Improvement Funded Waste and Recycling service change project.

Since the commencement in April 2024, over 90,000 household bins had been delivered, and the new service had been successful introduced into the areas

of Ross and Cromarty, Nairn, Inverness and B&S. Additionally, HC Business Waste Customers in these areas had received new recycling bins.

Black Isle and Easter Ross was the first area where service change was introduced, (April/May). A new grey 140 litre non-recyclable waste bin and silver food waste caddies were delivered to properties in food waste areas:

Muir of Ord 1251, Strathpeffer 497, Munloch 264, Avoch 531, Fortrose and Rosemarkie 1158, Culbokie 337, Invergordon 1767, Alness 2816, Dingwall 2396, Evanton 612, Maryburgh & Conon Bridge 1491, North Kessock 608.

In other non-food waste areas, a new grey 180 litre non-recyclable waste bin was provided. In all areas, the green bin was successfully changed to a mixed plastics, metals and food and drink cartons recycling bin, and the blue bin was changed to a paper, card and cardboard recycling bin.

The overall response from householders and businesses was very positive, demonstrating the communication and engagement with the public has been well received and understood.

Early data shows an encouraging reduction in non-recycling waste being sent for disposal. Since the service change, there has been a reduction of around 30% on the amount of kerbside residual waste collected in Easter Ross. A high food waste participation rate of over 70% was being achieved in areas where the service was being provided.

The Committee **NOTED** the completion of Recycling Improvement Funded (RIF) collection service changes in Black Isle and Easter Ross Area.

**7. Scottish Government Play Funding Allocation
Riarachadh Maoineachadh Cluiche Riaghaltas na h-Alba**

There had been circulated Report No BIER/24/24 by the Assistant Chief Executive - Place

The Committee **AGREED** to homologate £3,605.07 of funding to the project identified for Chapel Street Play Park, Portmahomack.

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

**a. Cromarty Common Good Fund
Maoin Math Coitcheann Chromba**

There had been circulated Report No BIER/25/24 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Place.

Information was sought on progress with East Church Hall, and this would be followed up and reported to a future Area Business meeting;

The Committee **NOTED** the position of Cromarty Common Good Fund (CCGF) as shown in the 2023/24 Quarter Two Monitoring Statement, and **AGREED** an update on East Church Hall would be provided to a future Area Business Meeting.

**b. Fortrose and Rosemarkie Common Good Fund
Maoin Math Coitcheann na Cananaich agus Ros Maircnidh**

There had been circulated Report No BIER/26/24 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Place.

The Committee **NOTED** the position of Fortrose & Rosemarkie Common Good Fund (FRCGF) as shown in the 2023/24 Quarter Two Monitoring Statement.

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

There had been circulated Report No BIER/27/24 by the Chief Officer Community and Housing, and the Chief Officer Corporate Finance.

During discussion, information was sought and provided on the measures in place to ensure community engagement was undertaken on the uses of the CGFs, along with the rules governing the CGF.

The Committee **NOTED** the Quarter 2 monitoring statement for the Invergordon Common Good Fund.

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

There had been circulated Report No BIER/28/24 by the Chief Officer Community and Housing, and the Chief Officer Corporate Finance.

During discussion, the following issues were raised:

- clarification was sought and confirmed that the Community Development Manager for the area, who was currently on leave, was the best contact for a community group interested in pursuing the construction of a pathway from Glenmorangie to Tain;
- with regard to monies that had previously been provided to the community for small projects such as a Christmas event for the elderly and for the storage of Christmas lights, it was explained that there was currently no community grants budget; and
- ongoing concern was expressed by Mr Loudon that the issue of landownership between the Council and the CGF for land at Blarliath Industrial Estate had not yet been resolved despite the information having been requested on more than one occasion. This was due to the pressure of work on the Common Good Fund officer. A brief summary was also provided of what charges for officer time were made against the CGF.

The Committee **NOTED** the Quarter 2 monitoring statement for the Tain Common Good Fund.

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

There had been circulated and was **NOTED** details of the Discretionary Budget applications that had been approved.

**10. Minutes
Geàrr-chunntas**

There had been circulated and were **NOTED** Minutes of Meeting of the Black Isle and Easter Ross Area Committee held on 5 August 2024.

The meeting ended at 12.15pm.

The Highland Council

Minutes of the Meeting of the **Nairnshire Committee** held Remotely on 4 November 2024 at 10.30am.

Present:

Mr M Green
Ms B Jarvie
Mr L Fraser
Mr P Oldham

In Attendance:

Mr M Greig, Community Development Manager, Communities and Place
Ms D Sutton, Head of Community Operations and Logistics
Mr S Manning, Principal Parking 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 M Green in the Chair

Business

1. Apologies for Absence Leisgeulan

There were no apologies for absence.

2. Declarations of Interest Foillseachaidhean Com-pàirt

There were no declarations of interest or transparency statements.

3. Good News Naidheachdan Matha

The Chair drew the Committee's attention to the following items of Good News:-

- the Nairnshire Community Newspaper had just released its second edition and was looking to employ an administrative assistant and an editor; and
- the third Nairn Common Good engagement group meeting had been a success.

During discussion the following main points were raised:-

- thanks were extended to the Yarn Bombers for their displays around Nairn and the surrounding areas;

- the Nairn Partnership Engagement Day had been successful and thanks were extended to Lynn MacNeil for organising the event;
- the Halloween events and decorations throughout the area showed great community spirit;
- the new Nairn Academy was currently being built and was on target to be completed by summer 2026; and
- attention was drawn to the different events that would be taking place for Remembrance Day.

**4. Nairn Common Good Fund – Invitation to Pay Parking Scheme
Maoin Math Coitcheann Inbhir Narann – Sgeama Cuireadh Pàigheadh
airson Parcadh**

There had been circulated Report No NC/14/24 by the Assistant Chief Executive - Place.

During discussion the following points were raised:-

- information was sought and provided on how the card processing fees were calculated, why costs had increased by more than revenue and the details of the parking services contract;
- in response to a question, it was confirmed that the current parking services contract would come to an end this year; and
- an update was sought and provided on the parking management survey.

Thereafter, the Committee **AGREED** that £5,242.00 costs incurred by the Council's Parking Enforcement Team to operate the invitation to pay parking scheme at the Nairn Common Good sites be charged against the Nairn Common Good Fund.

**5. Scottish Government Play Park Funding
Maoineachadh Phàircean-cluiche Riaghaltas na h-Alba**

There had been circulated Report No NC/15/24 by the Assistant Chief Executive - Place.

During Discussion, the following main points were raised:-

- it was good that funding had been spread throughout the town;
- the new embankment slide for the Links play area was welcomed as there was a lot of interest in this from the community;
- it was queried how much smaller the new boat in the Links play area would be compared to the current one; and
- on the point being raised it was confirmed that there would be funding available for one more year and that the £7,000 contingency could be rolled over to the following financial year.

Thereafter, the Committee **AGREED** in Ward 18 £85,000 be allocated to the agreed projects as outlined at paragraph 6.4 of the report.

**6. Nairn Common Good Fund Update
Cunntas às Ùr mu Mhaoin Math Coitcheann Inbhir Narann**

There had been circulated Report No NC/16/24 by the Assistant Chief Executive - Place

During discussion the following main points were raised:-

- the Common Good Fund was performing well, enabling up to £50,000 to be given to support the Nairn Community and Arts Centre and money to be laid aside for costal erosion works;
- it was confirmed that the status of Viewfield Stables as an alienable or inalienable asset would be for the court to decide;
- it was queried whether the most financially sound way to proceed concerning Viewfield Stables was to do nothing as it was uncertain whether anyone would wish to buy it and there would be large costs involved in renovating it; and
- further information was sought on what the costs would be to go forward with the marketing; the schedule of dilapidations was and whether Viewfield Stables formed part of the museum.

Thereafter, the Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the position of the NCGF as shown in the Quarter 2 revenue monitoring statement against the budget for 24/25; and
- ii. **AGREED** that progression to consultation for future marketing concerning Viewfield Stables be deferred to enable further information to be sought.

**7. Sandown Lands Community Food Growing – Update
Fàs Biadh Coimhearsnachd Fearann Sandown – Cunntas às Ùr**

There had been circulated Report No NC/17/24 by the Assistant Chief Executive - Place.

During discussion, the following main points were raised:

- there was no support for the Common Food Growing Area from the Common Good Fund Engagement Group or the wider community;
- this project was initiated by the previous Nairnshire Committee;
- the installation of a solar panel farm would mean that the land could not be used for anything else for at least 11 years without losing money;
- the best of the suggested ideas was the use of the land for beehives;
- for the Food Growing project to be viable there would need to be a group from the Community willing to take it forward;
- the photovoltaic (PV) panels would mean tying down the land for 10 to 15 years and there was space at the Council Depot at Balblair to put solar panels; and

- it was hard to see where the money would come from to employ two people to support a community food growing scheme.

Thereafter, the Committee:-

- NOTED** the feasibility study and its findings contained within Appendix 2 of the report;
- AGREED** not to proceed with the recommended next steps in section 7.4 of the report; and
- AGREED** not to progress to explore the installation of a PV Panel farm within the lands for income generation.

8. Nairn Public Conveniences Update – Harbour Street Toilets and Nairn Links Toilets
Cunntas às Ùr mu Ghoireasan Poblach Inbhir Narann – Taighean-beaga Sràid a’ Chalaigh agus Taighean-beaga Fighdeach Inbhir Narann

There had been circulated Report No NC/18/24 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Place

During discussion, the following main points were raised:

- the discussion of public conveniences at the Common Good Fund Engagement Group had been very helpful;
- only one standard toilet and one disabled toilet would be needed on Harbour Street and it was suggested that this should be trialled until Easter;
- more toilets were needed at the Links facilities;
- in response to a question it was confirmed that outdoor showers at the Links facilities would be accessible for the Nairn beach wheelchairs and that a foot shower would be installed next to the splash pad;
- it was queried whether a separate dog shower could be installed at the Links facility;
- on the point being raised it was confirmed that the Links public conveniences were on Common Good land and were therefore a Common Good asset even though they were managed by the Council;
- clarification was sought on what was the responsibility of the Common Good Fund and what was the responsibility of the Highland Council regarding the Links public conveniences; and
- support was shown for the suggestion of temporary toilets as a solution for Harbour Street.

Thereafter, the Committee:-

- In respect of Harbour Street Toilets:
 - NOTED** the findings of the Harbour Street Feasibility Study;
 - AGREED** next steps as outlined in section 10.1 of the report and to proceed with options 3 & 4;

- In respect of the Nairn Links Toilets:
 - iii. **NOTED** the findings of the Nairn Links Toilets;
 - iv. **AGREED** next steps as outlined in section 10.2 of the report and to proceed with option 2; and
- In respect of the Community Regeneration Funding (CRF) Funding:
 - v. **AGREED** the previous ringfenced monies from the CRF to be reallocated for other capital projects.

9. Highland Charities Trust – Allocation of Funds Urras Charthannasan na Gàidhealtachd – Riarachadh Mhaoinean

There had been circulated Report No NC/19/24 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Place.

During discussion, the following main points were raised:-

- the formation of a hardship fund was welcomed;
- this had received universal support from the Common Good Fund Engagement Group;
- clarification was requested on the criteria that would be used by the Citizens Advice Bureau for distributing the money;
- it was emphasised that this fund should be available for people throughout the Nairnshire area and not just in the Royal Burgh;
- the Citizens' Advice Bureau (CAB) was best placed to administer this fund due to their wealth of experience in this area; and
- it was requested that a report on using Common Good money to support this fund be brought to the following meeting of the Committee.

Thereafter, the Committee **AGREED**:-

- i. funds from the Nairn and Auldearn Poor Fund be allocated as a form of Hardship Fund to serve the people of Nairn and Nairnshire; and
- ii. that officers approach the CAB to administer the funds as part of the 'Peoples Pot' currently administered by CAB.

10. Ward Discretionary Budget Buidseat Fo Ùghdarras Uàird

The Committee **NOTED** the following Ward Discretionary Fund payment that had been approved since the previous meeting of this Committee:-

- Green Hive – Nairn Trike Project - £1,516
- Brent Centre Highlands – Sport and Thought Highlands - £1000

During discussion, in response to a question, it was clarified that there was approximately £6,000 left in the fund and one application pending.

11. Minutes
Geàrr-chunntas

The Committee **NOTED** the Minutes of the Meeting of the Nairnshire Committee held on 5 August 2024 which had been approved by the Council on 19 September 2024.

The meeting ended at 11.50am.

The Highland Council

Minutes of Meeting of the **Housing and Property Committee** held in the Council Chamber, Council Headquarters, Glenurquhart Road, Inverness on **Wednesday 6 November 2024** at 10.30 am.

Present:

Ms S Atkin	Mr R Mackintosh
Mr B Boyd (Remote)	Ms A MacLean
Mr R Bremner (Remote)	Mr D Macpherson
Mr I Brown	Ms J McEwan (Remote)
Mr L Fraser	Mr C Munro (Remote)
Mr A Graham	Mr P Oldham (substitute)
Mr M Gregson	Mr R Stewart (Remote)
Mrs I Mackenzie (Remote)	

Non-Members also present:

Mr J Finlayson (Remote)	Mrs M Paterson (Remote)
Ms M Hutchison (Remote)	Mrs T Robertson (Remote)
Mrs B Jarvie (Remote)	Ms M Ross
Mr B Lobban	

Tenant Representatives in Attendance:

Ms L Richardson, Tenant Representative
Mr A Dick, Tenant Representative
Mr D Paterson, Tenant Representative
Ms M Anderson, Tenant Representative

Officials in Attendance:

Ms A Clark, Chief Officer – Housing and Communities
Mr F MacDonald, Chief Officer – Property and Assets
Mr B Cameron, Strategic Lead - Housing & Building Maintenance
Mr R Campbell, Service Lead – Capital Planning & Estate Strategy
Ms H Cameron, Housing Development Manager
Ms H Chisholm, Housing Policy Officer
Mrs L Dunn, Joint Democratic Services Manager
Ms A Macrae, 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.**

Ms S Atkin in the Chair

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

Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of Mrs G Campbell-Sinclair, Mr R Jones, Mr D McDonald and Ms L Niven.

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

There were no declarations of interest or transparency statements.

Item 12: Mr M Gregson – Transparency Statement.

3. **Good News Naidheachdan Matha**

The Committee **NOTED** the good news as circulated and that an update on the Action Plan and next steps arising from the Highland Housing Summit would be provided to the Members briefing on 21 November 2024.

4. **Housing Revenue Account (HRA) and Non-HRA Budget Monitoring Statement to 30 September 2024 Aithris Sgrùdaidh Buidseat Cunntas Teachd-a-steach Taigheadais agus Cunntas Teachd-a-steach Neo-thaigheadais gu 30 Sultain 2024**

There had been circulated Report No HP/21/24 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Place.

In discussion, Members raised the following main points:-

- an assurance was sought and provided that the Service's budgets had been fully loaded into the new financial system and there was the ability to monitor spend against budget;
- in response to questions, confirmation that Members would be provided with a breakdown of spend on Supervision and Management, Other Costs and homelessness and consideration given to the level of detail provided in future reports;
- concern at the pressure on staff due to staff vacancies and noting that Members would be issued with a list of current vacancies by post title once the service establishment check had been completed and confirmation of the activity to fill these posts;
- confirmation was sought and provided that the potential to include spend on central administration and loan charges during the course of the year would be considered;
- noting that the Service had a good track record on the average time taken to complete adaptations from the date of referral, and the level of budget ring-fenced for this purpose;
- it would be helpful for Members to be provided with updates by ward, where appropriate, on the ongoing Resettlement support being provided in Highland; and
- reference to the response rate to the previous annual rent consultation and that local Members encourage tenants to participate in the next consultation.

Thereafter, the Committee:

- i. **APPROVED** the budget position on the Housing Revenue Account and Non-Housing Revenue Account 2024/25 for the period to 30 September 2024; and

- ii. **NOTED** that Members would be provided with a (a) breakdown of spend on Supervision and Management, Other Costs and homelessness; (b) list of current vacancies by post title and confirmation of the activity to fill these posts; and (c) updates by ward, where appropriate, on the Resettlement support being provided.

5. Property & Facilities Management Services Revenue Monitoring Statement to 30 September 2024
Aithris Sgrùdaidh Teachd-a-steach Sheirbheisean Rianachd Cuid-seilbh & Ghoireasan gu 30 Sultain 2024

There had been circulated Report No HP/22/24 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Place.

In discussion, Members raised the following main points:-

- further clarity was sought and provided on the impact of fee-earning staff vacancies on annual income targets and the work being done to review targets and the income multiplier to improve on the predicted year end position;
- in response to a query, confirmation that the Council's estate was valued on a rolling five year programme and this took account of investment in buildings such as energy improvements;
- concern at there being insufficient contractor capacity to deliver new housing development and the volume of projects in the Highland Investment Plan going forward particularly given other major developments in the area such as the Inverness and Cromarty Firth Green Freeport;
- in regard to the above, the need for a collective approach with partners, agencies, and private sector was emphasised. Officers had also commenced dialogue with external suppliers in terms of procurement going forward;
- an explanation was sought and provided on the underspend shown on the CCFM budget, the impact of recruitment challenges and sickness absence and the ongoing work with the Education Service to improve the service going forward;
- an update was sought and provided on progress with the new CCFM model of delivery and plans to provide more support to Head Teachers, as responsible premises officers;
- in response to a query, it was explained the potential for a trusted keyholder option was being considered where challenges existed in gaining access to Council facilities and more detail would be provided in a future report;
- an update was sought and provided on the establishment of the Highland Property Partnership which included external partners. A meeting was to be held on 18 November 2024 and details of the outcome would be provided to a future Committee;
- an assurance that consultation would be undertaken with Members and communities affected by asset rationalisation and the change of use of any buildings;
- in response to a query, further clarification was provided on the negative figure shown for other costs under the technical design and projects budget and that further detail could be provided to Mr A Graham if required and

- concerns were expressed at the cost of hiring Council facilities and sports pitches and the impact on community groups and organisations. The Chair proposed that more detailed information on school lets by Associated School Group be provided to a future Committee and afterwards a Member briefing be arranged on this issue.

Thereafter, the Committee **NOTED**:

- i. the position for the second quarter of the 2024/25 financial year, and the predicted year-end position;
- ii. that the budget gap might change positively or negatively depending on the application of expenditure and recruitment controls, filling fee earning posts in an extremely challenging job market, adjusting services to meet previously agreed budget savings; in-year income recovery, and identifying new income and procurement opportunities; and
- iii. the progress update provided in relation to corporate budget savings delivery.

The Committee also **AGREED** that more detailed information on school lets by Associated School Group be provided to a future Committee and thereafter a Member briefing be arranged on this issue.

6. Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Capital Monitoring Report Monitoring Report to 30 September 2024
Aithisg Sgrùdaidh Calpa Cunntas Teachd-a-steach Taigheadais gu 30 Sultain 2024

There had been circulated Report No HP/23/24 by the by the Assistant Chief Executive – Place.

In discussion, Members raised the following main points:-

- an explanation was sought and provided on the level of grant funding provided by the Scottish Government and strategic approach taken in respect of individual open market purchases;
- confirmation was sought and provided that the planned delivery of 189 Council houses by 31 March 2025 remained on target;
- concern was expressed at the impact of construction industry conditions including labour and material shortages on tender returns and how this was being addressed. In response, a detailed summary was provided on the mitigating actions being undertaken in response to the challenges;
- the importance of building the right type and mix of new affordable housing so it was adaptable from early to later life and the need to consider housing solutions for all ages going forward. In response, an explanation was provided on the approach taken with partners to deliver an appropriate mix of housing to meet the need in locations. This issue was also addressed in the Highland Housing Challenge; and
- the importance of arrangements being put in place for the maintenance of open spaces in new housing developments, specific concern being raised in respect of Achmore Court, Inverness. It was confirmed that officers would liaise with the local Members on this issue.

Thereafter, the Committee **APPROVED** the budget position on the Housing Revenue Account Capital Programme 2024/25 to 30 September 2024.

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

There had been circulated Report No HP/24/24 by the by the Assistant Chief Executive – Place.

In discussion, Members raised the following main points:-

- an assurance was sought and provided that work was ongoing to identify the internal and external resources required to deliver the Capital Programme going forward;
- officers be thanked for the improvement works undertaken to St Clement's School, Dingwall;
- the need to celebrate the Council's achievements and good work in delivering projects such as new housing developments and schools;
- every measure be taken to ensure business as usual could be maintained at the Charleston Community Complex as the works at Kinmylies Primary Nursery were progressed;
- in response to a query, reference was made to the full condition survey being carried out to the Inverness Leisure Centre and Aquadome to identify the refurbishment works required going forward;
- concern that at the further delay on the Broadford Primary School project and that the timescales for the project had been unrealistic and querying who would take responsibility if the Scottish Government did not grant a funding extension for the project;
- it was important to recognise the excellent work of the stakeholder group in taking the Broadford Primary School project forward and that Members undertake scrutiny of the project based on the facts as presented to the Committee;
- an update was sought and provided on the works being undertaken at Nairn Academy to ensure it continued to be operational and safe;
- confirmation was sought that the opportunities to support staff to work across the wider Highland area would be considered in more detail; and
- the ongoing works to improve the Gypsy/Traveller site at Longman Park, Inverness be welcomed and potential for local Members to visit the site once the project was completed be considered.

Thereafter, the Committee **NOTED**:

- i. the capital monitoring position at the end of the second quarter of the 2024/25 financial year, the estimated year-end position and the main financial variances outlined in the report;
- ii. the current position regarding the delivery of the works programmes and the individual projects referred to in the report;
- iii. that the outcome of the options appraisal exercise for the provision of staff housing on Rum would be reported to the next meeting of this Committee; and
- iv. the current position on the remedial works underway at Charleston Academy and Nairn Academy.

**8. Service Performance Monitoring Report – Q2 2024/25
Aithisg Sgrùdaidh Coileanadh Seirbheis – R2 2024/25**

There had been circulated Report No HP/25/24 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Place.

In discussion, Members raised the following main points:

- in response to a query, confirmation that more clarity would be provided on the performance information for Renewable Energy generated per annum under Property and Facilities Management;
- confirmation was sought and provided that the next report to the Committee would include information on the strategies being progressed in relation to staff absences;
- in response to a query, a summary was provided on the ongoing work to make more information publicly available and confirmation the next report to the Committee would include further information on the nature of the Freedom of Information requests being received.

The Committee **NOTED** the Service's performance information and that the next report to the Committee would include further information on the:

- i. strategies being progressed in relation to staff absences; and
- ii. nature of the Freedom of Information requests being received.

**9. Housing Performance Report 1 April 2024 - 30 September 2024
Aithisg Choileanaidh Taigheadais 1 Giblean 2024 – 30 Sultain 2024**

There had been circulated Report No HP/26/24 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Place.

In discussion, Members raised the following main points:

- re-let times continued to be a matter of concern and a major issue nationally and reference to the need to balance using in house staff and external contractors in terms of the impact on performance and the repairs budget;
- noting the impact on re-let times due to delays caused by utility companies was a national issue and had been raised at COSLA and Scottish Government level and with OFGEM;
- concern in relation to the level of rent arrears and an assurance that the focus continued to be on early intervention and raising awareness of the support available to tenants from the Council and other agencies;
- the impact on rent arrears due to the migration of tenants on legacy benefits and tax credits to Universal Credit at 31 March 2024;
- confirmation that a breakdown of the percentage of emergency and non-emergency repairs that were rechargeable to the tenants would be provided directly to Mr R Stewart;
- highlighting that performance on both emergency and non-emergency repairs was significantly better than the national benchmarking average;
- it would be helpful for local Members to be kept up to date on the longer term voids within their wards. It was confirmed this information would be provided directly to Mr I Brown;

- highlighting that further performance information by Council Ward could be found on the Council's Intranet ward reporting pages; and
- concern at the impact of rising costs, particularly energy costs, on working tenants and the level of rent arrears and for this to be taken into account when installing new heating systems.

Thereafter, the Committee **NOTED** the information provided on Housing performance in the period 1 April 2024 to 30 September 2024.

10. Strategic Housing Investment Plan 2025–2030
Plana Ro-innleachdail Tasgadh Taigheadais 2025–2030

There had been circulated Report No HP/27/24 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Place.

In discussion, Members raised the following issues:

- further clarity was sought and provided on the new key worker policy statement developed by officers and partners which focused on supporting communities;
- the importance of families within communities also being recognised, as the informal care provided to relatives enabled them to remain at home, saving Council and NHS Highland resources;
- a proactive approach be taken to delivering housing where private development was not economically viable, reference being made to a Fife Council initiative to build mid-market properties for sale or rent;
- it was important to ensure existing housing occupied by tenants who were elderly, immobile or with health conditions met their needs;
- the next update on the Strategic Housing Investment (SHIP) should reference the overall plans in respect of the Highland Housing Challenge;
- how the Council was going to meet the challenge associated with the current high build costs per Council house unit in delivering the new affordable housing programme;
- it was clear the Council could not meet the challenges on its own and there had to be consideration of every type of tenure, collaborative partnerships and other sources of funding to increase the housing supply;
- the collaborative and inter agency working and achievements to date in delivering affordable housing and in the mid-market sector be recognised;
- the potential for former retail land and property to be brought into public use for housing be explored and reference to successes in Inverness City Centre in this regard;
- further clarification was sought and provided that all properties were built to varying needs standards to cater for the vast majority of people for the duration of their lives; and
- in response to a query, further clarity was provided on the framework and process in place for using compulsory purchase orders to acquire sites for affordable housing.

The Chair advised that many of the above issues had been raised at the Highland Housing Summit and there would be the opportunity for further discussion at the Members briefing on 21 November 2024. She also advised that it was hoped major developments in the area such as the Inverness and Cromarty Firth Green Freeport would retain young people in the area and help balance the population.

Ms L Robertson, Tenants Representative advised that the universal message arising from national housing events and summits was that every home needed to be accessible and adaptable. Social housing was important in tackling poverty and exclusion and she referred to the potential to lobby the Scottish Government to allow local authorities to raise income through a reformed Council tax to build the homes required in communities.

Thereafter, the Committee:

- i. **APPROVED** the Strategic Housing Investment Plan attached as Appendix 1 to the report, for submission to the Scottish Government in draft form pending consideration by Area Committees; and
- ii. **AGREED** the indicative planned investment programme to 2030 contained in Appendix 2 to the report, subject to further discussion by Area Committees.

11. Delivery Plan Budget Monitoring & Progress Update: Reconfiguring Our Assets – Affordable Housing and Net Zero: Energy Efficient Homes Sgrùdadh Buidseat Plana Libhrigidh & Cunntas air Adhartas: Ag Ath-rèiteach na So-mhaoin Againn – Taigheadas Neo-chosgail agus Neoni Lom: Dachannan Lùth-èifeachdach

There had been circulated Report No HP/28/24 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Place.

In discussion, Members raised the following main points:

- in response to a query, it was confirmed Mr D Macpherson would be provided with details of progress with the roll out of LED street lighting;
- in response to a query, further clarity was provided on how the Social Value Charter for renewables would be advanced to ensure maximum benefit to the affordable housing programme;
- confirmation was sought and provided that a review would be undertaken of the level of support provided to tenants following the installation of new heating systems;
- noting that a range of factors that impacted on the affordability of a heating system including the significant increase in electricity tariffs. Individual tenants experiencing difficulties with their bills be encouraged to contact the Housing Team in the first instance;
- the potential for the Council to test the performance of air source heating systems in terms of value for money. It was explained that case studies had been done on performance levels linked in with whole house retrofit and further details were provided in this regard;
- the opportunity to make ongoing design improvements to new housing development and confirmation a specific issue with fire alarms at Joe Yates Court, Dingwall would be investigated;
- in terms of key risks, confirmation that Mrs A Maclean would be provided with further detail on work being undertaken to assess the space standards and specifications of newbuilds; and
- the consideration being given to a small modular contract to test this particular product in terms of cost and quality be welcomed.

Thereafter, the Committee **NOTED**:

- i. the progress provided in the Programme and Project updates in the report; and
- ii. that the Deliver Affordable Housing Project would be updated to reflect the outcomes and actions as a result of the Highland Housing Summit.

12. Annual Assurance Statement 2024 Aithris Bharantais Bhliadhnaile 2024

Transparency Statement: Mr M Gregson made a Transparency Statement in respect of this item on the grounds his brother in law was a member of the Scottish Regulatory Framework Committee and was an adviser to the Scottish Government for the energy efficiency standards for Scottish housing. 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 HP/29/24 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Place.

In discussion, Members raised the following issues:

- an explanation was sought and provided on the engagement undertaken in relation to the Customer Satisfaction Survey, the challenges in getting new and younger tenants to participate and the need to adapt to tenant feedback on their preferred method of engagement;
- in regard to the above, further consideration would be given to how to more proactively engage with new tenants; and
- an explanation was sought and provided on the reasons for the grading and progress being made in respect of compliance with the Scottish Housing Quality Standard.

Thereafter, the Committee heard from the Ms L Richardson, Tenant Representative on Tenants Together Scotland's lobbying activity in relation to tenant participation and design of the tenant satisfaction survey to better capture the views of tenants. She also raised a number of fire safety and accessibility concerns on behalf of disabled and older tenants.

It was confirmed that ongoing discussions on the issues raised would continue to be taken forward with tenant representatives and Members.

Thereafter, the Committee **APPROVED** the Annual Assurance Statement for 2024 detailed in Appendix 1 of the report.

13. Property Revenue Maintenance Programme Update 2024-25 Cunntas às Ùr mu Phrògram Gleidhidh Teachd-a-steach Seilbhe 2024–25

There had been circulated Report No HP/30/24 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Place.

In discussion, Members raised the following main points:

- reference to the benefits and greater clarity the new Single Property Service would deliver for Members and the Committee;

- further clarity was sought and provided on the budget allocated to the Single Property Service, the process for this being prioritised across the Council's estate and reference to the additionality and enhanced facilities that would be delivered by Highland Investment Plan; and
- the importance of ensuring the Responsible Premises Officers issued the appropriate fire safety and drill information in Council premises where partners were co-located.

Thereafter, the Committee **NOTED** the:

- i. budget categories for the Property Revenue Maintenance budget;
- ii. budget position for the second quarter of the 2024/25 financial year; and
- iii. year-end balanced budget, being forecast.

14. Asset Rationalisation Update 2024-25
Cunntas às Ùr mu Chuibhreannachadh So-mhaoin 2024–25

There had been circulated Report No HP/32/24 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Place.

In discussion, Members raised the following main points:

- confirmation was sought and provided that an update would be provided to local Members on the deliverables and benefits the Caithness Demonstrator project was achieving. This would include options for the future use of the Wick Library and community views on this issue;
- in response to a query, confirmation that further details would be provided to a ward business meeting on the status of the former Finance Office, Nairn and proposals for the Nairn Depot;

Thereafter, the Committee **NOTED** the progress on the asset rationalisation workstreams.

15. Tenant Participation and Engagement Update
Cunntas às Ùr mu Chom-pàirteachadh Mhàladairean

There had been circulated Report No HP/33/24 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Place.

In discussion, Members heard from Mr D Paterson, Tenants Representative in relation to this item. Thereafter, the following main points were raised:

- the tenant representatives be commended on the level of volunteering and commitment they provided to their communities;
- the potential to refresh the 'rate your estate' initiative involving local housing officers, Members, tenants and residents;
- the 'rate your estate' initiative continued to be active in Caithness and further details were provided on the benefits of this approach;
- the potential to have an environmental improvement budget line in next year's budget for housing estates to enable improvements to be undertaken at a ward level;
- noting that a percentage of the Area HRA Capital budget could be allocated towards environmental improvements to reflect tenant priorities; and

- the process of feeding in tenant views to budget planning in terms of priorities would be a positive step.

Thereafter, Members heard from Ms L Richardson, Tenant Representative on improving accessibility to the tenant consultation process and being mindful of those with disabilities and visual impairments and where English was not their first language.

Thereafter, the Committee:-

- APPROVED** the Tenant Participation & Engagement Strategy 2024-2029 as detailed in Appendix 1 of the report, subject to agreed amendment at sign-off meetings of the Tenant Working Group in November and December 2024; and
- NOTED** the ongoing activities and commitment to tenant engagement demonstrated by tenant volunteers and officers.

16. Update on Resettlement and Humanitarian Programme Fios às Ùr mun Phrògram Ath-shuidheachaidh agus Daonnachdail

There had been circulated Report No HP/34/24 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Place.

In discussion, Members commended the Resettlement Team, officers, schools, partners, third sector and other organisations and communities for the level of support provided. The refugees and displaced persons who had settled in the Highlands had brought huge benefits to their communities and schools and it was anticipated more people would require to be resettled in future and it was hoped they would be welcomed.

Thereafter, the following main points were raised:

- confirmation was sought and provided that the Council was fully funded for the resettlement and humanitarian schemes;
- the importance of positive messages being communicated to communities in relation to the resettlement of refugees and displaced persons and the fact local Members had a key role in this regard;
- an assurance was sought and provided in relation to resettlement of Afghan families in transitional accommodation at Cameron Barracks, Inverness; and
- confirmation was sought and provided that ward updates would be provided as appropriate on the resettlement and humanitarian support being provided.

The Committee **NOTED** the efforts made by Council Services, partner agencies and communities in delivering services to households requiring resettlement and humanitarian support and that ward updates would be provided as appropriate.

The meeting was closed at 2.25pm.

The Highland Council

Minutes of Meeting of the **Climate Change Committee** held in the Council Chamber, Council Headquarters, Glenurquhart Road, Inverness on Thursday 7 November 2024 at 10.30 am.

Present:

Ms S Atkin	Mr P Logue
Mr J Bruce (remote)	Mr D Louden (remote)
Mrs I Campbell (remote)	Mr R MacKintosh
Ms S Fanet (Chair)	Ms L Niven (remote)
Mr J Grafton	Ms M Ross (remote)
Mr A Graham	Ms K Willis (Vice Chair)

Non-Members also present:

Mr M Baird (remote)	Mr S Coghill (remote)
Dr C Birt	Mr D Millar (remote)

In attendance:

Mr N Osborne, Climate Change and Energy Team Manager
Ms S Barrie, Service Lead – Design and Construction
Mr A Hunter, Service Lead – Transport and Logistics
Mr B Cameron, Strategic Lead – Housing and Building Maintenance
Mr R Macdonald, Energy Manager (remote)
Ms F Daschofsky, Net Zero Project Manager
Ms I MacMillan, Project Manager
Mr S Miller, Project Manager
Mr J Perry, Project Manager (remote)
Ms F Conti, Category Manager – Procurement (remote)
Mr A Fraser, Principal Engineer
Ms R Burbaite, Climate Change Coordinator
Mr A Morgan, Climate Change Coordinator
Ms C Weaver, Climate Change Co-ordinator
Ms M Murray, Principal Committee Officer
Mrs O Marsh, 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.

Ms S Fanet in the Chair

Business

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

An apology for absence was intimated on behalf of Dr M Gregson.

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

There were no Declarations of Interest or Transparency Statements.

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

The Chair informed the Committee of the following items of good news:-

- the Scottish Government had approved the Energy Efficient Scotland: Area Based Scheme grant funding which would allow works to commence to privately owned and privately rented properties;
- the Energy Efficient Scotland: Area Based Scheme had been nominated at the National Energy Efficiency Awards for Multi-Measure Project of the Year, where the project had received Special Commendation;
- the Council's Energy Efficient Scotland: Area Based Scheme had been shortlisted as a finalist for The Scottish Green Energy Awards in two award categories: Outstanding Project Award and Carbon Reduction Award. The Awards would take place in December; and
- the Climate Change and Energy Team had been nominated for Best Local Authority EV Charging Scheme at the National Transport & Energy Awards to be held on 21 November. Climate Change and Energy Team Project Manager, Rachael Anderson, had also been nominated in the Rising Star category at the Awards for the project management work undertaken to deliver Highland Council's EV infrastructure network.

The Committee **NOTED** the good news.

4. **Net Zero Programme Update** **Cunntas às Ùr mu Phrògram Neoni Lom**

There had been circulated Report No CCC/19/24 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Place.

During discussion, the following main points were raised:-

- the importance of building the Net Zero agenda into everything the Council did was emphasised, and information was sought, and provided, as to whether the Net Zero, Energy Investment and Innovation Portfolio Board had been engaging with the Climate Change and Energy Team to progress embedding Net Zero into the Council's Capital Programme, and the implications of the delay in that regard in terms of developing next year's budget;
- in relation to the target of five proposed projects for inclusion in the Net Zero Programme being brought to each meeting of the Climate Change Committee for consideration, it was queried whether seven projects would be brought to the next meeting given only three had been presented to today's meeting;
- with regard to the Kingussie Flood Protection project, much of the downstream flooding related to what was happening in the upper catchment, and information was sought, and provided, as to whether there had been any discussions with the Estate regarding implementing nature-based solutions further upstream. Other Members voiced their support for the use of nature-based solutions, commenting

that when flooding took place people tended to look at “big pipe” solutions, but upstream solutions could be more sustainable. There were opportunities for woodland creation or management, as well as for Scottish Government funding for peatland restoration. The Climate Change and Energy Team Manager undertook to pick up the points raised with colleagues in the Planning, Land Use and Environment Team;

- information was sought, and provided, on whether all Learning Estate Investment Programme projects would be designed and built to Passivhaus Standard; progress in respect of the Solar PV Council Estate project; the impact of government grant funding on the Energy Efficient Homes programme of works; and the identification of responsible officers in respect of the thematic groups;
- the ongoing work in Balintore in terms of the Energy Efficient Homes projects was welcomed;
- in response to a question, it was explained that data on area-wide emissions was being collated by the Climate Intelligence Service, and a report in that regard would be presented to a future meeting of the Committee. It was estimated that local authority emissions accounted for 2-3% of emissions in Highland; and
- in relation to waste management, reference was made to reports of issues with paper and cardboard collections, and it was queried whether monitoring was taking place to enable changes to be made as the rollout of the new waste and recycling collection arrangements continued. In that regard, the Net Zero Project Manager undertook to liaise with Waste Management officers and circulate a response;

The Committee:-

- i. scrutinised and **NOTED** progress to date as outlined in the report and Appendix 1 of the report; and
- * ii. **AGREED TO RECOMMEND** to Council the approval of the project brief templates in Appendix 2 of the report for inclusion in the Council’s Net Zero Action Plan.

5. Net Zero Thematic Group Update – Built Estate and Energy Cunntas à Ùr mu Bhuidheann Chuspaireil Neoni Lom – Oighreachd Thogte agus Lùth

There had been circulated Report No CCC/20/24 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Place.

During discussion, the following main points were raised:-

- in response to questions, it was confirmed that Net Zero and energy surveys were underway across the Council’s non-domestic estate. There was a two-year programme in respect of the first 300 buildings, and it was intended to bring a report in that regard to the next meeting of the Committee;
- in relation to the options appraisals to be carried out at six properties to determine how the heating systems could be converted to fossil fuels, it was queried what non-fossil fuels were being considered. With regard to Fortrose Academy in particular, an assurance was sought, and provided, that the heating system would be factored into any future investment programme;
- in relation to the Heating Policy, information was sought, and provided, on the plans for wider communication going forward; and

- with reference to the Scottish Government's consultation on "Building Regulations: Determining the principles for a Scottish equivalent to the Passivhaus Standard", the need for a Scottish equivalent was questioned and further information was sought, and provided, on what was being proposed.

The Committee otherwise **NOTED** the progress of actions by the Built Estate and Energy Thematic Group.

**6. Net Zero Thematic Group Update – Sustainable Business Travel
Cunntas às Ùr mu Bhuidheann Chuspaireil Neoni Lom – Siubhal Gnothachais Seasmhach**

There had been circulated Report No CP/20/24 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Place, which had been considered by the Communities and Place Committee on 5 September 2024.

During discussion, the following main points were raised:-

- it would be helpful to provide a breakdown of business travel emissions between staff and Elected Members. Much of the travel by Members was commuting to Committee meetings from around Highland, and it would be useful to know how much of it was being done in private vehicles, how many electric vehicles (EVs) were being used, was public transport being used etc, to try to implement behaviour change. It was also queried how many Members used Car Club. In response, it was confirmed that a breakdown could be provided and would be included in the next Sustainable Business Travel update. Officers would also look at Member input into the Sustainable Business Travel Thematic Group;
- in relation to Car Club, whilst mileage had decreased, emissions had gone up, and information was sought, and provided, as to the reasons and how it could be addressed;
- reference was made to the Hi-Bike e-bike schemes in Fort William and Inverness, and it was queried whether there could be a subsidy for staff and Members to encourage them to use the e-bikes to get around town rather than using a car. Officers undertook to link in with the Active Travel team in that regard, and it was confirmed that a proposal was being taken to the Sustainable Business Travel Thematic Group regarding the possibility of building the pool of e-bikes within the Council fleet;
- in relation to Council fleet replacement, the inclusion of both hydrogen and electric vehicles was welcomed, and information was sought, and provided, on what evaluation was taking place ahead of funding becoming available and whether the Council was looking at what other local authorities, such as Aberdeen City Council, were doing;
- it was queried whether consideration was being given to broadening public transport;
- in response to a question, it was confirmed that there was a Liftshare Scheme for both staff and Members, and officers would look at how it could be better promoted;
- there was a balance to be achieved between reducing business travel emissions and the need for Members to attend meetings and be out in their communities;
- clarification was sought, and provided, as to what the Pathfinder 2 project encompassed, and the expected outturn in terms of the cost for charging an EV;

- with reference to the high lease costs and rapid depreciation associated with EVs, information was sought, and provided, as to whether consideration had been given to purchasing used EVs;
- the importance of responsible use of EV chargers was emphasised, and reference was made to instances of Council vehicles being left plugged into a charger for a significant length of time. There was a reputational risk to the Council if staff were not setting an example in terms of how chargers were used, and information was sought, and provided, on what training was available to staff and who was responsible for ensuring Council vehicles were charged appropriately; and
- grey fleet miles were increasing since a low during the Covid pandemic, and information was sought, and provided, on whether there was a strategy for slowing the increase or had it been accepted that grey fleet usage would increase as Council fleet usage reduced.

The Committee otherwise **NOTED** the report.

7. Climate Change Performance Monitoring Report Q2 2024/25
Aithisg Sgrùdadh Coileanaidh Atharrachadh Gnàth-shìde R2 2024/25

There had been circulated Report No CCC/21/24 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Place.

During discussion, information was sought, and provided, on a number of points including whether the action to develop a vision and strategy to embed the circular economy into the Council's operations had been completed; Carbon Literacy training and how the red RAG rating could be improved; the actions that had been due to complete in the second quarter of 2024/25; and the actions relating to progressing live sustainability software to allow measuring of engagement, options appraisals for sites for energy saving interventions, and the development of solar panel installations performance data.

The Committee scrutinised and **NOTED** the performance information for the Climate Change function.

8. Annual Report under Public Bodies Climate Change Duties 2023/24
Aithisg Bhliadhnaile fo Dhleastanasan Atharrachadh Gnàth-shìde nam Buidhnean Poblach 2023/24

There had been circulated Report No CCC/22/24 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Place.

During discussion, the following main points were raised:-

- information was sought, and provided, as to whether High Life Highland (HLH) building operations could be reported separately for additional scrutiny, and whether the Net Zero culture shift was being spread to all partner organisations;
- whilst the in-house bus service had been a success for the Council and local communities, it had increased overall Council emissions;
- in relation to reducing electricity-related emissions, it was questioned whether the methodology might have been altered if the trading model had been changed to a zonal or nodal model as opposed to one UK wholesale market for electricity. In

Highland, wind and hydro-electric were used most of the time and there were no emissions being generated;

- information was sought, and provided, on how the Council was going to start reducing the annual percentage reduction as it was still on an upward trajectory and becoming increasingly out of reach; and
- as the national targets had recently changed, and the interim targets of 2030 and 2040 no longer applied, it was queried what impact this would have on the Council's approach and profile of reductions.

The Committee:-

- AGREED** the Highland Council's draft Public Bodies Climate Change Duties Report 2023/24 as set out in Appendix 1 of the report;
- AGREED** to delegate authority to the Assistant Chief Executive – Place to sign the declaration in Part 6e and submit the Report by 30 November 2024; and
- NOTED** progress against the organisation's emissions reductions targets.

9. Strategic Approach to Climate Change Adaptation Dòigh-obrach Ro-innleachdail a Thaobh Freagarrachadh do dh'Atharrachadh Gnàth-shìde

There had been circulated Report No CCC/23/24 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Place.

During discussion, the following main points were raised:-

- thanks were expressed for the report and the work that was taking place;
- the recent tragic events in Spain due to climate change were a reminder that changes were coming and there was a need to adapt. The more adaptation was delayed the more costly it would be for future Councils and governments, and the need to increase awareness was emphasised;
- reference was made to the potential negative effects of energy installations, such as wind turbine blades shedding small amounts of plastic into the environment, and it was queried how broadly such installations were being looked at;
- in response to a question regarding the integrated impact assessment, it was explained that, whilst climate change itself had a negative impact, the Adaptation Strategy and Action Plan would have a positive impact on socio-economic disadvantage;
- whilst it was appreciated that adaptation was important, concern was expressed that it detracted from the need for mitigation and the reduction of emissions and gave people a false sense of security. It was also felt that wider consideration should be given to other impacts such as changes in the Gulf Stream, ocean sea levels and coastal erosion. With regards to coastal erosion, it was confirmed that a coastal change adaptation plan was being produced by the Council, which it was anticipated would be available in the new year and would feed into the overall Adaptation Strategy;
- the report cited a reduced need for wintertime heating as a positive climate change impact, but this was possibly inaccurate given Scotland was potentially going to become so cold it would be uninhabitable in the future;
- it was questioned how the cost figures in section 6.2 of the report had been calculated;

- in response to a question, it was confirmed that the proposed Members' workshop would take place in the new year; and
- it was highlighted that in 2023 one Council ward had suffered four landslides which had closed roads, three on the same road on the same day, and concern was expressed that Highland would see more incidents like this in the future due to climate change.

The Committee **NOTED**:-

- the contents of the report; and
- that the Climate Change Adaptation Strategy and Action Plan would be brought to the Climate Change Committee for consideration, prior to full Council approval and publication.

10. The Local Heat and Energy Efficiency Strategy (LHEES) Delivery Plan Update Cunntas às Ùr mu Phlana Lìbhrigidh na Ro-innleachd Teas agus Lùth-èifeachdais Ionadail

There had been circulated Report No CCC/24/24 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Place.

Members welcomed the following initiatives and targets: community energy to increase by 100% in generation capacity by 2030; the aim to expand solar assets across the Council's non-domestic estate; and the exploration of opportunities to invest in utility-scale solar, battery energy, onshore and offshore wind energy. The indicative Heat Network zones and the fabric-first approach were also welcomed.

The Committee:-

- NOTED** progress to date;
- * **AGREED TO RECOMMEND** that the Council approve the draft LHEES Delivery Plan Strategic Approach set out at Appendix 1 of the report, and the draft Delivery Plan contained in Appendix 2 of the report.

11. Innovation Funding Maoineachadh Innleachdach

There had been circulated Report No CCC/25/24 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Place.

During discussion, the following main points were raised:-

- it having been queried how much funding had been lost by exiting the European Union (EU), it was confirmed that, following a transitional period when the UK had not been eligible, the EU Horizon funding stream was now back online;
- congratulations were expressed to officers for securing the funding already brought in from successful bids, and it was queried what projects the funding would be used for and what the associated timescales were;
- clarification was sought, and provided, regarding the tables in section 5.2 of the report and the apparent dramatic reduction in available Net Zero funding; and

- information was sought, and provided, as to whether there would be a target approach to the amount of funds officers sought to bring in, and whether the proposed Project Officer would be on a time-limited contract.

- * The Committee **AGREED TO RECOMMEND** that the Council approve the proposal to develop a more focused and consistent approach to bid writing around the Net Zero agenda supported by the climate and energy team as part of the innovation and investment workstream in the Council's Our Future Highland Delivery Plan.

12. Delivery Plan Budget Monitoring and Progress Update – Heat Networks Project Cunntas às Ùr mu Sgrùdadh Buidseit & Adhartas a' Phlana Libhrigidh – Pròiseact Lìonraidhean Teasa

There had been circulated Report No CCC/26/24 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Place.

Members expressed thanks for the report and looked forward to seeing how the project progressed. In addition, information was sought, and provided, on whether local consultants could be used in terms of the Scottish Government's approved scheme.

The Committee **NOTED** the update provided on the Heat Networks Project.

13. Ecology Strategy and Action Plan Ro-innleachd agus Plana-gnìomha Eag-eòlais

There had been circulated Report No CCC/27/24 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Place.

During discussion, the following main points were raised:-

- thanks were expressed for the report and the two informative and productive Member workshops;
- the proposed inclusion of Gaelic headings in the Strategy was welcomed, and it was queried if the document would be provided in accessible formats such as signing interpretation and spoken book;
- it was questioned whether there was awareness of all the risks, from an environmental and ecological perspective, of the developments being considered for planning permission and licences, such as battery energy storage systems, and information was sought, and provided, on the role of the Ecology Strategy within the planning process;
- it was suggested that interested persons watch the film "Why Not Scotland?", produced by Scotland: The Big Picture, which looked at rewilding projects happening in Europe. Attention was also drawn to the Rewilding Nation Charter petition by the Rewilding Alliance, which was asking the Scottish Government to rewild 30% of land in Scotland; and
- when making decisions in the Chamber, such as on planning matters, there was a need for solid data on the ecological impacts on both land and water.

The Committee:-

- NOTED** the content of the draft Ecology Strategy and the actions contained therein;

- ii. **NOTED** the response to the public consultation; and
- iii. **AGREED** to recommend that the Economy and Infrastructure Committee adopt the draft Ecology Strategy and Action Plan as detailed in Appendix 2 of the report.

The meeting concluded at 2.10 pm.

The Highland Council

Minutes of Meeting of the **Caithness Committee** held **remotely** on Monday, 11 November 2024 at 10.00 am

Present:

Mr R Bremner
Mr A Jarvie
Mr S Mackie
Ms J McEwan

Mr M Reiss
Mr K Rosie
Mr W Mackay

In attendance:

Ms H Ross, Senior Community Development Manager
Ms M Ross, Principal Housing Officer
Mr M Dent, Access Officer
Ms A Macrae, Senior Committee Officer

Also in attendance:

Inspector K Macrae, Police Scotland

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

Mr S Mackie in the Chair

Business

1. Apologies for Absence
Leisgeulan

An apology for absence was intimated on behalf of Mr R Gunn.

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

The Committee **NOTED** the following:-

Items 9 &10: Mr S Mackie (Transparency Statement/Declaration of Interest)

3. Minutes
Geàrr-chunntas

There had been circulated and **NOTED** Minutes of Meeting of the Caithness Committee held on 12 August 2024 which were approved by the Council on 19 September 2024.

Arising from the Minutes, concern was expressed that Members had not yet received an update in relation to the Council's commercial leases with a specific focus on Thurso and Dunnnett campsite leases, reference being made to the opportunities to realise significant investment and benefits for local communities.

Following discussion, the Chair undertook to ensure that an update was provided to Members as soon as possible.

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

There had been circulated Report No CC/18/24 by the North Area Commander.

In discussion, Members raised the following main points:-

- contrary to Transport Scotland roads signage, the need to place responsibility for safe driving on motorcyclists as opposed to other vehicle drivers. It was explained a key issue was raising awareness of the dangers of speeding and reducing the number of road traffic accidents and fatalities;
- concern at continued driver behaviour reflected in the number of drink/drug offences over the period;
- local officers be commended on the high detection rates for drink/drug driving offences in the area;
- the robust approach being taken to theft by shoplifting be welcomed;
- a query as to why there were no recorded arrests in the area for persons being drunk and incapable. It was explained this may be due to a more encompassed approach being taken to such persons;
- in response to a query, confirmation that a date had yet to be confirmed for the introduction of body worn cameras in Caithness. The Inspector undertook to follow up on this point and respond directly to Mr M Reiss;
- confirmation was sought and provided that the Police continued to use speed detection equipment in the area and Members were encouraged to report any areas of concern;
- in response to a query in relation to the roll out of push bikes for officers in the area, the Inspector undertook to follow up on this point and respond directly to Mrs J McEwan;
- Police Scotland be commended on their role in the Remembrance Sunday events held in the area; and
- the Inspector and her team be thanked for their ongoing work in communities across Caithness.

The Committee **NOTED** progress made against the objectives set within the Highland Local Policing Plan 2023-2026 Year 1, attached as Annex A to this report, for the period covering 1 April 2024 – 30 June 2024.

5. Flow Country World Heritage Site – Presentation
Làrach Dualchas na Cruinne nam Flobhachan – Taisbean

The Committee **NOTED** this item had been deferred to a future meeting.

6. Adoption of the Modified Core Paths Plan (Caithness and Sutherland)
Amended
Gabhail ri Plana nam Prìomh Cheuman Atharraichte (Gallaibh agus Cataibh) air Atharrachadh

There had been circulated Report No CC/19/24 by the Assistant Chief Executive - Place.

In discussion, Members welcomed the report and commented that the integrated impact assessment was overwhelmingly positive in terms of actively encouraging and promoting outdoor access in the area. The improvements and specific projects being delivered by the Council and partners was also encouraging and reference was made to the continuing opportunities going forward.

Thereafter, an update was sought and provided on the new core path from John O'Groats to Ness of Duncansby (CA07.16c). The John O'Groats Development Trust had funded the new path and had resources for its maintenance, however the Trust did not propose to extend the path along the coast east of the caravan site due to issues of coastal erosion and therefore it had to be routed inland. Members were advised that discussions were ongoing, including with landowners, on this route.

The Committee **AGREED** to **ADOPT** the:-

- i candidate core paths as consulted upon, and not objected to, under the amended plan December 2017 to March 2018;
- ii candidate core paths as consulted upon under the modified amended plan April 2019 – May 2019;
- iii candidate core paths into the plan as directed by Scottish Ministers by letter on the 2 September 2024; and
- iv Altnabreac to Forsinain candidate core path CA01.05(C) with the exception of the level crossing at Altnabreac.

**7. Housing Management Performance Report – 1 April 2024 to 30 September 2024
Aithisg Dèanadais Stiùireadh Taigheadais – 1 Giblean 2024 gu 30 Sultain 2024**

There had been circulated Report No CC/20/24 by the Assistant Chief Executive - Place.

In response to questions, it was explained the increase in rent arrears was mainly due to the migration of tenants on benefits to Universal Credit as this was paid in arrears. It was confirmed that the potential to recoup those arrears from the DWP was not an option and that the arrears remained with the tenants and the challenges in this regard were highlighted.

Thereafter, Members commended the local Housing team on their timely responses to Members enquiries and reference was made to the value of the regular Member/officer housing meetings held in the area.

The Committee **NOTED** the information provided on housing performance in the period 1 April 2024 to 30 September 2024.

**8. Wick Common Good Fund – Quarter 2 Monitoring
Maoin Math Coitcheann Inbhir Ùige – Sgrùdadh Ràith 2**

There had been circulated Report No CC/21/24 by the Chief Officer - Community and Housing and Chief Officer - Corporate Finance.

In addition to the report, Members were advised that the Sheriff Court had recently granted consent for the disposal, by way of “ribbon” lease, of small portions of Wick

Common Good Land at Riverside Park to wind farm developers to facilitate the oversail of turbines and equipment.

In discussion, confirmation was provided that an update would be given to a Ward Business Meeting on the income generated for the Common Good Fund from other similar “ribbon” leases and noting there were further enquiries in the pipeline.

Thereafter, Members highlighted the need to develop a longer term strategy for the best use and investment of the monies generated by and opportunities to grow the Wick Common Good Fund. It was suggested that regular diarised Member/officer meetings outwith the Committee be arranged to take this forward with the local community council also feeding into this process. A strategic approach was also required in relation to the Thurso Common Good Fund and it was important to make both Funds as robust as possible for the benefit of communities.

The Committee **NOTED** the Quarter 2 monitoring statement for the Wick Common Good Fund.

9. Ward Discretionary Awards Duaisean fo Ùghdarras Uàird

Transparency Statement: Mr S Mackie made a Transparency Statement in respect of this item on the grounds a business he co-owned and listed on his Member declarations of interest was a member of the Caithness Chamber of Commerce which had been the recipient of a Ward Discretionary award for the Caithness Transport Forum. 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.

Thurso and Northwest Caithness Ward Discretionary Budget applications approved 1 April 2024 – 30 September 2024

The Committee **NOTED** that the following Thurso and Northwest Caithness Ward Discretionary Budget applications had been approved for the period 1 April 2024 to 30 September 2024:

Community Food Initiatives North East – Fareshare in Highland	£1,690.00
Caithness Chamber of Commerce – Caithness Transport Forum	£500.00
Pentland Firth Yacht Club – Replacement Windows	£1,450.00
Highlife Highland – Active School Coaching & Equipment	£1,500.00
Sidh Chailleann Art – “Industrial Caithness” Exhibition	£1,000.00
Thurso Youth Club SCIO – Holiday Activities	£1,000.00
Thurso Community Council – Thurso Town Centre initiative 2024	£400.00
Total Spend to Date	£7,540.00
Current Available Balance	£6,860.00

Wick and East Caithness Ward Discretionary Budget applications approved 1 April 2024 – 30 September 2024

The Committee **NOTED** that the following Wick and East Caithness Ward Discretionary Budget applications had been approved for the period 1 April 2024 to 30 September 2024:

Community Food Initiatives North East – Fareshare in Highland	£2,763.00
Caithness Chamber of Commerce – Caithness Transport Forum	£500.00
Highlife Highland – Youth Session Resources	£999.00
Argyll Square Area Association – Replacement Litter Bin	£561.60
Total Spend to Date	£4,823.60
Current Available Balance	£9,576.40

10. External Appointment – Dounreay Stakeholder’s Group

Declaration of Interest: Mr S Mackie declared a financial interest in this item as Chair of the Dounreay Stakeholder Group and took no part in the discussion or determination of this item. Mrs J McEwan took the Chair for this item.

Members were advised that the Dounreay Stakeholder’s Group (DSG) had indicated to the Council that one of its three membership places on the Group has lapsed due to non-attendance over a period of time. The DSG therefore requested that the Council reappoint a replacement member as soon as possible.

The Committee **AGREED** to appoint Mr R Bremner as a replacement Member to the Dounreay Stakeholder’s Group

The meeting concluded at 11.45am.

The Highland Council

Minutes of Meeting of the **Dingwall and Seaforth Area Committee** held in the Council Chamber, Council Offices, Dingwall on Monday 11 November 2024 at 12.00 noon.

Present:

Mr S Kennedy Mrs M Paterson
Mrs A MacLean

In attendance:

Mrs D Ferguson, Senior Ward Manager
Ms L Bauermister, Community Development Manager
Ms I MacMillan, Project Manager, Climate Change and Energy
Ms F Shand, Principal Housing Officer
Mrs G MacPherson, Committee Officer

Also in attendance:

Mr P Young, 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.

Mrs M Paterson in the Chair

1. Apologies for Absence Leisgeulan

There was an apology for absence intimated on behalf of Mr G MacKenzie.

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

There had been circulated Report No DSA/13/24 together with the Dingwall and Seaforth Performance Report by the Local Group Manager for the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service.

Members recently attended an open day at Dingwall Fire Station and had been impressed with the improvements to facilities and technology. There were a further two open days planned, focusing on recruitment, and there had already been a positive response to the local and social media advertisements. It was hoped that this might increase the number of female officers and second appliance availability.

During discussion, the following points were raised:-

- in response to a question regarding Home Fire Safety Visits, it was explained that the visits continued to focus on premises deemed higher-risk, with SFRS working in partnership with carers and other professionals;
- non-fire emergencies included water rescues, someone stuck in a lift, or assisting the Ambulance Service gain access to a property, and it was said that these incidences were on the rise;
- information was sought regarding Community Safety Advocates and it was confirmed these were non-operational SFRS staff who supported on-call crews by way of school visits and speaking with communities; and
- Members thanked the local crews for their continued dedication to Dingwall and Seaforth.

The Committee having scrutinised, **NOTED** the Dingwall and Seaforth Performance Report.

4. Utilising the Great British Insulation Scheme to tackle fuel poverty in Dingwall and Seaforth Social Housing
A' Cleachdadh Sgeama Mòr Teas-dhion Bhreatainn gus dèiligeadh ri bochdainn connaidh ann an Taigheadas Sòisealta Inbhir Pheofharain agus Shiophoirt

There had been circulated Report No DSA/14/24 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Place.

During discussion, the following items were raised:-

- it was asked if the Climate Change and Energy Team (CCET) would be liaising with Housing to capture properties reported as damp;
- in terms of paragraph 3.1 of the report, further information was sought regarding the costs associated with project management and it was said that the cost was paid under the project and coming from Council funds;
- it was asked if the CCET was on target to achieve an Energy Performance Certificate rating of B by the end of 2032;
- information was sought, and provided, regarding checking properties for insulation;
- in terms of paragraph 3.3 of the report, information was sought, and provided, regarding the review of the tenant opt-out policy;
- it was asked if the CCET had considered future costs, which might include a future tenant wishing to be involved in the scheme when a previous tenant had opted out;
- in terms of paragraph 5.1 of the report, it was confirmed that residents would be signposted to the Citizens Advice Bureau, the Council's Welfare Support Team and Home Energy Scotland;
- information was sought, and provided, regarding the number of responses received, what would happen if only a small number of properties were to

be included in the scheme, if there were enough funds and how long it was going to take; and

- Members looked forward to an update at a future meeting, which would include the uptake and the costs.

The Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the contents of this report; and
- ii. **AGREED** to support the development of externally funded projects and the opportunity to scale up.

5. Housing Management Performance Report – 1 April 2024 to 30 September 2024 Aithisg Choileanaidh Stiùireadh Taigheadais – 1 Giblean 2024 gu 30 Sultain 2024

There had been circulated Report No DSA/15/24 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Place.

During discussion, the following points were raised:-

- Members felt that homelessness was a concern, particularly when it originated through rent arrears;
- the number of homeless was rising and information was sought, and provided, regarding the availability of housing resources and restrictions;
- information was sought, and provided, regarding the current rear arrears as recorded in paragraph 6.2 of the report;
- the importance of early intervention was expressed and an explanation was provided regarding the help offered to those experiencing difficulties due to the migration to Universal Credit;
- information was sought, and provided, regarding tenants required to take their private landlord to court, having presented themselves as homeless to the Council;
- anti-social behaviour was a big issue in many communities and it was asked if improvements could be made working alongside our community planning partners and other housing providers;
- it was asked how often homeless housing properties were rotated, for the wellbeing of other local tenants; and
- a breakdown of the numbers in table 9 of the report was requested and provided.

The Committee **NOTED** the information provided on housing performance in the period 1 April 2024 – 30 September 2024.

6. Place Based Investment Funds – Repurposing of Funding Allocation Maoinean Tasgaidh Stèidhichte air Àite – Ag Ath-adhbhrachadh Riarachadh Maoineachaidh

There had been circulated Report No DSA/16/24 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Place.

In November 2021, this Committee had agreed to allocate £10,000 to support the business community, however, despite varying attempts to achieve this, no firm proposals had been brought forward. It was therefore felt appropriate in this meeting to reallocate the funds elsewhere.

A concern was raised as local businesses had been told that funding had been available and it was confirmed that there might be a funding opportunity for local businesses through the Community Regeneration Fund, which supported economic activity.

The Committee **AGREED** that £10,000 would be reallocated for events which would support the 800th anniversary of Dingwall as a Royal Burgh.

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** the following Dingwall and Seaforth Ward Discretionary Budget applications approved since its last meeting:-

- i. Highland Action for Little Ones (HALO), Keep ME Safe, £300.00
- ii. Maryburgh Community Council, Maryburgh in Bloom, £350.00

8. Dingwall Common Good Fund 2024/25
Maoin Math Coitcheann Inbhir Pheofharain 2024/25

There had been circulated Report No DSA/17/24 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Place.

The Committee:-

- i. having scrutinised, **NOTED** the position of Dingwall Common Good Fund (DCGF) as shown in the 2024/25 Quarter Two Monitoring Statement; and
- ii. **AGREED** to increase the approved Dingwall Common Good Fund Budget line for Community Grants & Donations to £3,500 for 2024/25.

9. Minutes
Geàrr-chunntas

The Committee **NOTED** the Minutes of Meeting of the Dingwall and Seaforth Area Committee held on 12 August 2024 which were approved by the Council on 19 September 2024.

The meeting ended at 1.20 pm.

The Highland Council

Minutes of Meeting of the **Wester Ross, Strathpeffer and Lochalsh Committee** held remotely on 11 November 2024 at 10.30 am.

Present:

Mr C Birt Mr P Logue
Mrs E Kraft

In attendance:

Ms M Ross, Principal Housing Officer
Mr W MacKinnon, Community Development Manager
Mrs O Marsh, Committee Officer

Also in attendance:

Group Commander Mr M Colliar, Scottish Fire and Rescue Service (Item 3)

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

Mrs E Kraft in the Chair

Business

Preliminaries

As this was Remembrance Day, the Chair highlighted the impact of wars which had wiped out generations of young folk from Highland communities and stressed the importance of remembering them and their sacrifice.

**1. Apologies for Absence
Leisgeulan**

An apology for absence was intimated on behalf of Mrs I Campbell.

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

There were no declarations of interest or transparency statements.

**3. Scottish Fire and Rescue Service - Performance Report – Q2
Seirbheis Smàlaidh agus Teasairginn na h-Alba – Aithisg Choileanaidh – R2**

There had been circulated Report No WRSL/13/24 by the Local Senior Officer for the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service.

During discussion, the following main points were raised:-

- thanks were expressed to the SFRS for their hard working in keeping communities safe;
- regarding the recruitment of retained fire staff within communities, Members confirmed they would reach out to community councils to promote recruitment, and allow the SFRS to communicate directly with those interested; and

- reassurance was sought regarding the ability to react to any outbreak of fire at battery storage areas. In this regard it was stressed that knowledge and information was key and it was welcomed that the SFRS would send over information to alleviate community concerns. In addition, Members would signpost communities to the SFRS for further discussion.

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

4. **Review of the Allocation Process for Area Share of Invitation to Pay Income Ath-sgrùdadh air a' Phròiseas Riarachaidh airson Cuibhreann Sgìreil dhen Teachd-a-steach bho Chuireadh airson Pàigheadh**

There had been circulated Report No WRSL/14/24 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Place.

Thanks were expressed to officers for answering questions and queries from communities. Members welcomed the review in a year's time once place plans were in position.

The Committee:-

- i. **APPROVED** the proposed change to the process for applications to read as – “a joint application from the Community Council and Development Trust or other eligible Community Group”;
- ii. **NOTED** that correspondence would be sent to Community Councils annually, at the start of the Financial Year, outlining the invitation to pay funds that were available for their Area; and
- iii. **NOTED** that a further review of the allocation process would take place next year when the Wester Ross, Strathpeffer and Lochalsh Area Place Plan was complete, as it might identify agreed community priorities.

5. **Housing Management Performance Report – 1 April 2024 to 30 September 2024 Aithisg Choileanaidh Stiùireadh Taigheadais – 1 Giblean 2024 gu 30 Sultain 2024**

There had been circulated Report No WRSL/15/24 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Place.

During discussion, the following main points were raised:-

- information was sought, and provided, on how housing benefits were paid to claimants and how this impacted on rent arrears;
- it was felt that the new arrangements for tenants to take full responsibility for pay rent charges had impacted on vulnerable people. In this regard it was confirmed that local housing teams would offer support to those who sought assistance;
- it was queried if officers could provide a detailed analysis of the housing report specific to Lochcarron area within Ward 5 for Lochcarron Community Council;
- information was sought on the relationship between the Housing and Planning Services in regards to new housing developments; and
- thanks were expressed to officers for their support for Member queries and supporting local housing tenants.

The Committee **NOTED** the information provided on housing performance in the period 1 April 2024 – 30 September 2024 and **AGREED** to provide a detailed analysis of the housing report specific to Lochcarron area within Ward 5.

6. **Wester Ross, Strathpeffer and Lochalsh Ward Discretionary Budget** **Buidseat fo Ughdarras Uàird Rois an Iar, Shrath Pheofhair agus Loch Aillse**

The Committee **NOTED** that the following Wester Ross, Strathpeffer and Lochalsh Ward Discretionary Fund applications have been approved since 12 August 2024:

- Dornie and District Community Trust - community shop and café: £796.79
- Achmore Community Hall Association - Hall energy efficiency measure: £750.00
- Contin Community Trust - Seniors festive lunch and kids Christmas parties: £700.00.

7. **Minutes** **Geàrr-chunntas**

The Committee **NOTED** the Minutes of Meeting of the Wester Ross, Strathpeffer and Lochalsh Committee held on 12 August 2024 which were approved by the Council on 19 September 2024.

The meeting concluded at 11.30am

The Highland Council

Minutes of Meeting of the **Lochaber Committee** held remotely on **Tuesday, 12 November 2024 at 10.30 a.m.**

Present:

Mr A Baldrey
Mr J C Grafton
Ms S Fanet

Mr T MacLennan
Ms L Saggars
Ms K Willis

Officials in Attendance:

Mr J Henderson, Housing Manager
Ms E Wilkinson, Principal Housing Officer
Ms D Sutton, Amenities Manager (South)
Ms S Murdoch, Common Goods Fund Officer
Ms P Betts, Common Goods Fund Officer
Mr J Maclean, Bereavement Services Manager
Ms R Robertson, Project Coordinator, Burial Grounds
Mr W MacKinnon, Community Development Manager, West and Mid Highland
Mr A MacInnes, Senior Committee Officer, Democratic Services

Also in attendance:-

Chief Inspector D Allan, Police Scotland (item 3 only)

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

There was circulated Report No LA/19/24 by the Area Commander, Police Scotland.

Following a summary of the report by the Chief Inspector, Police Scotland the following main points were raised in discussion:-

- The increase in domestic abuse crime in the last year was concerning. There was now a better understanding of domestic abuse which included coercive behaviour.

- There were increases in incidents relating to fraud, including boiler room scams, romance fraud. These scams were widely reported in the media, but people were still following victims to them. Given people's good nature they often wanted to believe what they were being told by scammers, or they were panicked into taking rash action. Educating the public was key in fighting fraud.
- It was queried if digital scanning equipment for road traffic accident investigations was based in Lochaber. An undertaking was given to provide this information to Councillor T MacLennan.
- There had been no concerns raised regarding road works in Fort William affecting emergency responses. However, an undertaking was given to check this.
- There was evidence of a rise in anti-social behaviour, particular in youth disorder. The Police would look at ways on how to tackle this behaviour. In the Western Isles division a campus officer had recently been appointed to link in with schools. Lessons learned from this could be used to tackle anti-social behaviour in other areas.
- The Police were very active in education of young people on the dangers of online exploitation and the need to protect themselves online.
- The Police had a missing persons co-ordinator who encouraged young people to get involved in local clubs and groups etc, to address repeat missing persons cases. Other opportunities in the local community to assist with this would be welcomed.

The Committee **NOTED**:-

- i. progress made against the objectives set within the Highland Local Policing Plan 2023–2026 Year 1 attached as Annex A to this report, for the period covering 01 April 2023 – 31 March 2024; and
- ii. the change in format necessitated by a reduction in back-office capacity to prepare additional area committee reports.

4. Housing Performance Report Aithisg Coileanaidh Taigheadais

There was circulated Report No. LA/20/24 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Place.

Following a summary of the report by the Housing Manager, the following main points were raised by Members:-

- It was queried if there was a breakdown of the reasons for rent arrears, such as shortage of money from losing employment. It was advised that currently this was not recorded but an undertaking was given to consider this.
- In terms of tenants reporting housing repairs, there were reports that they did not hear back from the housing team for a long time. It was queried if a review of the communication strategy was required to address this. It was advised that a report on housing repairs would be submitted to the Area Committee to allow greater scrutiny of this issue;
- It was noted that complaints received by the housing team of anti-social behaviour had decreased. Consideration would be given to more detail being provided in reports on anti social behaviour. Anti-

social behaviour cases in a housing context, covered a broad range of issues, they could be complicated and could take a long time to resolve, if ever.

- In terms of homelessness, the housing team were sometimes made aware in advance of a crises that could make someone homeless. The housing team would soon be obliged to take homeless applications 6 months in advance of someone being made homeless.
- Some sheds on housing estates were in a poor condition and were attracting vermin. Some of these were in private ownership, but this problem was affecting Council tenants. There was a need to look at how the Council could be more proactive in addressing this issue. The Housing Manager undertook to look at the issue in more detail and perhaps a multi service approach could address the problem.

The Committee **NOTED** the information provided on housing performance in the period 1 April 2024 – 30 September 2024.

5. **Scottish Government Play Park Funding** **Maoineachadh Phàircean-cluiche Riaghaltas na h-Alba**

There was circulated Report No. LA/21/24 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Place.

Reference was made to a scheme of flood defence works and contractors had not brought a play park back up to the required standard following these works. Therefore, the Council was not able to adopt the play park. The Council would engage with the contractor on this matter to see if assistance could be provided to bring the play park back to required standard. An update on this would be provided at an Area Business meeting.

The work on play park projects would commence as quickly as possible to ensure money was spent within the timelines that the Scottish Government funding required to be spent. Members would be kept informed of progress. Final proposals for the remainder of the funding would be brought to a future Committee to ensure the full funding allocation was spent.

The Committee **AGREED** in Ward:

- i. 11 £182,152 to be allocated to the agreed projects as outlined at 6.5 of the report; and
- ii. 21 £194,000 to be allocated to the agreed projects as outlined at 6.6 of the report.

6. **Fort William Common Good Asset Register** **Clàr So-mhain Math Coitcheann a' Ghearasdain**

There was circulated Report No. LA/22/24 by the Assistant Chief Executive - Corporate and Assistant Chief Executive – Place.

Following a summary of the report by the Common Goods Fund Officer, the following main points were raised by Members:-

- It was noted that Elected Members of the Council were custodians of common good funds in Highland. The role of local Members going forward in developing a strategic plan for the Fort William common

good fund was queried. It was advised that the responsibility for the management and strategic plans for the fund would be with local Members. A meeting of Members and Officers from relevant Services to look at the way forward with the common good fund would be arranged in due course.

- There were delegated amounts that the local committee had to adhere to for disposal of common good assets. If the asset value exceeded the delegated amount, local Members would make recommendations to full Council. The process for sale of a common good fund asset was explained.
- There was work ongoing for all Highland common good funds to assess fund requirements and how funds meet the liabilities for their responsibilities. Members would be kept informed of progress with this work.
- Part of the income from the West End car park would go to the common good fund from the beginning of July. The remaining income would go to the Council for their part of the car park. 55% of income would go to the common good and 45% would go to the Council. This was based on measurement of the area of land owned by the Council and that owned under common good. It was suggested that the split in income needed to be investigated as it was not felt this was a fair split for the common good fund.
- Reassurance was sought that any future repairs required to the West End car park sea wall, should be the responsibility of the Council and not the common good fund. It was advised that this would need to be discussed further with Officers, as there needed to be an agreement on liability for expenses for any shared asset.

Thereafter, the Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the contents of the 'Fort William Common Good Asset Register' in the format presented in Appendix 1;
- ii. **NOTED** the contents of the 'Fort William consultation on the asset register - representations and responses' document in Appendix 2;
- * iii. **AGREED** to the publication of the Fort William Common Good Asset Register;
- * iv. **AGREED** to the re-classification of the properties included on the asset register and to the creation of the Fort William Common Good Fund;
- v. **NOTED** that the properties listed on the Fort William Common Good Asset Register will continue to be supported by the Council's General Fund, until such time as adequate income levels are available from the Fort William Common Good Fund to cover maintenance costs;
- vi. **NOTED** that the creation of the Fort William Common Good Fund and its financial position, will be reported under the minutes of a future Highland Council meeting, given that all Members are custodians of all Common Good Funds in Highland; and
- vii. **AGREED**, for full transparency, clarification was sought as to the division of Highland Council/ Fort William Common Good Fund land in relation to the West End car park as well as other assets in future, and also the share of responsibility for costs of major repairs to the sea wall containing the West End car park.

7. **Bereavement Services - Project Updates**
Cunntas às Ùr mun t-Seirbheis Chaoidh

There was circulated Report No. LA/23/24 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Place.

Following a summary of the report by the Bereavement Services Manager, the following main points were raised by Members:-

- A consultant had been commissioned to do a comprehensive feasibility study for a crematorium in Lochaber;
- It was encouraging to see the potential to increase the capacity at 3 burial grounds in the area, especially at Glen Nevis. If more could be done to encourage cremations, this would alleviate pressures on burial ground capacity.
- There was additional land in Morar to be developed for burial space which would increase capacity;
- It was queried if cost was a factor when people were choosing between burial and cremation. It was advised that across Scotland there was an average of 70% cremations and 45% in Highland. It was therefore felt there was a tradition for burials in Highland.

The Committee **NOTED** the:-

- i. progress of burial ground extensions in the Lochaber area; and
- ii. challenges with identifying and developing suitable land for burial ground development.

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

Non – company appointments

The Committee was asked to appoint 1 Member from Ward 21 to the Fort William 2040 Community Stakeholder group.

Ms S Fanet was nominated by Ms K Willis and this was seconded by Mr A Baldrey.

There being no other nominations, the Committee therefore **AGREED** that Ms S Fanet be appointed to the Fort William 2040 Community Stakeholder group.

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

The Committee **NOTED** the following Ward Discretionary Fund grant awards since the last Committee meeting:-

Ward 11

Highland Archive Service HLH - Isle of Eigg Archive Workshop - £356

An Comunn Gàidhealach - Royal National Mod 2025 (contribution to venue hire) - £800

Ward 21

An Comunn Gàidhealach - Royal National Mod 2025 (contribution to venue hire) - £1200

Duror & Kentallen Community Council - Local Place Plan Hard Copy

Printing Costs - £200

10.

Minutes

Geàrr-chunntas

There was circulated for information, Minutes of Meeting of the Lochaber Committee held on 27 August 2024 which were approved by the Council on 19 September 2024, the terms of which were **NOTED**.

The meeting ended at 12.05 p.m.

The Highland Council

Minutes of Meeting of the **Sutherland County Committee** held in the Chamber, Council Offices, Drumbuie, Golspie on Tuesday 12 November 2024 at 10.30am.

Present:

Mr M Baird

Mr R Gale

Ms M Hutchison

Mr J McGillivray

Mr H Morrison (remote)

Ms L Niven

In attendance:

Ms P Tomalin, Community Development Manager

Ms I Percy-Bell, Principal Waste Management Officer

Mr M Dent, Access Officer

Ms A Macrae, Senior Committee Officer

Also in attendance:

Station Commander D Bell, 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 Gale in the Chair

Business

1. Apologies for Absence

Leisgeulan

There were no apologies for absence.

2. Declarations of Interest

Foillseachaidhean Com-pàirt

Item 6: Mr J McGillivray (Transparency statement)

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/16/24 by the Local Senior Officer for Highland.

In discussion, Members raised the following main points:-

- an explanation was sought and provided on the new terms and conditions for retained staff to be implemented early in 2025 to provide for more flexibility in contractual hours;
- it would be helpful for Members and community councils to receive a summary of the above changes for sharing with potential recruits, schools and communities;

- concern that the level of station availability had reached a critical point across Sutherland and reflected the effects of depopulation particularly in relation to young people;
- in response to a query, an update was provided on the number of candidates currently going through the recruitment process at stations across Sutherland;
- the range of activity being undertaken by the Service to engage with local communities to promote recruitment and also highlighting the importance of local knowledge in identifying potential recruits;
- the importance of encouraging more females to join the Service and noting the Station Commander would provide details of the number of females currently going through the recruitment process; and
- concern at the zero station availability at Lochinver and Scourie over the period and an explanation was sought and provided on how the Service would respond to a serious road traffic collision in the area. It was explained this would involve the deployment of the nearest fire appliance or joint mobilisation as appropriate.

The Committee **NOTED** the Area Performance Report

4. Waste and Recycling Service Changes Atharrachaidhean dhan t-Seirbheis Sgudail is Ath-chuairteachaidh

The Principal Waste Management Officer gave a verbal and video presentation on this item.

In discussion, Members welcomed the presentation and raised the following main points:-

- it would be helpful for Members to view the process of recycling through to the final product after the waste had been sorted and bailed;
- in response to a query, confirmation that Ms L Niven would be provided with a definitive answer on how many times plastics could be recycled;
- issues in North and West Sutherland as a result of some households not having received their bins and cross-communication as to what should be done with recycling in the meantime. It was confirmed these issues would be followed up with the Operations Team;
- it would be helpful for Members to be provided with a supply of the booklets produced on the changes to the service for distribution in communities;
- concern some packaging had to be taken to a large supermarket for recycling and the challenges this presented for rural areas; and
- it would be helpful for Members to receive a copy of the presentation for sharing with community councils.

5. Adoption of the Modified Core Paths Plan (Caithness and Sutherland) Amended Gabhail ri Plana nam Prìomh Cheuman Atharraichte (Gallaibh agus Cataibh) air Atharrachadh

There had been circulated Report No SCC/17/24 by the Assistant Chief Executive - Place.

In response to questions, it reported that the main reason for the deletion of a section of the Armadale – A836 core path was due to the collapse of a bridge on the route.

The potential for the Council's Rangers to undertake improvements to the path would be considered, albeit it was unlikely the bridge could be replaced. In relation to the core path in Elphin, not to be adopted into the Core Paths Plan, as directed by Scottish Ministers, the potential to work with the community on future paths in this locality would be considered. It was understood the gates on the Achinduich path had been unlocked but this would be confirmed.

The Committee **AGREED** to **ADOPT** the:

- i candidate core paths as consulted upon, and not objected to, under the amended plan December 2017 to March 2018;
- ii candidate core paths as consulted upon under the modified amended plan April 2019 – May 2019;
- iii candidate core paths into the plan as directed by Scottish Ministers by letter on the 2 September 2024; and
- iv Sportsmans Walk – A9 candidate core path SU12.25(C) with the exception of the level crossing at Dunrobin Station.

6. Allocation of Invitation to Pay Income 2022/23 and 2023/24
Cuireadh gus Pàigheadh: Riarachadh Teachd-a-steach 2022/23 -2023/24

Transparency Statement: Mr J McGillivray made a Transparency Statement in respect of this item as Chair of Sutherland Sports Council. However, having applied the objective test, reviewed his position in relation to the item and any personal connection, he did not consider that he had an interest to declare.

There had been circulated Report No SCC/18/24 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Place

In discussion, there was a consensus that the process for the distribution of Invitation to Pay income in Sutherland for 2022/23 and 2023/24 be as set out in Option 2 in the report on the basis Ward 4 be allocated £6,428 and Ward 1 allocated £12,019 with funding of £1,000 from each Ward being ring fenced for the Sutherland Sports Council. It would then be open to the Sports Council to come back with any further funding applications as required.

Thereafter, it was noted that mandatory charging was to be introduced at Achmelvich Car Park and that confirmation would be sought as to whether the income generated would continue to be allocated to the Sutherland County Committee.

The Committee:

- i. **NOTED** the options for distributing the Invitation to Pay income which had been allocated to the Sutherland County Committee;
- ii. **APPROVED** the proposed process for the distribution of Invitation to Pay income in Sutherland for 2022/23 and 2023/24 funds as set out in Option 2 in the report on the basis Ward 4 be allocated £6,428 and Ward 1 allocated £12,019 with funding of £1,000 from each Ward being ring fenced for the Sutherland Sports Council; and
- iii. **NOTED** that the delegated powers for the authorisation of spend up to £10,000 would be assigned to the Community Development Manager in

consultation with local Members while spend over £10,000 would be subject to Sutherland County Committee approval; and

iv. **NOTED** that the distribution process will be reviewed in a years' time.

**7. Dornoch Common Good Quarterly Monitoring Report
Aithisg Sgrùdaidh Ràitheil Maoin Math Coitcheann Dhòrnaich**

There had been circulated Report No SCC/19/24 by the Chief Officer Community and Housing and Chief Officer Corporate Finance.

In discussion, all parties involved in the work undertaken in relation to the Dornoch Burn were commended on their efforts.

Thereafter, it was clarified that the income generated from invitation to pay on Common Good Land was allocated to the Common Good Fund.

The Committee **NOTED** the Quarter 2 monitoring statement for the Dornoch Common Good Fund.

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

North, West and Central Sutherland Ward Discretionary Budget applications for the period 1 April 2024 to 30 September 2024

The Committee **NOTED** that the following North, West and Central Sutherland Ward Discretionary Budget applications had been approved over the period 1 April 2024 to 30 September 2024:

Assynt Dev. Trust – Menopause Chats	£1,425.00
Community Food Initiatives North East – FareShare in Highland	£5,050.00
Bradbury Centre – Medical Bath Replacement	£500.00
North Sutherland Community Forestry Trust – First Aid Training	£500.00
Kyle of Sutherland Development Trust – Kyle Feeds	£500.00
Lairg & District Community Initiatives – Lairg War Memorial Upkeep	£400.00
North West Training Centre – Learning programme 24-25	£500.00
Total Spend to Date	£8,875.00
Current Available Balance	£5,525.00

Additionally, the Committee **NOTED** there was a balance of £1,718.53 available from a pre-existing Cost of Living Fund. This could be drawn down by submitting a Ward Discretionary Fund application.

The Committee **NOTED** that the following East Sutherland and Edderton Ward Discretionary Budget applications had been approved over the period 1 April 2024 to 30 September 2024:

East Sutherland and Edderton Ward Discretionary Budget applications approved for the period 1 April 2024 to 30 September 2024.

Community Food Initiatives North East – FareShare in Highland	£2,179.00
Embo Trust – Old School Transition – Final Step	£780.00
The Dornoch Area CIC – Dornoch Transport Project	£999.00
Bradbury Centre – Medical bath Replacement	£1,500.00
Dornoch Cricket Club – Practice Nets Extension	£500.00
Dornoch Youth Service Summer Programme	£1,000.00
Youth Highland – Golspie RESPECT Project	£1,000.00
Embo Football Club – Essential Works to Changing Rooms	£900.00
Engaging with Activity CIC – Hub Outings	£1,000.00
Timespan – Gutting Girls	£1,000.00
Total Spend to Date	£10,858.00
Current Available Balance	£3,542.00

Additionally, the Committee **NOTED** there was a balance of £948.02 available from a pre-existing Cost of Living Fund. This could be drawn down by submitting a Ward Discretionary Fund application.

**9. Minutes
Geàrr-chunntas**

There was circulated and **NOTED** the Minutes of the Sutherland County Committee held on 27 August 2024, which were approved by the Council on 19 September 2024.

The meeting concluded at Noon.

The Highland Council

Minutes of the meeting of the **Health, Social Care and Wellbeing Committee** held in the Council Chamber, Glenurquhart Road, Inverness on Wednesday, 13 November 2024 at 10.30am.

Present:

Ms S Atkin (substitute for Mrs M Paterson)	Mr P Logue (substitute for Mr J Edmondson)
Mr M Baird (substitute for Mr R Gale)	Mrs I Mackenzie
Mrs M Cockburn	Mr A MacKintosh
Mr D Fraser	Mrs A MacLean
Mrs B Jarvie (remote)	Mrs K MacLean
Ms L Johnston	Ms L A Niven (substitute for Dr C Birt)
Ms E Knox	Mrs M Reid (remote)
Ms L Kraft	Ms M Smith

Non-Members present:

Mr S Coghill (remote)	Mr D Millar (remote)
Mr J Finlayson (remote)	Mr P Oldham (remote)
Ms M Hutchison (remote)	Mr R Stewart
Mr T MacLennan (remote)	

NHS Highland representatives:

Ms L Bussell, Director of Nursing
Mr S Steer, Director of Adult Social Care
Mrs P Stott, Chief Officer

Third sector representatives in attendance:

Dr G Rodger, Inspiring Young Voices

Participating Officials:

Ms K Lackie, Assistant Chief Executive - People
Ms F Duncan, Chief Social Work Officer & Chief Officer Health and Social Care
Ms F Malcolm, Chief Officer, Integrated People Services
Ms M McIntyre, Head of Children and Justice Social Work
Mr I Kyle, Lead Officer Strategy, Performance and Quality Assurance
Ms J Park, Strategic Lead Child Health
Ms G Prince, Partnership Development Manager
Mrs L Dunn, Joint Democratic Services 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 Fraser in the Chair

Preliminaries

The Chair welcomed Dr Gaener Rodger to the meeting as a new third sector representative, and asked her to introduce herself and her role with Inspiring Young Voices.

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

Apologies were submitted on behalf of Dr C Birt, Mr J Edmondson, Mr R Gale, Mrs M Paterson, Mr R Gunn, and Mrs M Ross.

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

Declaration of Interest

Item 10 – Dr G Rodger

Transparency Statements

Item 5 – Ms L Johnston

3. **Service Achievements** **Coileanaidhean Seirbheis**

An update was provided on the following:

- Adults Serving Community Sentences had helped transform Invergordon Day Centre;
- The Pines had been awarded Highland Third Sector Interface Partnership of the Year 2024;
- Specialist Community Public Health Nurse Post Graduate Training;
- Education Scotland and the Home to Highland Care Experienced Team; and
- A recent Fire Skills Course for young people.

The Committee **NOTED** and welcomed the updates, and thanked all involved in the Fire Skills Course.

4. **Chief Social Work Officer Annual Report 2023-24** **Aithisg Bhliadhnail Àrd-Oifigear Cùraim Shòisealta 2023-24**

There had been circulated Report No HCW/19/24 by the Chief Social Work Officer.

The Committee **NOTED** the issues raised in the annual report, which had recently been presented to the full Council, and the implications for social work and social care services within Highland Council and NHS Highland.

5. **Adult Social Care Assurance Report and Strategic Update** **Aithisg Bharantais agus Cunntas Ro-innleachdail Cùraim Shòisealta Inbheach**

Ms L Johnston declared a connection to Item 4 as an employee of Connecting Carers but, having applied the objective test, did not consider that she had an interest to declare.

There had been circulated Report No HCW/20/24 by the Assistant Chief Executive – People.

During discussion, the following issues were raised:

- it was clarified that there had been a loss of 218 care home beds, leaving a total of approximately 1800 beds in Highland. 377 people were currently waiting for a care at home service. It was important to remember the real lives of the people behind the statistics;
- information was sought, and would be provided outwith the meeting, on the variation in payment rates for rurality and remoteness. Details were provided of the numbers and sizes of care homes in Highland and it was pointed out that the 50-bed model for care homes to be economically viable did not suit the remote and rural nature of the Highlands, with reference to the importance of keeping care home residents as close to their families and communities as possible. In addition to the loss of care home beds, information was provided on the number of hours of care that had also been lost, in addition to increasing need. Challenges included lack of capacity, affordability and availability of workforce. This had been raised at senior political levels and at the convention of the Highlands and Islands;
- the value of the Option One Care Fund was highlighted and it was hoped this funding source would continue;
- an explanation was sought and provided on the coding system for hospital discharges, and it was pointed out that in addition to people delayed in hospital waiting for care home places, there was also a waiting list of people in the community;
- an explanation of various graphs and their keys in the report was sought and provided;
- the importance of supporting paid and unpaid carers was emphasised;
- NHS staff were thanked for their attendance at the recent public meeting about the temporary closure of Strathburn Care Home and its anticipated reopening in the new year;
- the importance of improving people's lives to help prevent people going into or being delayed in hospital, for example tailored home adaptations or digital solutions, was emphasised;
- the importance of encouraging people to organise power of attorney was highlighted;
- reference was made to the higher cost of living for people in remote and rural areas, and to challenges in accessing services. Information would be provided to Mrs B Jarvie outwith the meeting on payments for personal assistants; and
- the Chair voiced his support and gratitude for unpaid and paid carers, and emphasised the importance of providing them with adequate support.

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

6. Health and Social Care - Revenue Monitoring Budget and Performance Report – Quarter 2 2024-25
Slàinte is Cùram Sòisealta – Buidseat Sgrùdadh Teachd-a-steach agus Aithisg Coileanaidh – Ràith 2 2024-25

There had been circulated Report No HCW/21/24 by the Assistant Chief Executive – People.

During discussion, the following issues were raised:

- an explanation was sought and provided for the savings achieved by NHS Highland which had now gone up from £1.7m to £2.3m. It was clarified that savings arising from unfilled vacancies were non-recurring with efforts being made to fill these posts and the recruitment challenges were on the corporate risk register. Attention was drawn to the impact on staff of having unfilled vacancies;
- the value of community groups in keeping people in their homes longer, and facilitating their discharge from hospital, was highlighted;
- assurance was sought and would be provided outwith the meeting to Mrs K MacLean that the sterilising unit for medical equipment had been repaired. This was important to allow the reuse of equipment; and
- clarification was sought and provided on the 5 and 20 day complaint response data.

Thereafter, the Committee **NOTED** the:-

- i. forecast revenue position as at Q2 of the 2024/25 financial year;
- ii. progress update provided in relation to budget savings delivery; and
- iii. Service's performance and risk information.

7. Delivery Plan Budget Monitoring and Progress Update – Person Centred Solutions Portfolio
Sgrùdadh Buidseit agus Cunntas Adhartais a' Phlana Libhrigidh – Cùram-roinne airson Fuasglaidhean Stèidhichte air an Neach

There had been circulated Report No HCW/22/24 by the Assistant Chief Executive – People.

During discussion the following issues were raised:

- with reference to the successful 'grow your own' approach to recruiting social workers, it was suggested this would be a helpful approach for carers, using designated care homes as training hubs. A summary was provided of work being undertaken to encourage young people into careers in social care;
- an explanation was sought and provided for the financial and operational responsibility for the system for recording client records;
- reference was made to the ongoing challenges around digital communication and information sharing between the Council NHS Highland, with some of the issues being IT related, and other data protection considerations; and
- the Chair voiced support for the promotion of careers in the care profession and for training and continued learning being undertaken by care at home providers. NHS Highland had hosted a successful careers event the previous day attended by around 80 school pupils.

Thereafter, the Committee **NOTED** the progress being made in the Delivery Plan projects in the report.

8. Health and Social Care Children's Services – Child Health Update
Seirbheisean Chloinne Slàinte is Cùraim Shòisealta – Cunntas as Ùr mu Shlàinte Chloinne

There had been circulated Report No HCW/23/24 by the Assistant Chief Executive – People.

During discussion, the following issues were raised:

- a summary was sought and provided of the changes to the school nurse role in recent years, and how their services could be accessed by pupils and by Education staff, with particular reference to smaller, rural schools. It was important that awareness was raised of the new approach, noting that school nurses also worked with children in the community as well as in a school setting;
- information was sought and provided on the provision of social services when young mothers were transitioning from Children & Young People's Services to Adult Services, particularly care-experienced young people who were more likely to lack family support. This included buffer teams, midwifery and health visitor support, according to need;
- more information on staff training and qualifications being undertaken would be helpful for future committees, and attention was drawn to the number of new Health Visitors that had been supported through training since 2020. Reference was made to useful ongoing work being undertaken with various partners organisations and groups, including support for breastfeeding;
- the Highland Words Up Approach, to support new parents/staff in parent groups, was welcomed as a beneficial early intervention approach;
- information was sought and provided on the fourteen professions that came under the Allied Health Professional (AHP) umbrella, and on the success and expansion of the 'Just ask' advice line, which facilitated direct access for families and professionals to specialist AHP advice, guidance and support;
- a summary was provided of the funding and management of specialist social care equipment for individuals, including what happened to equipment purchased for an individual for educational purposes once the young person had finished their education. Noting that some pieces of essential medical equipment were bulky, it was suggested that the rules on Council tenants only being permitted one garden shed be reconsidered in special circumstances, and the Chair offered to bring this to the attention of the Housing Service;
- the importance of supported school attendance for children and young people with disabilities was highlighted;
- an update was sought and provided on the numbers of staff being trained on the Solihull emotional and mental wellbeing approach, and it was queried whether staff were also being provided with trauma-informed training; and
- it was suggested that The Promise was specifically tailored to care experienced young people.

Thereafter, the Committee:

- NOTED** on the delivery of the delegated functions for child health, service improvements and associated risks and mitigations;
- NOTED** the integrated approach, as part of Families First, to move to whole family, community based early preventative support;
- AGREED** the workforce development and improvement initiatives in line with the Highland council delivery plan; and
- NOTED** the Chair would advise the Housing and Property Service of the need for appropriate/additional storage facilities for Council tenants with family members requiring the use of bulky medical equipment.

9. **Resetting the Highland Outcome Improvement Plan Ag Ath-shuidheachadh Plana Leasachadh Bhuilean na Gàidhealtachd**

There had been circulated Report No HCW/24/24 by the Assistant Chief Executive – People.

During discussion, the following issues were raised:

- the increased focus on drugs and alcohol issues in the plan was welcomed;
- further traction was required on shared spaces and hubs, with some of the work being undertaken in Inverness being worthy of cascading elsewhere, with particular reference to breastfeeding support as an example;
- there were actions to be taken forward from a recent workshop on poverty and health;
- improved communication and sharing of information could help to break down barriers and attention was drawn to the value of the community planning partnerships and other cross agency partnerships in this regard;
- the value of youth work in improving young people's self esteem was highlighted, with particular reference to the need to support young people who were not attending school; and
- concern was expressed about certain physical barriers such as the lack of drop kerbs for disabled accessibility. Examples of this would be sought outwith the meeting.

Thereafter, the Committee **NOTED** the 19 September 2024 Council report at Appendix 1 to the report and that Members would provide the Chair with any known examples of accessibility issues, with particular reference to pavements that required a dropped kerb.

10. Health and Social Care Contracts Update Cunntas às Ùr mu Chùmhnantan Slàinte is Cùrain Shòisealta

Dr G Rodger declared an interest in Item 10 as Inspiring Young Voices had a Service Level Agreement with the Council, and she left the chamber for the item.

There had been circulated Report No HCW/25/24 by the Assistant Chief Executive – People.

During discussion, the following issues were considered:

- service providers and the Council would benefit from a procurement strategy being in place;
- the consultation undertaken with the providers was welcomed;
- attention was drawn to the hierarchy of priorities, with some contracts requiring urgent review;
- an explanation was provided of why some contracts were for 12 months and others longer;
- the benefits of co-production were highlighted, as were the possibilities for considering contracts across different Council areas; and
- attention was drawn to the importance of adding value.

Thereafter, the Committee:

- i. **NOTED** the progress that had been made to improve contract management; and
- ii. **AGREED** the current activity and future developments.

11. Champions Updates
Cunntasan nan Curaidhean

- * The Committee **AGREED** that Ms Sarah Atkin be appointed as a Children's Champion and **NOTED** the updates from the following Champions:

Trauma

Mrs Morven Reid provided details of the keynote speakers, presentations and workshops at the Highland Trauma Summit that had been held in Strathpeffer Pavillion on 3 September 2024. She summarised learning from the event and made reference to the need to ensure interactions in the Council Chamber reflected trauma-informed practice.

Other achievements included the appointment of a TIP Lead Officer to drive forward how organisations achieved a trauma informed status, and the availability of Traineasy modules.

Next steps included progressing the positive feedback from the summit.

Older Adults

Mrs I MacKenzie summarised the strong local connections she had made advocating for older residents. Topics included effective and appropriate communications, and mobility issues such as dropped kerbs, cluttered pavements, overgrown vegetation, and lack of allocated parking. The importance of creating age-friendly neighbourhoods was highlighted, as was the promotion of intergenerational projects, with various examples provided. Concerns were expressed in relation to the Winter Fuel Payment and reference was made to Age UK's Silver Sunday and Highland Blindcraft Sensory Services. A video by Age UK 'Let's Change How We Age' was shown.

The Chair thanked the Champions for their work.

12. Minutes
Geàrr-chunntas

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

- i. Highland Council / NHS Highland Joint Monitoring Committee held on 19 June 2024; and
- ii. Highland Violence Against Women Partnership Group held on 22 July 2024.

The meeting ended at 1.50pm.

The Highland Council

Minutes of Meeting of the **Economy and Infrastructure Committee** held in the Council Chamber, Council Headquarters, Glenurquhart Road, Inverness on Thursday, 14 November 2024 at 10.30 am.

Present:

Mr M Baird

Mr I Brown

Mr J Bruce

Mr M Cameron

Mr A Christie (substitute)

Mr K Gowans

Mr M Green

Mr R Jones

Mr P Logue

Mr D Macpherson (Remote)

Mr H Morrison (Remote)

Ms L Niven Remote

Mr P Oldham

Mrs T Robertson

Mrs M Ross (substitute) (Remote)

Ms M Smith

Ms K Willis

Non-Members also present:

Mr S Coghill (Remote)

Mr J Finlayson (Remote)

Dr M Gregson

Ms M Hutchison (Remote)

Ms E Knox (Remote)

Ms L Kraft (Remote)

Mr R MacKintosh

Mr T MacLennan (Remote)

Mr D Millar

Mr C Munro (Remote)

Officials in Attendance:

Mr M MacLeod, Assistant Chief Executive – Place

Ms S McKandie, Chief Officer - Revenues & Commercialisation

Ms N Wallace, Service Lead-Environment Dev Active Travel

Mr K Forbes, Property Manager, Estates Management

Ms C Maxwell, Service Finance Manager

Mr M Bailey, Programme Manager (City Region Deal)

Mr A Tyron, Principal Engineer (Structures)

Mr D Chisholm, Tourism and Inward Investment Team Leader

Mr A Puls, Environment Team Leader

Miss J MacLennan, Joint Democratic Services Manager, Performance & Governance

Mrs O Marsh, Committee Officer, Performance & Governance

Also in attendance:

Mr G Moir, CEO, Cairngorm National Park.

Mr G Miles, Head of Strategic Planning, Cairngorm National Park.

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

Mr K Gowans in the Chair

Business

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

Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of Mr J Edmondson, Mr W MacKay and Mr R Stewart.

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

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

Item 7 – Mr M Green, Mr H Morrison and Mrs T Robertson

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

Item 6 – Mr M Green and Mr H Morrison

Item 7 – Mr K Gowans

**3. Good News
Naidheachdan Matha**

The Committee **NOTED** the following items of Good News:-

Caol Flood Scheme

Having been entered by RJ Macleod for a CECA Award, the Caol Flood Scheme won the Resilient Communities Category.

Naver Bridge

The Naver Bridge replacement project was proceeding at pace with work starting within the river to enable installation of the new piled bridge foundations.

Graduate Engineer

On 4 October 2024, Highland Council Graduate Engineer Ewan Gordon graduated from the UHI Inverness with a first-class BEng (Hons) in Civil Engineering. Ewan was also awarded the Institution of Civil Engineers (ICE) Certificate of Merit for best performing graduate. Ewan, from Helmsdale, joined the Highland Council as a trainee technician in 2017, and now works in the Council's Project Design Unit.

Islands Programme Funding – Skye Project Success

The Council had been awarded £760k from the Scottish Government's Islands Programme for two projects on Skye. The £3m Islands Programme was highly competitive, with the Scottish Government receiving applications totalling £6m. £350k has been awarded to the Council to undertake community and public access improvements at three key locations:-

- Claigan Road – Extending the length of existing passing places and provision of new passing places at a cost of £150k. This would complement the £130k allocation in the 2024/25 Roads Maintenance Programme.
- Neist Point – Extending the length of existing passing places and provision of new passing places.
- Glen Brittle – Extending the length of existing passing places and provision of new passing places at a cost £150k. This would complement the £240k allocation in the 24/25 Roads Maintenance Programme.

The Council would also manage a £410k grant to Staffin Community Trust to support the ongoing major redevelopment of Staffin Harbour. The Council had successfully managed a number of funding awards over the years for this important community led regeneration project.

Local Place Plans in Highland

Following six recent validations, there were now eight registered Local Place Plans in Highland and congratulations were expressed to the communities for their efforts in preparing these community-led plans:-

- Black Isle Local Place Plan
- Broadford and Strath Local Place Plan
- Duror and Kentallen Local Place Plan
- Garve and District Local Place Plan
- Lochalsh Local Place Plan
- Torridon and Kinlochewe Local Place Plan

There were also 38 Local Place Plans in progress.

4. Presentation – Cairngorm 2030 Taisbeanadh – Am Monadh Ruadh 2030

Mr Grant Moir, Cairngorm National Park gave a presentation on the Cairngorms National Park. The Park, across 20 long-term projects, wanted to achieve their vision that by 2030 the Cairngorms National Park would be an exemplar of people and nature thriving together in a rapidly changing world. The presentation included projects such as transforming landscapes, empowering communities, rethinking how we travel and Championing Wellbeing.

During discussion, Members raised the following main points:-

- thanks were expressed for the presentation;
- further details were requested regarding the Outdoor Dementia Centre and the Nature Prescription, and whether there was a planned rollout for wider Highland access;
- it was queried when the citizens assemblies or citizens jury would be involved in decision making or recommendations;

- it was felt that litter disposal was a major focus to educate the public to do so responsibly. In this regard it was queried if there were any plans to tackle this and plans on how to benchmark performance against Loch Lomond in terms of the key objectives; and
- thanks were expressed to staff for their hard work as the roadshows had been successful and well attended. In addition, it was queried how underrepresented groups were intended to be contacted and engaged with.

The Committee **NOTED** the presentation.

**5. Quarterly Revenue and Performance Monitoring Report Quarter 2
2024/25
Aithisg Ràitheil Teachd-a-steach agus Sgrùdadh Coileanadh Ràith 2
2024/25**

There had been circulated Report No. ECI/44/2024 by the Assistant Chief Executive - Place.

During discussion, Members raised the following main points:-

- thanks were expressed for a very honest report;
- commendation was expressed for the continued service provision of the Corran crossing and for the hard-working staff despite the many challenges and costs that had been incurred on the ferry project. It was hoped that there would be an electric ferry provision in the near future;
- disappointment was expressed regarding the overspent budgets but it was felt that these would improve over time;
- concern was expressed regarding the Map Highland Carbon Resources process as there had been a forecasted overspend of the Climate Change Team. It was therefore queried how progress would be made as no significant progress had been made since 2023 Q4 with none predicted;
- concern was raised regarding vacancies not being filled which would result in high workloads for exiting staff and could lead to stress and sickness. Vacancies should not be targeted for savings;
- it was queried if Capital budget could be allocated to some of the refit works to offset the Corran Ferry forecasted overspend and assurance was sought that once works were completed that would be the end of the recent serious issues;
- it was queried if the Council had checked that the Corran Ferry would be included in the Scottish Government capital budget in view of the additional funds received through the Barnett Formula most recently referred to in the Chancellor's budget;
- reassurance was sought, and provided, regarding the Council's strategies to combat the overspend on Harbours and Ferries highlighted at paragraph 5.3.6 in the report;
- regarding Appendix 1, it was queried if the staff costs underspend of £1.875m included recruitment cost reductions or if these additional savings would be included in the underspend by the end of the financial

year. In this regard, it was also queried what strategic aims would be at risk as a result of any recruitment actions being taken and if further scrutiny loss calculations should be undertaken due to the Project Design Unit understaffing issues;

- regarding paragraph 5.3 of the report, the underspend of £71k for Planning, Environment and Building Standards, it was queried if these funds could be used for the Environmental and Planning Enforcement service as there were only 1 or 2 enforcement officers dealing with breaches and more were needed;
- it was surprising that car parks were reporting an overspend as it had been anticipated they would produce revenue income. In this regard it was felt that the car parking team required additional staff to ensure income generation;
- regarding the Rose Street car park loss of parking, information was sought regarding the long term plan for the car park and whether there were contingencies in place should it structural fail in the future. In this vein, it was queried if the Rose Street car park received funds from the Inverness Common Good Fund;
- as the Common Good Fund in Fort William received 50% of the parking income, it was expressed that, had this previously been known, the structured targeting might have been carried out differently; and
- an update was provided regarding Marine Fuel Sales. It was felt that whilst targets had been overambitious, overall the Service was performing well despite some regular vessel customers relocating north to Orkney as fish migrated there due to climate change.

The Committee **NOTED**:-

- i. the Service's revenue monitoring position; and
- ii. the Service's performance and risk information.

6. Sustainable Tourism Strategy 2024-2030 Ro-innleachd Turasachd Sheasmhach 2024-2030

Transparency Statements: The following declared a connection to this item but, having applied the objective test, did not consider that they had an interest to declare:-

**Mr M Green - as an owner of a Holiday Let
Mr H Morrison – as an owner of a hotel**

There had been circulated Report No. ECI/45/24 by the Assistant Chief Executive - Place.

During discussion, Members raised the following main points:-

- thanks were expressed to officers for their hard work in producing the Tourism Strategy and Member workshops;
- information was sought regarding a timeline for development of actions and delivery of the strategy. In this regard, it was highlighted that the

Lochaber area was typically overwhelmed with tourists during events and the summer season and that consideration should be given to the Ben Nevis Visitor Centre within the delivery plan;

- it was queried what the impact would be of withdrawing funding from Destination Management Organisations in the strategy, given the positive effect they had provided so far;
- the report should be a live and fluid document as several additional subjects for inclusion had been identified by Members such as; encouraging motorhomes into campsites, sustainable practices, a link up with the Transportation Service from the airport to Inverness, electric charging connections for cruise ships and recycling waste materials from cruise ships. It was felt that greener solutions should be investigated further;
- it was confirmed that the Scottish Government were beginning to consult on a future cruise ship and campervan levies;
- regarding page 26 of the report, it was queried if the statement that renewable energy developments across Highland were having a negative impact on the visitor economy was evidence or perception based;
- it was queried if train travel formed part of the sustainable travel network plan as they had posed a real challenge to transport goods such as bicycles. In this regard it was requested that trains be included within the strategy;
- concern was raised that the 140 online responses could either be a display of apathy towards the strategy or indicate most were happy;
- it was queried how the strategic documents had taken into account the concern that there was insufficient detail on how the Council would achieve the delivery plan;
- it was queried what benchmarks, targets or evaluations there would be for the delivery plan and when the Committee would be updated and agree that they were suitable measures. In this regard it was confirmed that Members would see the strategic delivery plan before it was implemented; and
- the honesty, directness and case study analysis within the report was welcomed. However, it was felt that that the weaknesses were the small number of people who had taken part in the exercise and therefore robust engagement within the tourist industry needed to be undertaken.

The Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the summary of responses to the consultation as set out in Appendix 2 of the report and the key changes which had been made following the consultation as outlined in section 6 of the report;
- ii. **AGREED** to adopt the sustainable tourism strategy as set out in Appendix 1 of the report;
- iii. **AGREED** to the next steps set out in Section 8 of the report, which included the preparation of an associated delivery programme; and
- iv. **AGREED** that the Tourism Strategy be amended to accommodate consultation feedback on the visitor levy scheme as proposed in Item 7 and that a further report on any changes be reported to a future meeting of this Committee.

**7. Proposal to Consult on the Introduction of a Visitor Levy Scheme
Moladh Co-chomhairleachadh a Chumail mu Bhith a' Toirt A-steach
Sgeama Cìs Luchd-tadhail**

Declarations of Interest – the undernoted Members made Declarations of Interest in this item and, in accordance with paragraph 5.6 of the revised Code of Conduct, they left the meeting for this item:-

Mr M Green – as an owner of a Holiday Let

Mr H Morrioso – as he runs a hotel

Mrs T Robertson – as an owner of a property used for short term lets

Transparency Statement – Mr K Gowans declared a connection to this item as a close family member was employed with the Council in relation to the Tourism Levy Scheme but, having applied the objective test, did not consider that he had an interest to declare.

There had been circulated joint Report No. ECI/46/24 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Place and Assistant Chief Executive – Corporate.

During discussion, Members raised the following main points:-

- it was important that consultation be engaging and as inviting as possible to encourage participation with an appropriate amount of time be set aside for the process to get it right. In this regard, it was felt that the questionnaire must include a free text box after each question to gather additional subjective information, rather than prescriptive tick box options. It was also suggested that the questions be numbered within the consultation for easier referencing;
- it was accepted that the consultation process was a huge exercise with complexities. Concern was raised that it did not confirm how the levy would be collected. In addition, the costs involved in implementing the scheme were not included in the consultation and clarification was needed regarding the application of VAT and any implications that this would have for businesses;
- it was felt that responses to the consultation should number into the hundreds to be considered a representative consultation;
- suggestion was made to further review and shape the consultation paper to ensure its success as the current layout was felt to contain weaknesses and challenges which might prevent people wanting to be involved in this exercise;
- it was confirmed that the posed questions were in line with the Scottish Government's guidelines and it was impossible for Council to estimate how many, or what type, of response would be received. It had been anticipated that there would have been more than 140 responses;
- it was queried if the visitor levy revenue collected locally would be reinvested locally. In this regard it was confirmed that this type of decision would be included within the consultation exercise;
- information was sought as to what targeted action could be taken to reach any particular area or group who had not responded to the questionnaire;

- concern was raised that only accommodation businesses were being focussed on, whereas visitors in motorhomes or campervans might circumvent the visitor levy but would still use many Highland resources;
- it was felt that clarification be sent out to businesses on VAT thresholds and visitor levy before the consultation process was undertaken; and
- a suggestion was made that an additional question be added to the questionnaire to ask that, in the event that VAT was applicable to the visitor levy and this added to a business's turnover, would they close down their business earlier to remain below the VAT threshold. In this regard it was confirmed that HMRC might increase the VAT threshold and much of this information would be captured in the consultation.

The Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the summary Impact Assessments as set out in Appendix 1 of the report;
- ii. **AGREED** the outline of the proposed Visitor Levy Scheme as set out in Appendix 2 of the report;
- iii. **AGREED** to consult for a 12-week period commencing on Friday 15 November 2024 and closing on Friday 7 February 2025;
- iv. **NOTED** that following the consultation a report would be considered at a future meeting of the Highland Council which would set out the findings of the consultation and invite Members to decide whether to implement a Visitor Levy Scheme; and
- v. **AGREED** to include a free text box at each question within the consultation paper to gather additional information.

8. Capital Monitoring – Q2 2024/25 Sgrùdadh Calpa – R2 2024/25

There had been circulated Report No. ECI/47/2024 by the Assistant Chief Executive - Place.

The Committee **NOTED** the financial position as of 30 September 2024 and the estimated year end forecast.

9. Inverness & Highland City Region Deal – 2023/24 Annual Report Cùmhnant Baile Roinne Inbhir Nis & na Gàidhealtachd – Aithisg Bhliadhnail 2023/24

There had been circulated Report No. ECI/48/24 by the Assistant Chief Executive - Place.

During discussion, Members raised the following main points:-

- the Made Road Orders and Compulsory Purchase Orders for the A9/A96 Inshes to Smithton project, made on 14 May, had come into force on 20 June 2024 and an indication was sought as to when this project might take place; and

- the funding redirected to the Corran Ferry Vessel Replacement from the A9/A82 Longman Junction project was welcomed and it was hoped an announcement from the Scottish Government about the possibility of an electric vessel would be forthcoming before the end of the year.

The Committee **APPROVED** the IHCRD Annual Report as a record of the activity and delivery during 2023/24.

10. Rural Housing Planning Policy Explanatory Note Nota Mineachaidh Poileasaidh Dealbhaidh Taigheadais Dùthchail

There had been circulated Report No. ECI/49/24 by the Assistant Chief Executive - Place.

During discussion, Members raised the following main points:-

- this provided an opportunity to re-interpret parts of the National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4) and to ease planning considerations in rural areas to help support the rural economy;
- the Planning Review Body had seen numerous appeals against refused applications in rural areas and it was hoped this would clarify what was acceptable in the highland landscape, thus assisting both officers and applicants;
- it was hoped there would be further training for Members and information for Community Councils and communities so they had a greater understanding of this policy;
- 20-minute neighbourhoods was not necessarily practical in rural areas;
- pressure needed to be put on the Council's partners to provide access to services, such as GP practices, in rural area; and
- the aim was to develop sustainable communities as well as housing.

The Committee:-

- i. **AGREED** the Rural Housing Supplementary Guidance – Explanatory Note contained in Appendix 2 of the report; and
- ii. **NOTED** that, from the point of approval by Committee, this Explanatory Note would inform all planning advice and decisions.

11. Roads Structures Annual Report Aithisg Bhliadhnail Structaran Rathaid

There had been circulated Report No. ECI/50/24 by the Assistant Chief Executive - Place.

During discussion, Members raised the following main points:-

- the number of bridges needing repair was acknowledged but the budget allocated to meet the necessary repairs over the next 5-6 years was queried;

- it was also queried when the major bridge schemes described in the report would take place and what the associated timelines were;
- information was sought, and provided, as to the repair and maintenance schedules for Bonar Bridge, Clava Bridge, the Waterloo Bridge and the bridge over the River Averon in Alness; and
- the timescales for the maintenance and/or repair of the Infirmary Bridge, Inverness was sought as the report provided two different dates. The schedule had slipped but repairs were now programmed for 2025. Current estimates were that these repairs would cost £535k with a replacement costing in the region of £1.2m. It was queried if spending £535k was the best use of resources and that investment should alternatively be made to its replacement. However, as the Chair pointed out that its replacement was not in the Council's Capital Programme.

The Committee **NOTED**:-

- i. the current position in Highland in relation to the number of structures inspections undertaken (as detailed in section 6.2 of the report);
- ii. the position of the Bridge Stock Condition Indicators in Highland (as detailed in section 7 of the report); and
- iii. the risks that were carried by the Council in relation to its road structures (as detailed in section 3.3 of the report).

12. Highland Local Development Plan – Evidence Gathering Plana Leasachaidh Ionadail na Gàidhealtachd – Cruinneachadh Fianais

There had been circulated Report No. ECI/51/24 by the Assistant Chief Executive - Place.

This had been a major piece of work and the evidence pack was comprehensive and well-considered. However, in relation to the “Our Coastline” section, consideration needed to be given to how the Plan would address issues arising from where planning permissions had been granted for building but which were too close to the coastline and where there was a now a flooding danger.

The Committee:-

- i. **AGREED** the draft evidence pack in Appendix 2 of the report, and **AGREED** for these to be issued for public consultation, noting that further work was required to gather relevant evidence for each theme and area;
- ii. **AGREED** to delegate approval of the final evidence packs to the Assistant Chief Executive – Place, in consultation with the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Economy & Infrastructure Committee prior to public consultation;
- iii. **AGREED** the next steps for public consultation outlined in Section 7 of the report and **NOTED** the updated timescales for preparation of the LDP;
- iv. **AGREED** for the Call for Sites template to be issued for consultation as soon as practicable after Committee;
- v. **AGREED** for a revised Development Plan Scheme to be prepared and published in early 2025 that reflects on the SG requirements for LDP

engagement, and the timescales and next steps outlined in Section 7 of the report; and

- vi. **NOTED** the important role that communities were playing in shaping this evidence and the additional time that had been provided for this purpose.

13. Ecology Strategy and Action Plan Ro-innleachd agus Plana-gnìomha Eag-eòlais

There had been circulated Report No. ECI/52/24 by the Assistant Chief Executive - Place.

The Strategy and Action Plan was positively received and the Member workshops commended. It was also highlighted that small changes by individuals could make significant changes.

The Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the content of the draft Ecology Strategy and Actions contained therein;
- ii. **NOTED** the response to the public consultation; and
- iii. **AGREED** to adopt the draft Ecology Strategy and Action Plan as detailed in Appendix 2 of the report.

14. Delivery Plan Budget Monitoring & Progress update Cunntas às Ùr mu Sgrùdadh Buidseit & Adhartas a' Phlana Lìbhrigidh

There had been circulated joint Report No. ECI/53/24 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Place and Assistant Chief Executive People.

The Committee **NOTED** the updates provided for all of the Delivery Plan Projects/Programmes in this report.

15. Infrastructure Levy for Scotland: Scottish Government Discussion Paper Cis Bun-structair airson Alba: Pàipear Deasbaid Riaghaltas na h-Alba

There had been circulated Report No. ECI/54/24 by the Assistant Chief Executive - Place.

The Committee **AGREED** to **HOMOLOGATE** officer comments, as detailed at Appendix 2 of the report, as the Highland Council's response to the Scottish Government's Infrastructure Levy Discussion Paper.

16. Minutes Geàrr-chunntas

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

- i. South PAC – 18 June 2024 (pp.601-605);
- ii. North PAC – 2024 7 August 2024(pp.606-613);

- iii. South PAC – 20 August 2024 (pp.614-618);
- iv. North PAC– 17 September 2024 (pp.619-622);

and also **APPROVED**:-

- v. Community Regeneration Strategic Fund Sub Group 27 August 2024 (pp.623-624); and
- vi. City Region Deal Monitoring Group held on 24 October 2024 (pp.625-627).

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

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

18. Housing Development Initiatives **Iomairtean Leasachaidh Taigheadais**

There had been circulated to Members only Report No. ECI/55/24 by the Assistant Chief Executive - Place.

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

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

There had been circulated to Members only Report No. ECI/56/24 by the Assistant Chief Executive - Place.

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

20. Land and Property **Fearann agus Seilbh**

There had been circulated to Members only Report No. ECI/57/24 by the Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure, Environment & Economy.

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

The meeting ended at 12.50 pm

Minutes of Meeting of the **City of Inverness Area Committee** held in the Council Chamber, Council Headquarters, Glenurquhart Road, Inverness on 18 November 2024 at 10.00 am.

Present:

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

In attendance:

Mr D Haas, Senior Community Development Manager
Mr K Forbes, Property Manager
Ms J Cromarty, Team Leader (Sustainable Transport)
Ms L Mateer, Principal Housing Officer
Ms J Johnston, Accountant
Miss J MacLennan, Joint Democratic Services Manager
Mrs G MacPherson, Committee Officer

Also in attendance:

Mr A McLean, Station Comander, Scottish Fire and Rescue
Mr McAulay, Station Comander (Cannich), Scottish Fire and Rescue
Mr C Donald, NatureScot

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 I Brown was in the Chair

Business

Preliminaries

Prior to the commencement of the meeting, the Chair welcomed Dr Gregson to his first meeting of the City of Inverness Area Committee.

Also, he paid tribute to former Highland Councillor Janet Home MBE who sadly passed away on 5 October 2024. Mrs Home served as a member of the former District Council from 1995 to 2007, then being elected to Highland Council. During her time as a Councillor she played an active role, serving on numerous Committees and, in 2001, she took the role of Convener of the Northern Joint Police Board and, in 2003, chaired the Licensing Board. She was deeply involved in youth work and played a major part in the construction of the Culcabok and Drakies Hall as well as serving on her local Community Council.

Other Members shared their memories of Mrs Home and condolences were expressed to her friends and family

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

Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of Mr M Cameron, Ms H Crawford, Mr K Gowans and Mr A Sinclair

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

The Committee **NOTED** the following:

Declarations of Interest:-

Item 7a – Mrs J Hendry
Item 14 - Mr D Gregg

and the following Transparency Statements:-

Items 6 and 7c – Mr A Christie and Mr D Gregg

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

There had been circulated Report No CIA/31/24 by the Local Senior Officer for Highland.

During discussion, Members raised the following main points:-

- advice was sought as to what Members could do, in association with communities and schools, when there was a pattern of deliberate fires, to ensure it could be eradicated;
- information would be useful as to the impact interlinked fire and smoke alarms was having in domestic properties;
- individuals accessing a number of Council benefits and NHS services should be signposted towards Fire Safety visits. It was also suggested officers could be trained to provide other advice, such as trip and fall hazards;
- fire officers were sometimes mobilised to assist with those who had fallen;
- it was hoped that by March/April 2025 the Cannich Crew station would be back to full strength and able to respond to call outs; and
- it would be interesting for Members to know the reasons behind accidental dwelling fires.

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

4. **Presentation - Inverness Gull Management programme-NatureScot -** **Licensing update** **Taisbeanadh – Prògram Stiùireadh Fhaoileagan Inbhir Nis – NàdarAlba –** **Cunntas às ùr mu cheadachd**

Chris Donald, NatureScot, following the request by Members of the Inverness City Area Committee held on 18 August, gave an update on the application of the licensing system undertaken under the wildlife and countryside act 1981. This would be with particular reference to Gull management within the city which had

been undertaken by Inverness BID and supported by the Inverness Common Good Fund, since 2012.

During discussion, Members raised the following main points:-

- Recognising that an overall decline in gull populations was reported, Members referred to many anecdotes and concerns from local residents, schools and business owners, about a perceived increase in problems caused by gulls, particularly during 2024. These including children being unable to eat outside at school, catering businesses being unable to use their outdoor seating, cars being damaged by corrosive gull faeces and members of the public, particularly the elderly, being attacked and dive-bombed by gulls. Concrete data was required to fully understand the situation with gulls in the centre of Inverness;
- given the amount of public concern about the problems gulls were causing, a public presentation explaining the legalities around the gull situation would be beneficial;
- it was reported that the problems being faced in the city centre with gulls was spreading to the suburban areas of Inverness and preventative measures taken in one area tended to move the problems into another area;
- clarification was sought, and provided, on the legal situation which was that, as soon as the birds started nesting, they were protected and a licence was required to interfere with them. Challenges around the reporting and action timescales were summarised, recognising the gestation period could be as little as 21 days, and a licence could take 28 days to be issued, by which time the chicks were hatched. Members highlighted the importance of making an area less attractive to gulls for nesting at an earlier stage;
- clarification on the diet of gulls was sought, noting that they were opportunistic in nature and would generally eat what was most readily available;
- electronic litter bins were effective;
- various hotspots for gulls around the city were highlighted by Members, although others pointed out that the whole city was affected;
- data on the extent of the gull problem in Inverness was required, with particular reference to the need to establish if the problem was increasing, and if gulls were becoming increasingly aggressive;
- it was suggested a report should be prepared on the possibility of providing Common Good Fund grants to businesses to take preventative measures against gulls nesting on their buildings;
- it was disappointing the licensing requirements had changed and had led to a perceived increase in gull problems in Inverness. The licencing process needed to be speeded up and preventative measures permitted;
- residents and visitors should be provided with more comprehensive information on how to minimise gull problems, and on the associated public health risks; and
- it was suggested NatureScot could develop an online portal for people to report gull incidents, as part of data gathering.

The Committee **NOTED** the presentation.

**5. Sustainable Transport Update - Mobility Hubs
Cunntas às ùr mu Chòmhdhail Sheasmhach – Co-ionadan So-ghluasadachd**

There is circulated Report No CIA/32/24 by the Assistant Chief Executive - Place.

During discussion, Members raised the following main points:-

- the positive anecdotes in the report were welcomed;
- information was sought, and provided, on efforts undertaken to reduce vandalism to ebikes following problems in the summer and this included the installation of CCTV in certain locations and changes to the docking stations. More information would be provided to Mr Brown outwith the meeting;
- the progress at the Torvean Mobility Hub was welcomed. It was queried if solar panels had been considered for EV charging there and this information would be provided to Mr Ballance outwith the meeting. Assurance was sought, and provided, that the Hub at Torvean would not hinder visitors to the park or the operation of the popular Park Run;
- information was sought on the likely timescales for the STAG appraisal for the North Kessock and Torr Mobility Hub; and
- disappointment was expressed that the funding for the bus partnership had been paused, with reference made to the £1.4b in funding received by the Scottish Government for local projects.

The Committee **NOTED** the Sustainable Transport Update – Mobility Hubs.

**6. Housing Performance Report – 1 April 2024 to 30 September 2024
Aithisg Dèanadais Taigheadais – 1 Giblean 2024 gu 30 Sultain 2024**

Transparency Statements: The following declared a connection to this item but, having applied the objective test, did not consider that they had an interest to declare:-

Mr A Christie - as a General Manager of Inverness Badenoch and Strathspey Citizens Advice Bureau

Mr D Gregg – as a member of the Board of the Inverness Badenoch and Strathspey Citizens Advice Bureau

There was circulated Report No CIA/33/24 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Place.

During discussion, Members raised the following main points:-

- one case of anti social behaviour could have a significant detrimental impact on many other tenants. Therefore, information was requested in the next report to Committee on how many incidents of anti social behaviour led to evictions. It was advised that evictions were a last resort. The housing team worked with the Council's legal services to look at whether there were other measures that could be taken instead of eviction. A briefing on anti social behaviour and actions to address this issue would be provided at a future Ward business meeting;
- in terms of anti social behaviour cases and how the Council compared to other local authorities, information would be provided to Members. The

housing team were more focused on this issue and it was hoped incidents would reduce going forward;

- the number of homeless presentations remained flat and this was reassuring in some ways. For example, there were not large numbers of evictions from the private sector or repossessions from mortgage lenders;
- in relation to time spent in temporary accommodation information on whether single men under the age of 30 were spending longer in temporary accommodation was requested;
- reassurance was sought that people who were working were not put in temporary accommodation as it was likely they would end up with rent arrears. Also, the amount of rent arrears for those in temporary accommodation should be provided. It was advised that there were people who were classed as working homeless and the team were looking at whether additional benefits for them could be applied for and options for types of accommodation that could be offered to them, such as social housing where rents were lower;
- in terms of housing allocation, a large percentage of those allocated housing were from homeless presentations and there was a need to reassure those who were homeless at home, in overcrowded accommodation or in unsatisfactory accommodation that help was available. It was advised that the housing team were managing to assist those people in these situations and a breakdown of information on homeless presentations would be provided at a Ward business meeting;
- the work of the housing team was commended. They were very helpful and informative and willing to go that extra mile to help people who were in very difficult situations;
- the work by the housing team to help those in rent arrears was highlighted. This included working with Welfare Support colleagues and the Citizen's Advice Bureau;
- contact details of the homeless prevention team would be provided to Mr D Gregg;
- in terms of who would pay the rent if a tenant was sent to prison, this depended on whether they were remanded or convicted, whether they were on universal credit or had the means to pay their rent. The housing team worked with the Prison service on a case by case basis; and
- information on how the Inverness South area was performing with their rent arrears would be provided to Mr D Macpherson.

The Committee **NOTED** the information provided on housing performance in the period 1 April – 30 September 2024.

7. Inverness Common Good Fund Maoin Math Coitcheann Inbhir Nis

a) Inverness Common Good Fund, Inverness Town House – Update Maoin Math Coitcheann Inbhir Nis, Taigh Baile Inbhir Nis – Cunntas às Ùr

Declaration of Interest – Mrs J Hendry made a Declaration of Interest in this item as a shareholder Teclan Ltd, who designed and built the new website and, in accordance with paragraph 5.6 of the revised Code of Conduct, left the meeting.

There had been circulated No CIA/34/24 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Place.

The Inverness Town House project was very impressive and staff involved on it were commended for their work on the project. There were still some challenges to overcome but, in the next few years, the Town House would be in a much better place and was a great asset for Inverness and Highlands for a long time to come.

The Committee **NOTED**:-

- i. the progress in respect of the Feasibility Study, the cost to be met from the ICGF Townhouse Future Planning budget with updates on the progress of the study being provided to the ICGF Sub-Committee. Further, that due to the number of submissions, additional time was required to select the successful tender with completion of the feasibility study being re-scheduled to March 2025;
- ii. the progress made on the establishment of the website, extension of civic commercial use and in particular the success in letting parts of the Town House to small businesses; and
- iii. the progress of works in relation to the former Town Clerk's office and the transformation of the Town House into a multi-functional venue without detriment to its primary civic use.

**b) Financial Monitoring
Sgrùdadh Ionmhasail**

There had been circulated Report No. CIA/35/24 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Place.

During discussion, Members raised the following main points:-

- an assurance was sought, and provided, that the Council's new financial system was operating to the degree required for the financial monitoring of the Common Good Fund;
- an explanation was sought, and provided, on the spend to date shown on the Town House Utilities and Cleaning budget, noting the cleaning element was carried out in-house by the Council and the costs recharged towards the end of the financial year; and
- in relation to cleaning costs, an assurance was provided that a joint procurement exercise was currently being undertaken for cleaning in respect of the Town House and Victorian Market.

The Committee **NOTED** the financial monitoring report to 30 September 2024 and that overall expenditure is within agreed budgets excepting estimated outturns detailed in Appendices 1 and 2 of the report.

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

Transparency Statements: The following declared a connection to this item but, having applied the objective test, did not consider that they had an interest to declare:-

Mr A Christie - as a General Manager of Inverness Badenoch and Strathspey Citizens Advice Bureau
Mr D Gregg – as a member of the Board of the Inverness Badenoch and Strathspey Citizens Advice Bureau

There had been circulated Report No. CIA/36/24 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Place.

In this connection, there had been circulated separately a copy of supporting documentation as Booklet A.

The Committee **APPROVED** the grant application of £25,000 from Blythswood Care for the Highland Foodbank (Inverness) and that the funds be drawn from the Winter Payments budget.

8. Ward Discretionary Budget Applications Iarrtasan Buidseat fo Ùghdarras Uàird

The Committee **NOTED** that the following City of Inverness Ward Discretionary Budget applications had been approved since 27 May 2024:-

Ward 12

- Charleston Academy: School Tie for Incoming S1's - £480
- International Sheep Dog Society Local Committee: Scottish National Sheepdog Trail 2024 - £500
- Beaulieu Community Council: Beaulieu Primary School Garden - £200
- Kilmorack Community Council: Defib Pad Replacement - £320
- Beaulieu Community Council: Local Place Plan - £750

Ward 13

- Charleston Seniors Club: Seniors Summer Trip - £702.75
- Charleston Academy: School Tie for Incoming S1's - £490
- Highland Hockey Club: Second Storage Unit - £750
- St Joseph's RC PS: Our Outdoor Learning Space - £1,302.07
- Inverness High School: Poverty Proofing Activity Day - £754
- Littering Picking - £250
- Inverness High School: Beekeeping Project - £153.88

Ward 14

- Inverness High School: Poverty Proofing Activity Day - £1,506
- Dalneigh Play Park Project: Fun Day August 2024 - £750
- Friends of Merkinch Local Nature Reserve: Nature Volunteer Programme Insurance Costs - £640
- Inverness High School Beekeeping Project - £307.80
- Inverness Festival Association: Inverness Music Festival 2025 - £750
- Highland Schools Wind Orchestra: Orchestra 2025 Tour to Augsburg Germany - £300

Ward 15

- 27th Inverness Brownies: Assistance with Let Fees - £822.66
- Cable Runway Repairs: Esk Road Play Area - £300
- See Saw: Holm Play Park - £120
- Highland Schools Wind Orchestra: Orchestra 2025 Tour to Augsburg Germany - £300

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Ward 16

- 7th Inverness (Crown) Camping Trip - £400
- HLH Millburn Associated Schools Active Football Groups - £2,254.35
- Community Action for Raigmore (CARE): Upgrade of Shack - £2,000
- Raigmore Primary School: P7 Residential Trip and Class Trips - £3,000

Ward 17

- Balloch Primary Parent Council: Fundraising Project Reading Programme - £1,600
- Croy Community Garden Group: Polytunnel / Water Pump Installation - £420
- Highland Schools Wind Orchestra: Orchestra 2025 Tour to Augsburg Germany - £300

Ward 19

- Balloch Primary Parent Council: Fundraising Project Reading Programme - £400
- Parkour Repairs Inshes Park - £500
- Balvonie Park Association: Balvonie Community Woodland and Land Acquisition - £6,000

9. Appointment to Sub-Committee, Working Groups etc Cur an Dreuchd gu Fo-Chomataidh, Buidhnean Obrach is eile

The Committee **AGREED** that the Group Leaders on the CIAC Committee discuss and appoint Members to the Common Good Fund Sub-Committee (*Consequently the following membership was determined by Group Leaders:- Mr C Ballance, Mr M Cameron, Mrs G Campbell-Sinclair, Mr A Christie, Mr A Graham, Dr M Gregson, Mrs I MacKenzie Ms K MacLean, Mr D Macpherson, Mr D McDonald, Mrs M Reid*).

10. Appointments to Outside Bodies Cur an Dreuchd gu Buidhnean on Taobh A-muigh

The Committee **AGREED**:-

- a) defer an appointment to the Inverness Town Twinning Committee; and
- b) to appoint Ms K MacLean to the Highland Disability Sport.

11. Minutes Geàrr-chunntas

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

- i. City of Inverness Area Committee held on 19 August 2024 - **NOTED**;
- ii. Inverness Events and Festivals Working Group held on 15 August 2024, 26 September 2024 and 24 October 2024 - **APPROVED**; and
- iii. Inverness Common Good Fund Sub-Committee held on 28 October 2024 - **APPROVED**.

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

The Committee **RESOLVED** that, under Section 50A(4) of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973, the public be excluded from the meeting for items 13, 14 and 15 on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraphs 6 and 9 of Part 1 of Schedule 7A of the Act.

13. Town House Feasibility Study – Update
Sgrùdadh Iomchaidheachd Taigh a’ Bhaile – Cunntas às Ùr

There had been circulated to Members only Report No CIA/37/24 by the Assistant Chief Executive - Place

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

14. Lease Proposal for Hydrogen Development, Longman
Moladh Aonta-màil airson Leasachadh Haidridein, An Longman

Declaration of Interest – Mr D Gregg made a Declaration of Interest in this item as a close family member was a civil servant involved in hydrogen policy and, in accordance with paragraph 5.6 of the revised Code of Conduct, left the meeting.

There had been circulated to Members only Report No CIA/38/24 by the Assistant Chief Executive - Place.

The Committee **NOTED** and **AGREED** the amended recommendations as detailed and in the report and tabled at the meeting.

15. Inverness Common Good Account Sites and Premises Transaction Report
Aithisg Gnothachais Làraich agus Togalaichean Chunntasan Maoin Math Choitcheann Inbhir Nis

There had been circulated to Members only Report No CIA/39/24 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Place

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

16. Notices of Motion
Brathan Glusaid

The following Notices of Motion had been received by the Chief Officer - Legal and Corporate Governance –

- (i) “Noting the significant issues in 2024 with maintenance of open spaces, parks, play areas, verges, river banks and other areas, that this Committee will consider and review the Maintenance Plan for 24/25 at its next meeting.”

Signed: Mr A Graham Mr A Christie Mrs T Robertson

During discussion, the following issues were raised:-

- as a result of the reduction in the budget for the maintenance of amenity areas agreed by the Council in March 2024, there had been issues in Inverness with the level of service. The fact staffing levels for this activity were significantly lower than previously was also highlighted;

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- in particular, Council housing estates had been affected and concern that some new housing developments had not been included in the maintenance list;
- it was important that the City was smart, tidy and attractive for both residents and visitors alike and the Motion had been put forward so there was more visibility and discussion on how open space maintenance was handled going forward; and
- support was expressed for the terms of the Motion and confirmation was provided that a report would be submitted to the next meeting in February 2025.

The Committee **AGREED** the Motion.

(ii) **Additional Urgent Motion**

In line with Standing Order 8, it was advised that the Chair had agreed that the following should be considered as an urgent Motion due to the recent Post Office announcement and the public consultation proposal.

“The Committee notes with concern the announcement by the Post Office that the central Inverness Post Office on Queensgate is threatened with closure along with 115 other branches nationwide. The Committee is concerned any reduction in services available to Inverness would negatively impact city centre businesses and residents. The committee requests that the City Leader writes to the Chief Executive of the Post Office asking them to:-

1. review all possible options to keep the Inverness branch open
2. confirm the planned dates for the 6 weeks of community consultation to hear residents and business views as suggested in the Post Office Principles of Public Engagement’

Signed: Mr D Gregg Mr I Brown

During discussion, the following issues were raised:-

- the Post Office was a service the City of Inverness needed and it was unthinkable for any city not to have a Central Post Office;
- Sub Post Offices were not in a position to provide everything a Central Post Office could. The Post office on Queengate was a well used facility by businesses and the public and for those sending sensitive documents such as banking, passports and visas and all options should be considered as to how it could be kept open including co-location with other services;
- the Post Office needed to provide the dates of the proposed consultation; and
- given there was cross-Committee support for this Motion a Press Release from all the Area Group Leaders should be issued.

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 20 November 2024 at 10.30am.

Present:

Mr I Brown	Mr P Logue
Mrs I Campbell (Remote)	Mr A MacKintosh
Ms S Fanet	Mr J McGillivray (Remote)
Mr J Grafton	Mr D Millar (Remote)
Dr M Gregson	Mr C Munro
Mr S Kennedy (Substitute)	Mr R Stewart

Non-Members also present:

Dr C Birt	Mr W MacKay
Mr J Finlayson	

In attendance:

Ms K Lackie, Assistant Chief Executive - People
Ms A Jansson, Area Education and Learning Manager
Ms L Walker, Gaelic Development Manager
Ms M A MacLeod Mitchell, Gaelic Development Officer
Ms E Rodgers, Gaelic Policy Officer
Ms J MacDonald, Senior Gaelic Translation Officer
Mr I Jackson, Education Officer
Mrs S MacAskill, Head Teacher, Dingwall Primary School
Ms J MacLennan, Joint Democratic Services Manager
Ms G MacPherson, Committee Officer

Also in attendance:

Mr S Thoumire, Creative Director of Hands Up for Trad
Mr S Walsh, Chief Executive, High Life 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.

Mr C Munro in the Chair

Business

1. Calling of the Roll and Apologies for Absence

Apologies were intimated on behalf of Mr R Bremner and Mrs M Paterson.

2. Declarations of Interest/Transparency Statement

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

Item 3 – Mr C Munro

3. Good News

Transparency Statement: Mr C Munro made a Transparency Statement in respect of this item as a close family member participated in Portree High School's cultural trip to Northern Ireland and he himself was an accompanying responsible adult. However, having applied the objective test, he did not consider that he had an interest to declare.

The Committee **NOTED** the good news as presented.

4. Gaelic Education Update

There had been circulated Report No. G/14/24 by the Assistant Chief Executive – People accompanying a presentation by Mrs Sara Macaskill, Head Teacher, Dingwall Primary School. Mrs MacAskill described Dingwall Primary's journey in Gaelic Medium Education and the reason as to why she was passionate about driving Gaelic forward and providing a Gaelic positive ethos and culture. Pupils too joined Mrs MacAskill to explain to Members what Gaelic meant to them.

During discussion, the following points were raised:-

- Dingwall Primary School had brought the community, staff and pupils on board with fostering a whole school approach to Gaelic. This should not be unique and set a benchmark for others to follow;
- Mrs MacAskill was to be congratulated and her presentation demonstrated what she had achieved at Dingwall Primary. It showed what determination could bring about;
- the Cafaidh Gaidhlig initiative, where people could meet, play board games and listen to musicians, was applauded;
- the Rights-based approach was to be encouraged; and
- the introduction of Gaelic into primary schools also had education and cognitive advantages.

The Committee **NOTED**:-

- i. the content of the report; and
- ii. the ongoing development work towards providing access to Gaelic education in secondary schools by digital learning.

5. Na Trads and MG Alba – Presentation

Members were presented with an overview of the upcoming Na Trads Music Awards, due to be held on Saturday 30 November at Inverness Leisure.

Mr Thoumire thanked the Gaelic Committee officers and Members for their involvement, acknowledging the strong collaborative partnership established between Highland Council, High Life Highland and Hands Up for Trad. He also welcomed the support from the Inverness Common Good Fund, UK Shared Prosperity Fund and High Life Highland.

Trad Awards reached an international audience and the second half of the ceremony was due to be broadcast live on MG Alba.

During discussion, the following points were raised:-

- Inverness and Fort William were cultural hubs and Members looked forward to the awards in Inverness this year;
- given that local venues had been vulnerable and under threat in many places, including Inverness, it was felt that the sector was performing well;
- it was asked if Hands Up for Trad had contact with any of the local musicians that performed at Eden Court Under Canvas, and it was confirmed this was the case;
- information was sought, and provided, regarding the benefits to the wider communities, particularly economic benefits and legacy. It was asked if information, such as lessons learned, was shared with other agencies, to maximise the benefit to the wider communities, and it was confirmed that Hands Up for Trad shared learning with the Royal National Mod; and
- in terms of engagement and the popularity of the event, thousands of votes for nominees had been received from across the world. This was on par with last year and the event showcased people, music, culture, nominees and language.

The Committee **NOTED** the presentation.

6. Progress Against Gaelic Language Plan 4

There had been circulated Report No. G/15/24 by the Assistant Chief Executive – People.

In relation to the Scottish Languages Bill, it was asked if it might be appropriate for Inverness to be considered as one of the areas of priority, as well as those areas more traditionally perceived, to receive development officer and central support. Thereafter, it was suggested officers explored a response to the Deputy First Minister as the Scottish Government prepared amendments to the Bill and it was confirmed that a response had already been provided by Highland Council. The response included that a lack of clarity around designating these areas of linguistic significance was felt. It was also thought that Members would each have areas that they felt were a priority.

The Committee **NOTED**:-

- i. the report; and
- ii. the progress made in relation to GLP corporate service aims, as outlined in section 6.

7. Gaelic Conference

There had been circulated Report No. G/16/24 by the Assistant Chief Executive – People.

During discussion, the following points were raised:-

- it was hoped simultaneous translation would be provided;
- it was also hoped that local business could be encouraged to get involved; and
- the conference offered an excellent opportunity to explore the potential for economic and work-related opportunities.

The Committee **NOTED**:-

- i. the Gaelic Conference overview, and
- ii. how the research reports might impact the scope of the Gaelic Conference and the links to the Highland Council's GLP Theme of Business and the Economy.

8. Gaelic Plan Fund – Bòrd na Gàidhlig

There had been circulated Report No. G/17/24 by the Assistant Chief Executive – People.

During discussion, the following points were raised:-

- Gaelic in Lochaline was flourishing and had brought opportunities to the community. However, if this were to continue, other services were needed, housing in Morvern being cited as an example;
- a Gaelic Toddler support worker was to be employed in Lochaber, and it was hoped this could be built upon and involve more people; and
- in relation to the English group in Roybridge confirmation was sought, and provided, that this was a parent and toddler group.

The Committee **NOTED**:-

- i. the report, and
- ii. the Gaelic Early Years (0-3) support for Highland.

The meeting ended at 12.10pm.

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, 20 Samhain 2024 aig 10.30m.

An làthair:

Mgr I MacIlleDhuinn
A' Bh-uas I Chaimbeul (air astar)
A' Bh-uas S Fanet
Mgr I Grafton
Dr M Gregson
Mgr S Ceannadach (ball-ionaid)

Mgr P Logue
Mgr A Mac an Tòisich
Mgr S MacIlleBhrath (air astar)
Mgr D Mac a' Mhuilleir (air astar)
Mgr C Rothach
Mgr R Stiùbhart

Neo-Bhuill an làthair:

Dr C Birt
Mgr I MacFhionnlaigh
Mgr U MacAoidh (air astar)

A' frithealadh na coinneimh:

A' Bh-uas K Lackie, Iar-Àrd-Oifigear – Daoine
A' Bh-uas A Jansson, Manaidsear Foghlaim agus Ionnsachaidh Sgìreil
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
A' Bh-uas J NicDhòmhnaill, Prìomh Oifigear Eadar-theangachaidh
Mgr I Jackson, Oifigear Foghlaim
A' Bh-uas S NicAsgaill, Ceannard, Bun-Sgoil Inbhir Pheofharain
A' Bh-uas S NicIllinnein, Manaidsear Cho-Sheirbheisean Deamocratach
A' Bh-uas G Nic a' Phearsain, Oifigear Comataidh

Cuideachd an làthair:

Mgr S Thoumire, Stiùiriche Cruthachail Hands Up for Trad
Mgr S Walsh, Àrd-Oifigear, High Life na Gàidhealtachd

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 leisgeul às leth Mhgr R Bremner agus na M-uas M NicPheadrais.

2. Foillseachaidhean Com-pàirt/Aithris Fhollaiseachd

THUG a' Chomataidh **FA-NEAR** dhan Aithris Fhollaiseachd a leanas:-

Nì 3 – Mgr C Rothach

3. Naidheachdan Matha

Aithris Fhollaiseachd: dh'fhoillsich Mgr C Rothach Aithris Fhollaiseachd a thaobh an nì seo, seach gun robh ball-teaghaich dlùth air pàirt a ghabhail ann an turas cultarach Àrd-Sgoil Phort Rìgh gu Èirinn a Tuath agus bha e fhèin air a bhith ann mar inbheach cunntasach. Ach, às dèidh dha an deuchainn a chur an gnìomh, cho-dhùin e nach robh com-pàirt aige ri fhoillseachadh.

THUG a' Chomataidh **FA-NEAR** dha na naidheachdan matha a chaidh a thaisbeanadh.

4. Cunntas às Ùr mu Fhoghlam Gàidhlig

Chuartaicheadh Aithisg Àir. G/14/24 leis an Iar-Àrd-Oifigear – Daoine, an cois taisbeanadh leis a' Bh-uas Sara NicAsgaill, Ceannard, Bun-Sgoil Inbhir Pheofharain. Dh'innis a' Bh-uas NicAsgaill mu shlighe Bun-Sgoil Inbhir Pheofharain ann am Foghlam tron Ghàidhlig agus an t-adhbhar a bha i cho dealasach mu bhith a' putadh na Gàidhlig air adhart agus a' toirt seachad deagh ethos is cultar Gàidhlig san sgoil. Bha sgoilearan còmhla ris a' Bh-uas NicAsgaill gus mìneachadh do Bhuill na bha a' Ghàidhlig a' ciallachadh dhaibhsan.

Rè na deasbaireachd, chaidh na puingeann a leanas a thogail:-

- bha Bun-Sgoil Inbhir Pheofharain air a' choimhearsnachd, an luchd-obrach agus na sgoilearan a chom-pàirteachadh tro bhith a' togail dòigh-obrach sgoile iomlain a thaobh na Gàidhlig. Cha bu chòir dhan a seo a bhith àraid agus bu chòir seo tomhas-measaidh a thoirt seachad do chàch airson a leantainn;
- bha a' Bh-uas NicAsgaill airidh air moladh agus sheall an taisbeanadh aice na bha i air a choileanadh aig Bun-Sgoil Inbhir Pheofharain. Sheall seo na dh'fhaodadh a bhith air a choileanadh le deòin is dìcheall;
- chaidh moladh a dhèanamh air iomairt a' Chafaidh Ghàidhlig, far am b' urrainn do dhaoine coinneachadh, geamaichean-bùird a chluiche agus èisteachd ri luchd-ciùil;
- bu chòir an dòigh-obrach stèidhichte air Còraichean a bhrosnachadh; agus
- bha buannachdan foghlaim agus cognatach an lùib a bhith a' toirt na Gàidhlig a-steach do bhun-sgoiltean.

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

- i. do shusbaint na h-aithisge; agus
- ii. dhan obair leasachaidh leantainneach a thathar a' dèanamh gu ruige a bhith a' solarachadh cothrom air foghlam Gàidhlig ann an àrd-sgoiltean tro ionnsachadh didseatach.

5. Na Trads agus MG Alba – Taisbeanadh

Chaidh foir-shealladh a thoirt do Bhuill mu Dhuaisean Ceòl Traidiseanta na h-Alba no Na Trads, a bha gu bhith air an cumail air Disathairne 30 Samhain aig Ionad-Spòrs Inbhir Nis.

Thug Mgr Thoumire taing do dh'oifigearan is do Bhuill Chomataidh na Gàidhlig airson an cuid obrach, a' toirt aithne dhan chom-pàirteachas cho-obrachail làidir a

bha air a stèidheachadh eadar Comhairle na Gaidhealtachd, High Life na Gàidhealtachd agus Hands Up for Trad. Chuir e fàilte cuideachd air an taic bho Mhaoin Math Coitcheann Inbhir Nis, Maoin Soirbheas Co-roinnte na RA agus High Life na Gàidhealtachd.

Bha Na Trads a' ruigsinn luchd-èisteachd eadar-nàiseanta agus bha an dàrna leth dhen chuir gu bhith air a craoladh beò air MG Alba.

Rè na deasbaireachd, chaidh na puingean a leanas a thogail:-

- b' e prìomh àiteachan cultarach a bh' ann an Inbhir Nis agus sa Ghearasdan agus bha Buill a' coimhead air adhart ris na duaisean ann an Inbhir Nis am-bliadhna;
- leis gun robh aitreabhan ionadail air a bhith fo chunnart ann an iomadh àite, Inbhir Nis nam measg, bhathar an dùil gun robh an roinn a' coileanadh gu math;
- chaidh faighneachd co-dhiù a bha ceangal aig Hands Up for Trad le gin dhen luchd-ciùil ionadail a bha air cluiche aig Under Canvas aig Cùirt an Easbaig, agus chaidh dearbhadh gun robh;
- chaidh fiosrachadh a shireadh, agus fhaotainn, ma na buannachdan do na coimhearsnachdan as fharsainghe, gu h-àraid buannachdan eaconamach agus dìleab nan duaisean. Chaidh faighneachd co-dhiù a bha fiosrachadh, a leithid leasain air an ionnsachadh, air a cho-roinn le buidhnean eile, gus a' chuid as fheàrr a dhèanamh de bhuanachdan do na coimhearsnachdan san fharsaingeachd, agus chaidh innse gum biodh Hands Up for Trad a' co-roinn ionnsachadh leis a' Mhòd Nàiseanta Rìoghail; agus
- a thaobh com-pàirteachadh agus cliù an tachartais, bha na mìltean de bhòtaichean air tighinn a-steach bho air feadh an t-saoghail airson nan daoine is nam buidhnean ainmichte. Bha seo aig an aon ìre ris an-uiridh agus bha an tachartas a' toirt àrd-ùrlar do dhaoine, ceòl is cultar, agus dhan cànan fhèin.

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

6. Adhartas mu choinneimh Plana na Gàidhlig 4

Chuartaicheadh Aithisg Àir. G/15/24 leis an Iar-Àrd-Oifigear – Daoine.

A thaobh Bile nan Cànan Albannach, chaidh faighneachd co-dhiù a bhiodh e iomchaidh gun deigheadh beachdachadh air Inbhir Nis mar aon de na sgìrean prìomhachais, a bharrachd air na sgìrean as traidiseanta, gus oifigear leasachaidh agus taic bhon mheadhan fhaotainn. Às dèidh sin, chaidh moladh gun dèanadh oifigearan rannsachadh gus freagairt a chur chun an Leas-Phrìomh-Mhinistear fhad 's a bha Riaghaltas na h-Alba ag ullachadh atharrachaidhean dhan Bhile, agus chaidh dearbhadh gun robh Comhairle na Gàidhealtachd air freagairt a thilleadh mar-thà. Bha an fhreagairt air innse gun robhar a' faireachdainn gun robh cion soilleireachd ann mu bhith ag ainmeachadh nan sgìrean prìomhachais cànanach. Bhathar cuideachd dhen bheachd gum biodh sgìrean aig gach Ball a bhiodh iad a' faireachdainn a bha nam prìomhachas.

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

- i. dhan aithisg; agus
- ii. dhan adhartas a thathar air a dhèanamh a thaobh amasan seirbheis corporra Plana na Gàidhlig, mar a thathar a' mìneachadh ann an earrainn 6.

7. Co-labhairt na Gàidhlig

Chuartaicheadh Aithisg Àir. G/16/24 leis an Iar-Àrd-Oifigear – Daoine.

Rè na deasbaireachd, chaidh na puingeann a leanas a thogail:-

- bhathar an dòchas gum biodh eadar-theangachadh mar-aon air a thoirt seachad;
- bhathar an dòchas gun deigheadh brosnachadh a thoirt do ghnothachasan ionadail com-pàirt a ghabhail; agus
- bha a' cho-labhairt a' tabhann sàr chothrom gus sgrùdadh a dhèanamh air na cothroman eaconamach is obrach a dh'fhaodadh a bhith ann.

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

- i. dhan fhoir-sealladh air Co-labhairt na Gàidhlig; agus
- ii. do mar a dh'fhaodadh na h-aithisgean rannsachaidh buaidh a thoirt air meud-comais Co-labhairt na Gàidhlig agus na ceanglaichean gu cuspair Gnìomhachais agus an Eaconamaidh ann am Plana na Gàidhlig.

8. Maoin nam Planaichean Gàidhlig – Bòrd na Gàidhlig

Chuartaicheadh Aithisg Àir. G/17/24 leis an Iar-Àrd-Oifigear – Daoine.

Rè na deasbaireachd, chaidh na puingeann a leanas a thogail:-

- bha a' Ghàidhlig ann an Loch Àlainn a' soirbheachadh agus air cothroman a thoirt chun na coimhearsnachd. Ach, ma bha seo a' dol a leantainn, bhiodh feum air seirbheisean eile, agus chaidh taigheadas sa Mhorbhairne ainmeachadh mar eisimpleir;
- bha neach-obrach taic phàistean Gàidhlig gu bhith air fhadhadh ann an Loch Abar, agus bhathar an dòchas gum b' urrainnear togail air a seo agus barrachd dhaoine a chom-pàirteachadh; agus
- a thaobh na buidhne Beurla ann an Drochaid Ruaidh, chaidh dearbhadh iarraidh, agus fhaotainn, gur e buidheann phàrant is phàiste a bha seo.

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

- i. dhan aithisg; agus
- ii. do thaic Thràth-bhliadhnaichean Gàidhlig (0-3) airson na Gàidhealtachd.

Chrìochnaich a' choinneamh aig 12.10f.

The Highland Council

Minutes of Meeting of the **Education Committee** held in the Council Chamber, Council Headquarters, Glenurquhart Road, Inverness on Thursday 21 November 2024 at 10.35 am.

Present:

Ms S Atkin (remote)	Mr D Gregg
Mrs I Campbell (remote)	Ms M Hutchison (remote)
Mrs M Cockburn (remote)	Ms L Johnston (remote)
Ms H Crawford (remote)	Ms L Kraft
Ms L Dundas (remote)	Ms M MacCallum (remote)
Ms S Fanet	Mr D Macpherson (remote)
Mr J Finlayson (Chair)	Mr J McGillivray (remote)
Mr R Gale	Mr D Millar (Vice Chair)
Mr J Grafton	Mr R Stewart (substitute)

Religious Representatives (non-voting):

Rev C Caley
Ms S Lamont (remote)

Youth Convener (non-voting):

Ms L McKittrick

Non-Members also present:

Mr A Christie (remote)	Mr B Lobban (remote)
Mr S Coghill (remote)	Mr P Logue
Mr D Fraser (remote)	Mr G MacKenzie (remote)
Mr K Gowans	Mrs A MacLean (remote)
Dr M Gregson	Mr P Oldham (remote)
Mr R Jones (remote)	Mrs T Robertson (remote)
Mr S Kennedy (remote)	Ms M Ross (remote)
Mr E Knox (remote)	

In attendance:

Ms K Lackie, Assistant Chief Executive – People
Ms F Grant, Chief Officer – Secondary Education
Ms A Jansson, Interim Chief Officer – Early Years and Primary Education
Ms F Malcolm, Chief Officer – Integrated People Services (remote)
Ms A MacPherson, Head of Resources
Mr I Kyle, Head of Integrated Children’s Services
Mr D Martin, Area Education and Learning Manager (Mid)
Mrs F Shearer, Area Education and Learning Manager (South)
Ms B Cairns, Principal Educational Psychologist
Ms M Garson, Senior Lead, Employability and Skills 3-18
Mr I Jackson, Education Officer (remote)
Ms F Dalgetty, Chief Executive, Fèis Rois (Third Sector)
Ms G Rodger, Chief Officer, Inspiring Young Voices (Third Sector) (remote)
Ms M Chemonges, Highland Parent Council Partnership (remote)
Ms M Murray, Principal Committee Officer
Ms R Ross, Committee Officer

Also in attendance:

Mr S Walsh, Chief Executive, High Life Highland

Ms H MacLeod, Community Learning and Development Support Officer, High Life 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.

Mr J Finlayson in the Chair

Preliminaries

Prior to the commencement of formal business, the Chair welcomed the new Third Sector representatives, Gaener Rodger, Inspiring Young Voices, and Fiona Dalgetty, Fèis Rois, to their first meeting of the Committee.

Business

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

An apology for absence was intimated on behalf of Mrs I MacKenzie.

**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 D Macpherson

Item 8: Mr D Gregg

Item 11: Mr D Gregg

Item 12: Mr D Gregg and Mr R Stewart

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

The Chair congratulated High Life Highland on its recent successes, highlighting that the Archive Service had been voted best archive record keeping service in the UK by the UK Archive and Records Association. High Life Highland had also won a prestigious Community Leisure UK award for sustainability, recognising the outstanding work done by Countryside Rangers, Libraries and the Botanic Gardens in protecting the environment.

A presentation on outstanding achievements by pupils and schools was then shown.

The Committee **NOTED** the outstanding achievements.

4. Supporting the Education of Children from Armed Forces Families A' Toirt Taic do dh'Fhoghlam Chloinne bho Theaghlaichean nam Feachdan Armaichte

There had been circulated Report No EDU/25/24 by the Assistant Chief Executive – People.

Bernadette Cairns, Principal Educational Psychologist, gave a presentation in amplification of the report.

During discussion, the following main points were made:-

- Members expressed thanks for the inspiring report, and commended those working to mitigate the disadvantages and barriers experienced by children from Armed Forces families;
- in response to questions, it was confirmed that the Military Liaison Group (MLG) worked with Armed Forces children up to the age of 18, and the Armed Forces Covenant included those in tertiary education, even after a marital separation;
- the inclusion of Reserve Armed Forces was welcomed;
- as set out in section 7.3 of the report, national studies showed educational disadvantage for children from Armed Forces families. However, in Highland there appeared to be no difference between children from Armed Forces families and the general school population in terms of Additional Support Needs (ASN) and social, emotional and behavioural needs, and information was sought, and provided, as to whether this was testament to the partnership work and “family first” approach in Highland;
- the report demonstrated that there were no quick fixes to challenges, and it was a matter of working together and having trust in the strategy, which was clearly paying off;
- with reference to the families’ patch in Wimberley Way, Inverness, Local Members expressed thanks to the Head Teachers and staff at Raigmore and Drakies Primary Schools and Millburn Academy for their excellent work in supporting children from Armed Forces families;
- reference having been made to the data on ASN, exclusion and attendance rates, it was queried whether it was also possible to track differences in attainment between children from Armed Forces families and the general school population. In response, it was confirmed that attainment data was being gathered and could be provided in future reports; and
- it was suggested that some of the learning from the MLG in terms of the organisation and sharing of information could be transferrable to other situations within the education system.

The Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the information about the service that the Military Liaison Group (Education) provided;
- ii. **NOTED** the potential impact of challenges and barriers that might be faced by children and young people from Armed Forces families;
- iii. **NOTED** the support, resourcing and training that the Military Education Group (Education) provided which could be signposted to families, educators, and communities; and

iv. **AGREED** that attainment data be included in future reports on the education of children from Armed Forces families.

5. Highland Youth Convener Update Cunntas às Ùr mu Neach-gairm Òigridh na Gàidhealtachd

Lauren McKittrick, Highland Youth Convener, gave a presentation sharing her action plan for the year ahead and an update on the progress she had made since taking up the Youth Convener role in August.

During discussion, the following main points were made:-

- Members thanked the Youth Convener for the interesting and inspirational presentation, wished her every success in her endeavours over the coming year, and looked forward to future discussions with her;
- vaping was a concern to everyone involved in health services, and information was sought, and provided, on young people's concerns about vaping and what more could be done about it;
- transport was an issue for young people living in rural areas, and the Youth Convener's support in that regard would be welcomed; and
- it was queried how the Youth Convener was finding being able to communicate with and visit all areas of Highland to carry out her role.

The Committee otherwise **NOTED** the presentation.

6. Senior Phase Attainment and Scrutiny (Session 2023-24) Buileachadh is Sgrùdadh na Gàidhealtachd (Seisean 2023-24) ann am Frèam Creideis & Theisteanasan na h-Alba

Transparency Statement: Mr D Macpherson declared a connection to this item as a close family member was a teacher in Highland but, having applied the objective test, he did not consider that he had an interest to declare.

There had been circulated Report No EDU/26/24 by the Assistant Chief Executive – People.

During discussion, the following main points were made:-

- this was the first set of examinations since the Covid pandemic where learners had been assessed on the full curriculum in each subject area;
- it was suggested that changes were needed to address the systemic issues in the Highland education system, and concern was expressed regarding the leadership and functionality of the Education Committee and that pupils, teachers and wider school communities were being failed;
- the latest attainment figures showed that Highland pupils in S4 to S6 were falling further behind. These figures represented young people's life chances, and young people in Highland were at a disadvantage when applying to colleges and universities where they had to compete with peers from other areas who were outperforming them;
- staff morale was plummeting, and statistics were cited from the Council's staff survey from 2022 which reflected a workforce that was overburdened, under-resourced and unsupported;

- hard-working teachers, support staff and pupils deserved nothing but praise for their incredible efforts in challenging circumstances;
- in response to a question, it was confirmed that the remit of the proposed Raising Attainment Board would include the identified need to focus on school attendance and the strategic plan in that regard;
- whilst there were some positive figures in the report, the majority of the content reflected many years of the Highland Education system failing to keep up, not only with the national average but with the virtual comparator;
- sympathy was expressed for the pupils who had not managed to attain their desired results;
- it was misleading to suggest that the Council was delivering the highest quality learning and teaching experiences for all young people;
- the report stated that the Raising Attainment Action Plan created in 2022 would be reviewed and refreshed to ensure everyone in the system was clear on their role in raising attainment and improving outcomes for young people, and it was questioned if everyone in the system had not previously known what their role was, and who had been managing that;
- it was necessary to look at what had gone before and what was having an impact on classroom performance, and the importance of listening to teaching staff and the youth voice was emphasised;
- it was suggested that the previous Chief Executive had set a goal to reduce the number of Pupil Support Assistants (PSAs) in schools, yet the number of pupils requiring additional support was increasing. Feedback from teaching staff was that the additional burden placed on them due to the loss of PSAs impacted the whole class, and the current PSA allocation system used an algorithm that paid little attention to need. It was therefore proposed that the Committee agree to undertake a review of the PSA allocation process to ensure that the need of the individual was the overarching criteria for the allocation of PSAs in all schools. In that regard, it was confirmed that a review was built into the current allocation model and would take place following the allocation in May 2025;
- the current system was not working, and it was necessary to make changes at a strategic level, taking into consideration the opinions and ideas of frontline teaching staff. Section 7 of the report made some robust comments on the way forward but results were needed, and a request was made for an early report on progress;
- thanks were expressed to officers for the work that had gone into the report, for responding to Members' questions in advance of the Committee, and for their commentary, which placed the report in the context in which it should be viewed;
- disappointment was expressed that the press had taken elements of the report out of context and published headlines that were detrimental about education in Highland, causing anxiety to parents of pupils preparing to sit prelims;
- children were more than numbers on a spreadsheet, and it was necessary to look at the picture behind the figures;
- the revised Raising Attainment Action Plan and proposed Raising Attainment Board were welcomed, as were the improvements identified in the National Improvement Framework report at item 11 on the agenda;
- the 2024 exam diet had seen a return to the traditional model of assessment for the first time since 2019, and the dip in the senior attainment had been seen across Scotland. Highland had dipped in 11 out of 16 measures compared to the national trend of 14 out of 16. The cohorts sitting those exams had been the children who had been at the significant transition period during Covid and the associated lockdown, which evidenced that it had been the right decision to

prioritise support for children at crucial periods of transition, and to invest in the mental health and wellbeing of children and young people;

- it was important that the impression was not being given that Highland was the worst Education authority in Scotland. That was by no means the case. Nevertheless, the authority was ambitious to improve and do better;
- there were factors that were unique to Highland that impacted on attainment figures - for example, Highland's rurality did not allow for an accurate virtual comparator, and the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) did not adequately reflect rural poverty. Another significant factor was that special schools were not included in the national data. There were three special schools in Highland, all in a central location which meant that the majority of children with significant additional needs attended their local mainstream school as a special school was too far away. These children might be included in the attainment statistics, thereby lowering them, which would not be the case if they attended a special school;
- the inclusive, multi-agency, child-centred approach in Highland was commendable, and reference was made to the recent presentation at Full Council by the Deaf Education team, which was an example of Highland supporting young children with significant communication difficulties to belong in their communities and access education. All deaf children struggled to access English language, which impacted not only on English as a subject but on Maths, and this would also impact on attainment statistics;
- Highland continued to lead nationally in the early years measurements for listening and talking, and in young people achieving positive destinations;
- whilst it was recognised there was work to be done, Members commended Highland pupils for their efforts and praised staff for trailblazing in many ways;
- to facilitate scrutiny of performance, it would be helpful for Members of the Committee to read the minutes of the Raising Attainment Board and to have the opportunity to speak to members of the Board, and a request was made that a report from the Board be presented to each future meeting of the Committee, together with the minutes, to be considered in private session given the subject matter might be quite detailed. In response, the Chair confirmed that consideration would be given to the most appropriate means of Member engagement with the Raising Attainment Board;
- it having been queried why there was no national or virtual comparator for attendance in the report, it was explained that national attendance data was included in the National Improvement Framework report at item 11 on the agenda;
- with reference to earlier comments regarding special schools, it was queried whether it was possible to provide data on the number of pupils in rural secondary schools who would be at special schools in other local authority areas. In that regard, it was confirmed that there were currently 188 learners in special schools in Highland, and 256 in enhanced provisions across Highland;
- whilst it was acknowledged that there were challenges in terms of rurality, these were not new so it could not be said they were the reason Highland was not performing well. Highland was always going to be rural, and it was necessary to accept that and implement specific measures to overcome the associated challenges;
- there were 22 measures in the report where Highland was lower than the national average, and it was necessary to address that;
- the negative language in some contributions was unnecessary, and a call was made for Members to work together on how to respond to the attainment challenges and ensure progress was made;

- it was disheartening for children if they were not hearing the right messages, and it was necessary to embrace the positives in the report;
- in relation to attendance, it was welcomed that the figures included online attendance, and it was queried whether there was any information as to why children were not attending school;
- it was welcomed that Area Committees would have the opportunity to scrutinise Associated School Group (ASG) performance data in the new year;
- information was sought, and provided, as to whether the fact that awards at higher levels attracted more tariff points was skewing the attainment figures, and whether a different comparator was needed due to the rurality of Highland;
- several Members spoke to the impact of Covid, commenting that the Council was a trauma-informed organisation, and there were children who were still living with the trauma of what they had been through during the pandemic. Some children had not wanted to go to school since, which was a worrying trend that was replicated throughout the country;
- it was highlighted that it was Carers Rights Day, and carers were mentioned some 30 times in the papers for today's meeting. Young carers had a huge role to play in their families and communities, and it was important to remember that their learning was impacted by looking after family members;
- concern was expressed regarding the recommendation that the Raising Attainment Action Plan be revised to ensure all secondary schools and partners were working collaboratively, as Members had assumed that formal collaboration had already been taking place;
- there was a lack of detail and precision regarding the proposed Raising Attainment Board. In response to a question, it was clarified that there would be a single Raising Attainment Board that would meet throughout the year. It was also queried whether the proposal was based on evidence of success in other better-performing Council areas and, if so, whether more information could be provided on their journeys;
- reference was made to a previous proposal that the Council be paired with a top-performing Scottish Council so lessons could be learned in terms of how to drive through reform, and it was requested that that proposal be revisited;
- reference was made to section 6.5 of the report, which indicated that the focussed attention on S6 attainment for Quintile 1 learners had paid off;
- to say that nothing had changed since 2022 was not correct, and reference was made to the new management structure and the way of collaborating with, supporting and challenging schools;
- the only comparison that should be made was with the 2019 figures;
- whilst PSAs had an important role, increasing the number of PSAs was not the answer to the attainment challenges;
- it was important to recognise that there had been an independent review of education in Scotland, and changes were coming;
- reference was made to achievements in Highland, not only in terms of academic excellence but sporting excellence and the arts as well as Duke of Edinburgh and Community Volunteer Awards;
- many countries did not use exams to measure attainment, and it was necessary to take a holistic view of children and young people and look at wellbeing and positive destinations;
- low attainment did not mean that pupils could not go on to achieve in life;

- not all young people wanted to go to university and, in response to a question, it was confirmed that the Scottish Certificate and Qualifications Framework data in the report included vocational skills;
- whilst it was recognised that there had been a dip in performance nationally, if Highland was trying to improve its position it was necessary to ensure it did not dip at all;
- given the comments regarding rurality being a factor, it was queried whether it was possible to produce a report comparing the Inverness schools alone with comparable urban schools in Scotland;
- with education, it took a long time for changes to come to fruition, and pace and urgency were key;
- children were at the centre of this, and it was necessary to strive for excellence for Highland's children;
- attainment was the most important thing on the Committee's agenda. The next report should set out what interventions were necessary to ensure that Highland made seismic leaps forward and, thereafter, it was necessary to track progress at each meeting;
- there were wider issues such as job security for teaching staff and a reduction in the amount of inter-school and inter-colleague collaboration;
- national initiatives such as the National Improvement Framework provided an interesting context but were limited in terms of helping staff on the ground;
- there were talented staff in schools and the Education Service, but there had been a clear reduction in the number of experienced staff in recent years, and recruitment and retention was an area of concern;
- mentoring for newly qualified teachers was something that had been a great strength, but it was not as available as it needed to be due to staffing pressures;
- the figures in the report were affected by areas such as presentation policy within a school or ASG;
- Getting It Right For Every Child might mean choices that did not impact positively on the league table;
- in response to calls for a wider review, it was confirmed that was taking place, and that support structures were being looked at across the Education Service to ensure they were appropriate. Details were also provided on the recent changes to the senior management structure. As assurance was provided that attainment was the top priority, and a further report would be presented to the next meeting of the Committee in February;
- reference was made to personal experience of teaching in classrooms with variable attendance, concentration, phone use, application to homework, and parental and school support;
- the attainment figures did not include things such as arts, humanities and meta-skills;
- SQA units were reviewed and changed, so it was not possible to make a like for like comparison of one year to another; and
- 40% of pupils in Scotland had Additional Support Needs, and it was necessary to apply more resources to teaching individual children.

The Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** Highland's Senior Phase Attainment for session 2023/24;

- ii. **AGREED** that the Raising Attainment Action Plan would be revised to ensure all secondary schools and partners were working collaboratively to develop improvements and evidence progress and impact;
- iii. **NOTED** that the delivery and impact of the revised Raising Attainment Action Plan would be monitored by a Raising Attainment Board which would provide direction, guidance and governance for the work required; and
- iv. **AGREED** that consideration would be given to the most appropriate means of Member engagement with the Raising Attainment Board.

7. Service Performance Reporting and Quarter 2 Monitoring – 1 July 2024 to 30 September 2024
Toradh Deireannach Teachd-a-steach Ràith 1 & Ro-aithris Ràith 2

There had been circulated Report No EDU/27/24 by the Assistant Chief Executive – People.

During discussion, the following main points were made:-

- information was sought, and provided, as to whether there was an explanation for the increase in staff absence rates, and whether data was available in terms of customer satisfaction with the outcome of complaints; and
- reference was made to the impact of the menopause on female staff, and the importance of supporting teaching staff, not only in terms of the curriculum and child development etc but with personal issues, was emphasised.

The Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the Service's revenue monitoring position; and
- ii. scrutinised and **NOTED** Service performance and risk information.

8. High Life Highland (HLH) Progress Report
Aithisg Adhartais High Life na Gàidhealtachd

Transparency Statement: Mr D Gregg declared a connection to this item as an employee of NHS Highland and on the basis that a close family member was a civil servant who had previously worked in Levelling Up but, having applied the objective test, he did not consider that he had an interest to declare.

There had been circulated Report No EDU/28/24 by the Chief Executive, High Life Highland.

In addition to the report, a video was shown on the specialist exercise classes for people with Parkinson's Disease being delivered as part of HLH's Health and Wellbeing Programme.

The Chair highlighted that, given some amazing performances by Highland athletes at the Olympic and Paralympic Games and the recent announcement that the Commonwealth Games were coming to Glasgow in 2026, part three of the report focussed on HLH's contribution to sport and physical activity. In order to frame part three of the report, HLH had used The Scottish Government's recent "Sport and Physical Activity on Health Framework" as a guide, focussing on the framework's

Active Sport and Recreation outcome which HLH delivered on behalf of the Council, and it was good to see how much was being done in this area.

During discussion, the following main points were made:-

- thanks were expressed for the report, the inspiring video and the work of HLH, and the progress that had been made since the Covid pandemic was welcomed;
- the work taking place in respect of Parkinson's Disease and falls prevention was commended. In that regard, it was queried whether there were opportunities for joined up working with the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS) who were also working with vulnerable groups in relation to home fire safety visits. The Chief Executive, HLH, undertook to take the matter up with SFRS colleagues through the Community Planning Partnership;
- in relation to the new sports pitch at Culloden, it had been understood it was primarily going to be used by local groups. However, they had been struggling to get access due it being used by large football teams, and clarification was sought as to how local people could book the pitch and what availability there was. The Chief Executive, HLH, undertook to revert to Mr R
- the increase in the number of young women participating in Shinty was encouraging;
- Am Baile was a fantastic asset for the Council, High Life Highland and the Gaelic community, and the success in terms of increasing engagement was welcomed;
- the increase in the number of library users was remarkable, and the benefits to young people of co-locating libraries and schools were emphasised;
- thanks to High Life Highland, more people than ever were benefiting from music tuition throughout Highland;
- the fact that over 44,000 people in Highland, 19% of the population, had a *highlife* leisure card was commendable;
- Members praised the "School's Out" programme of activities and the work of the Archive team, particularly the "Learn with Lorna" series of short films;
- reference was made to the huge amount of swimming lessons that had been provided and the benefits of learning to swim, and it was queried whether there was any strategic engagement with schools and families as to who could and could not swim;
- Ross Cairns, Scottish Athletics' performance coach of the year, was commended for his work with Inverness Harriers;
- Assynt Leisure Centre, which was affiliated with HLH, was offering a fully equipped learning space for pupils who could not get to school because of the snow;
- the benefits of the Highland Youth Parliament in terms of building confidence and leadership skills in young people were emphasised; and
- it would be good to have falls prevention classes in the Seaboard Villages. In addition, it was queried why Alness swimming pool was not open to the public during the day, and whether there was scope to open it for certain periods. The Chief Executive, HLH, undertook to liaise with Ms M Ross on these points.

The Committee **NOTED**:-

- i. the performance of High Life Highland (HLH) during the operating period to 30 September 2024, including HLH's contributions to the implementation of the Highland Council Corporate Plan in Appendix A of the report;
- ii. the general updates provided in part 2 of the report;

- iii. that HLH continued to deliver Public Service Obligations on behalf of the Highland Council as set out in the Service Delivery Contract; and
- iv. the information on HLH's contributions to the national "Physical activity for health: framework".

9. High Life Highland (HLH) Service Delivery Contract Review
Ath-sgrùdadh Cùmhnant Lìbhrigeadh Seirbheis High Life na Gàidhealtachd

There had been circulated Report No EDU/29/24 by the Assistant Chief Executive – People.

The Chair commented that, as Members were aware, the Council and HLH had been working on a revised Service Delivery Contract over recent months, and he thanked officers from both organisations for the collaborative work they had done to enable the Committee to consider the revised contract today, subject to legal checks.

During discussion, the following points were made:-

- the acknowledgement in the contract that High Life Highland was expected to rebuild reserves was welcomed; and
- the Adult Learning and Youth Work teams were commended for their efforts, and it was hoped their success would continue following their return to the Council.

The Committee **NOTED**:-

- i. that the HLH Board had been consulted on the report, in draft, at a special meeting held on 25 October 2024 and feedback from the Board had been reflected in the report;
- ii. the arrangements for properties and vehicles associated with the adult learning and youth work services in Appendix 1 of the report;
- iii. that the performance reporting required of HLH by the Council had been updated as a result of the Service Delivery Contract review and had been included in the revised contract in Appendix 2 of the report;
- iv. that the service level agreements which specified the services the Council provided to HLH to allow it to operate would be reviewed by Council and HLH officers over the course of the coming year; and
- v. that specialist legal advice on the overall arrangement/legal framework had been sought by both organisations and the arrangement continued to meet all legal requirements;

and **AGREED** the revised Service Delivery Contract in Appendix 2 of the report subject to final legal checks following comment by both the HLH Board and the Education Committee at this meeting.

10. Briefing Paper - Education (Scotland) Bill
Pàipear Brath-ullachaidh – Bile Foghlaim (Alba)

There had been circulated Report No EDU/30/24 by the Assistant Chief Executive – People.

During discussion, the following points were made:-

- it would be interesting to see how the new qualifications body developed in the future as there were some concerns that this could be seen as a rebranding exercise;
- stakeholder involvement should include universities, colleges and employers;
- the proposed new Chief Inspector role was welcomed; and
- information was sought, and provided, on how the transition to the new inspection body would be handled in respect of schools that were currently going through an inspection process with Education Scotland.

The Committee **NOTED** the contents of the report, which provided an overview of the key proposals in the Education (Scotland) Bill and outlined potential impacts on governance, qualifications, and education inspection.

11. National Improvement Framework (NIF) Annual Report Aithisg Bhliadhnaidh an Fhrèam-obrach Leasachaidh Nàiseanta

Transparency Statement: Mr D Gregg declared a connection to this item as an employee 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 EDU/31/24 by the Assistant Chief Executive – People.

The Chair commented that the report articulated the contents of the current NIF plan whilst also outlining the progress and successes that had been achieved in terms of the previous plan. He drew attention to the continuing positive trend in terms of ACEL data results, which had been a focus for discussion at previous Education Committees.

During discussion, the following main points were made:-

- the hard work and dedication of teachers and school staff was applauded;
- the need to pursue both equity and excellence was emphasised as many of the most disadvantaged pupils were falling further behind while those with fewer barriers to success were not being supported to reach their full potential;
- concern was expressed regarding the drop in attendance levels at secondary schools, the effectiveness of the stretch aims and the increase in the attainment gap between the most and least disadvantaged students across several areas;
- the focussed plan to address the problem of pupil absences was welcomed;
- information was sought, and provided, on upskilling and further education opportunities for young people who went directly into employment after leaving school, and the rollout of trauma informed training for all school staff;
- there had been significant improvement in literacy and numeracy in Primary 1, 4 and 7;
- Highland was leading in listening and talking scores for early years due to collaborative working within the Northern Alliance. The positive effects of this were now being seen in results throughout primary schools and would hopefully continue into secondary levels;
- the sustained level of positive school leaver destinations was welcomed;
- in response to a request for more specific and measurable targets, the Chair confirmed that these would be included in future reports;

- children's behaviour had become more challenging, and while it was important for children to understand their rights it was also important for them to understand that these came with responsibilities such as good behaviour and respect for teachers;
- it was highlighted that the number of care experienced young people specified in the report might not be accurate due to not including some kinship arrangements, or previously care experienced young people who had moved into the area;
- although a reduction in Neuro Developmental Assessment Service waiting times would be welcomed, it was emphasised that what was most important was ensuring that the correct support was put in place for pupils, and that a diagnosis was not required for this;
- more outcome data from the collaborative work with Health and Wellbeing teams was requested; and
- the recognition of the SHANARRI indicators of wellbeing and the reference to professional leadership were welcomed.

The Committee:-

- NOTED** the Education and Learning Annual Report 2023-2024 (Appendix 1 of the report);
- NOTED** the steps being taken to secure continuous improvement in session 2024/25 (Appendix 1 of the report);
- NOTED** that the progress report and Improvement Plan had been submitted to the Scottish Government, in line with the Local Authority's statutory requirements; and
- AGREED** that specific and measurable aims be included in future reports.

12. Community Learning and Development Annual Report – October 2023 to September 2024

Aithisg Bhliadhnaile Ionnsachadh agus Leasachadh Coimhearsnachd – Dàmhair 2023 gu Sultain 2024

Transparency Statements: The following Members declared a connection to this item but, having applied the objective test, did not consider that they had an interest to declare:-

**Mr D Gregg, as an employee of NHS Highland
Mr R Stewart, as a Board Member of Youth Highland**

There had been circulated Report No EDU/32/24 by the Assistant Chief Executive – People.

During discussion, the following main points were made:-

- the transformational impact of the initiatives supported by the Highland Mental Health and Wellbeing Fund was highlighted, and the use of the Fund to support projects across Highland was welcomed with particular attention being drawn to those in Skye and Lochalsh and the Thurso Young People's Project which was working to improve school attendance;
- attention was drawn to the fact that it was "I Will" Week, and the importance of youth activism and volunteering, including the Highland Youth Parliament, was emphasised;
- the important work done by the voluntary and charity sector across Highland was highlighted;

- attention was drawn to the success of the Vision 26 project, especially the involvement of so many young people;
- thanks were extended to local Youth Workers for their encouragement of young people in the Black Isle;
- the level of community engagement in the Black Isle Local Place Plan was commended; and
- it was hoped that Youth Work returning to schools would create more opportunities to work to improve school attendance;

The Committee **NOTED** the progress, including key delivery achievements, made in year three of the Highland Community Learning and Development Plan 2021-2024.

13. Educational Trusts Urrasan Foghlaim

There had been circulated Report No EDU/33/24 by the Assistant Chief Executive – People.

During discussion, the following main points were made:-

- it was encouraging that there were funds available that could be used in a positive manner, and the report and recommendations were welcomed;
- information was requested, when it was available, on the eligibility criteria of the various Trusts so constituents could be signposted to them and encouraged to apply, and the Chair confirmed that could be arranged; and
- the Education and Learning Manager (Mid) was commended for the work done to update the various Trust Schemes and bringing the information to the Committee.

The Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the work undertaken on behalf of Elected Members (the Trustees) to update the various trust schemes;
- ii. **APPROVED** the formation of the Educational Trust Fund Sub-Committee, to meet twice a year to receive trust reports and make decisions on grants, bursaries, and scholarships;
- iii. **APPROVED** the proposed remit, as set out in section 8.4 of the report, and membership of the Sub-Committee; and
- iv. **AGREED** that information on the eligibility criteria in respect of the various Trusts be provided to Members when it was available.

14. Statutory Consultation: Request to proceed to statutory consultation on the proposed closure of Kinlochewe Primary School Co-chomhairleachadh Reachdail: Iarrtas a dhol air adhart gu co-chomhairleachadh reachdail mu mholadh Bun-Sgoil Cheann Loch lù a dhùnadh

There had been circulated Report No EDU/34/24 by the Assistant Chief Executive – People.

During discussion, the following main points were made:-

- the proposed closure was a sign of wider depopulation which was cause for concern;

- the closure of the school would leave a big gap in Wester Ross between Gairloch, Strath Garve and Sheildaig;
- the community was urged to engage with the consultation;
- it was emphasised that the Scottish Government's default position was to keep rural schools open;
- clarification was sought, and provided, on what the school transport arrangements would be if the recommendations were implemented; and
- the closure of the school could result in a lack of people wanting to move to the area.

The Committee **AGREED** to proceed to statutory consultation on the basis of the Proposal attached to the report.

**15. Statutory Consultation: Request to proceed to statutory consultation on the creation of a Gaelic Medium catchment area for the new Tain Primary School
Co-chomhairleachadh Reachdail: Iarrrtas a dhol air adhart gu co-chomhairleachadh reachdail airson sgìre-sgoile Foghlam tron Ghàidhlig a chruthachadh airson Bun-Sgoil ùr Bhaile Dhubhthaich**

There had been circulated Report No EDU/35/24 by the Assistant Chief Executive – People.

The Committee **AGREED** to proceed to statutory consultation on the basis of the Proposal attached to the report.

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

The Committee **AGREED** the revised membership, in accordance with the political formula, which had been tabled at the meeting.

The meeting concluded at 2.35 pm.

The Highland Council

Minutes of Meeting of the **Badenoch and Strathspey Area Committee** held in **Kingussie Courthouse /Remotely** on **25 November 2024 at 10.30 am**

Present:

Mr J Bruce
Ms M Cockburn

Mr R Jones
Mr B Lobban

In attendance:

Mr L Hannah, Community Development Manager
Ms D Sutton, Strategic Lead Community Operations and Logistics
Mr D Lamont, Amenity Services Manager
Mr L Marchi, Principal Housing Officer
Ms F MacBain, Senior Committee Officer

Also in attendance:

Mr N Nethercott, Local Senior Officer, Scottish Fire and Rescue Service

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

1. Apologies for Absence
Leisgeulan

There were none.

2. Declarations of Interest
Foillseachaidhean Com-pàirt

Item 6 – Mr Lobban and Mr Jones (Transparency Statements)

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

There had been circulated Report No BSAC/17/24 by the Local Senior Officer for Highland

During discussion, the following issues were raised:

- information was sought and provided on the nature and frequency of prevention work being undertaken with partner agencies, with particular reference to home fire safety visits. It was possible an officer from SFRS could meet with Members to discuss the matter further, if required. The means and process for requesting fire safety visits was summarised;

- in response to a query about non-domestic buildings, the focus on 'sleeping risks', e.g. care homes, hospitals, hotels, was summarised, as was the process for commercial self-auditing of fire risks;
- clarification was sought and provided on the rationale for the locations of appliances, and a summary was provided of recent recruitment successes in various stations that meant no relocation of appliances was being currently considered;
- information was sought on the cost implications of false alarms, and it was explained that while there were associated costs, it was important people did not switch off alarms for fear of charges. The work undertaken with affected premises was summarised;
- clarification was sought and provided on when an automatic call-out might not be triggered. For example, if there was no sleeping risk and a single detector was triggered, a company might be asked to investigate prior to an appliance being dispatched. The successful statistics around this policy nation-wide were summarised, and Members suggested that the policy would benefit from wider publicity to raise awareness, following reports of misunderstandings of the policy;
- Mr Jones asked for information on the drivers' virtual reality scheme and this would be provided outwith the meeting. Information was provided on other education and prevention programmes; and
- Members emphasised the value of educational courses for young people, including those not in education.

The Committee **NOTED** the attached Area Performance Report and that Mr Nethercott would ask the Station Commander to attend a future ward or area meeting.

In terms of Standing Order 9 it was agreed that item 4 be considered at the end of the agenda.

5. Housing Performance Report Aithisg Coileanaidh Taigheadais

There had been circulated Report No BSAC/18/24 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Place.

During discussion, the following issues were raised:

- although rent arrears were relatively low, the level had increased, therefore close monitoring and early intervention was important;
- in relation to the monitoring of homes to check if inability to afford heating was causing higher levels of condensation damage, assurance was provided on joint working with the repairs team, with Allied Energy, and with tenants to provide advice, and assistance on energy tariff and grants;
- an explanation was sought and provided for the downward trend in homelessness in the area, which was partly the result of considering housing options with applicants prior to them becoming homeless, improved signposting and advice, and local development initiatives;

- with reference to the potential purchase of private homes by the Council, attention was drawn to budget challenges, including for the renovation of potential properties;
- attention was drawn to the considerable number of people on the housing waiting list;
- the frontline housing staff were commended for their work and assurance was sought they were provided with appropriate support, including training on being trauma informed; and
- assurance was sought and provided that the Housing team worked closed with housing associations.

The Committee **NOTED** the information provided on housing performance in the period 1 April 2024 – 30 September 2024.

6. Cairngorms National Park Authority CEO Report and Convener Update to Board 22 November 2024
Aithisg Àrd-Oifigeir Pàirc Nàiseanta a' Mhonaidh Ruaidh agus Cunntas an Neach-ghairm dhan Bhòrd 22 Sult 2024

Mr B Lobban and Mr R Jones declared a connection to this item as members of the CNPA Board but, having applied the objective test, did not feel they had an interest to declare.

The Park Authority Board Paper from the CNPA Chief Executive Officer and Convener could be found at the following weblink – [241122Paper1CEOReport.pdf](#). The paper provided an information update on the work of the Park Authority as well as significant projects in the National Park area. The paper would be of particular interest to Members who were not also Park Authority Board members.

The Committee **NOTED** the update and **AGREED** that representatives of the CNPA be invited to the next meeting.

7. Scottish Government Play Park Funding
Maoineachadh Phàircean-cluiche Riaghaltas na h-Alba

There had been circulated Report No BSAC/19/24 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Place.

The Chair requested that instead of allocating £19k to Campbell Crescent Play Area, and £19K Ardvonie Park Play Area, both in Kingussie, the allocation of £38k for Kingussie Play Parks be delegated to local Members. Members expressed their disappointment that Burnfield Play Park had been vandalised shortly after opening.

The Committee **AGREED** that in Ward 20, £108,768 was to be allocated to the agreed projects as outlined at paragraph 6.4 of the report, with the allocation of £38,000 for Kingussie Play Parks to be delegated to local Members.

8. Grantown Public Conveniences Goireasan Poblach Bhaile nan Grandach

There is circulated Report No BSAC/20/24 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Place.

During discussion, Members welcomed the refurbishment of Burnfield public conveniences. It was suggested that equipment from Grantown public conveniences be re-used elsewhere if possible. The security measures in place to protect the Burnfield facilities from vandalism were queried and explained.

The Committee **AGREED**:

- i. The closure of the Grantown High Street public convenience from 31st December 2024;
- ii. formal disposal of the asset, to allow the Grantown High Street public convenience be marketed for sale; and
- iii. to support a Comfort Scheme with the Grantown Initiative for the Grantown Burnfield public convenience from 1st January 2025 to 31st March 2026.

9. Ward Discretionary Budget Buidseat fo Ùghdarras Uàird

The Committee **NOTED** the following Ward Discretionary Fund applications had been approved since the previous Committee:-

Highland Council: Amenities	Ellanwood Rd Play Area: Spinner Board Replacement	£500
Highland Council: Amenities	Mossie Rd Play Area: Replace Timber Boards on Climbing Unit	£300
Highland Council: Amenities	Dulaig Play Area: Replacement Slide	£1200
Nethybridge and Vicinity Community Council	Grass-Cutting Equipment	£2000
Newtonmore Association	Leaflet Reprint	£820
Available balance		£9110 remaining

4. Minutes Geàrr-chunntas

There had been circulated and was **NOTED** Minutes of Meeting of the Badenoch and Strathspey Area Committee held on 26 August 2024.

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, 25 November 2024 at 10.30 am.

Present:

Mr J Finlayson
Mr D Millar

Mr C Munro
Mr R Stewart

Officials in attendance:

Ms M Ross, Principal Housing Officer, Place Service
Mr G Smith, Service Lead – Infrastructure, Place Service
Ms H Cameron, Housing Development Manager, Place Service
Mr S Manning, Principal Traffic Officer, Place Service
Ms M A Gray, Project Officer, Place Service
Mr W MacKinnon, Community Development Officer (West & Mid Highland)
Mr A MacInnes, Senior Committee Officer, Corporate Service

Also in attendance:

Police Inspector A Mackenzie, Police Scotland

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

Mr J Finlayson in the Chair

**1. Apologies for Absence
Leisgeulan**

There were none.

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

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 26 August 2024 which were approved at the Highland Council meeting held on 19 September 2024, the terms of which were **NOTED**.

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

There was circulated Report No SR/18/24 by the Area Commander for Police Scotland.

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

- It was noted this was a generic report for the South Highland Area Command rather than a specific report for the Skye and Raasay area given back office capacity issues in Police Scotland. Consideration would be given to providing an annual report for the Skye and Raasay Area, rather than the current two reports. This would provide local performance information for Members to scrutinise and free up Police resources.
- There had been an increase in visitors to the area and incidents such as road traffic accidents or missing persons out hill walking impacted on Police resources. There was also domestic crime in the area such as break ins, theft, drug misuse, sexual and domestic related crimes.
- An update on Police staffing in the area was provided.
- Members appreciated the work of Police Officers in the area.

The Committee **NOTED**:-

- progress made against the objectives set within the Highland Local Policing Plan 2023–2026 Year 1 attached as Annex A to this report, for the period covering 01 April 2023 – 31 March 2024;
- the change in format necessitate by a reduction in back-office capacity to prepare additional area committee reports; and
- that consideration would be given to providing an annual local performance report for the Skye/Raasay Area.

**5. Community Payback Service - Presentation
Seirbheis Ath-Phàigheadh Coimhearsnachd – Taisbeanadh**

This item was deferred until the next meeting.

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

There was circulated Report No. SR/19/24 by the Assistant Chief Executive - Place.

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

- In terms of homelessness presentations, expressions of interest had been received from some private landlords to change their properties from short term let, to long term lets, but they did not know how to go about this or who to approach for assistance. It was advised that the Principal Housing Officer would be the contact to offer guidance on this matter.
- Specific figures for homeless households/property types in the Skye/Raasay area would be provided to Members;
- The reduction in rent arrears was very positive and showed the benefits of the housing team in focusing on this issue. Also, it was good to see the number of evictions was very low, which reflected the professionalism of the housing team in engaging with tenants.
- The Council had a robust rent arrears escalation policy which was checked regularly to ensure it was fit for purpose.
- It was positive news that the serious and persistent incidents of anti-social behaviour in this area was low. It was queried what the process was for people wanting to report anti-social behaviour incidents. These incidents

could be reported to the Council's Service Centre or contact a Housing Officer.

- There needed to be a wider proactive discussion on how the Housing Allocations Policy works for people in Skye/Raasay given the difficulty some people who worked had in getting a property in the area. Some people could be on the housing waiting list for many years but did not have the points required to get a property.
- It was advised that owning a property or having recently sold a property was no barrier to someone being on the Council house waiting list. The list, was needs based, and the application form was assessed on someone's current housing need.

The Committee **NOTED**:-

- i. the information provided on housing performance in the period 1 April 2024 – 30 September 2024; and
- ii. that the Chair of the Committee would make representations to the Chair of the Housing and Property Committee for a review of the Housing Allocations Policy so it was more bespoke for the people on Skye and Raasay.

7. Portree Link Road Update Cunntas às Ùr mu Rathad-ceangail Phort Rìgh

There was circulated Report No. SR/20/24 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Place.

The Portree Link Road project was now in a position to move forward with the earliest anticipated start date for construction being May 2025 with a 25 week construction programme. This was dependent on contract procurement processes and successful appointment of a principal contractor for the works.

The issue of decrofting of land for the link road was ongoing but the Council was seeking early access agreements from landowners to ensure there is no delay to construction.

Members were very pleased the project was now going ahead and would alleviate some of the challenges with the flow of traffic through Portree and into North Skye. The completion of the link road would also be a trigger for other projects to help recovery and regeneration in Portree and the wider region. It was requested that a progress report on the project be submitted to a future Committee.

The cost estimate of the project was £1.6m and Members were assured that this was sufficient to construct the road. The contract would go out to competitive tender and the Council did have the option to tender for this project.

The Committee **NOTED**:-

- i. the funding position in respect of the Portree Link Road;
- ii. the proposed delivery programme; and
- iii. that a progress report on the project would be submitted to a future meeting of the Committee.

8. Parking Income Teachd-a-steach Parcaidh

There was circulated Report No. SR/21/24 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Place.

Following commentary on the report by the Principal Traffic Officer, the following main points were raised by Members:-

- It was noted that income from pay and display (after VAT) did not all go to the local Committee. For example, the local Committee did not get income from Somerled Square Car Park or the Green Car Park as the Council's parking policy for shared income did not cover legacy car parks.
- The parking services of the Council was fully funded from income received from parking charges.
- In terms of the parking income generated on Skye, the local Committee did not receive any on street parking income or penalty charge notice income. There were also capital borrowing costs to be paid for.
- The Committee did receive 50% of income from car parks (other than legacy car parks) after deductions;
- There was a cost per parking bay for maintenance and it would be useful to see a record of which car parks the maintenance was being undertaken, as for example, there was concern locally about the state of the Broadford car park. It was advised that a bid was required for any capital investment and maintenance on car parks, similar to the process of bidding for funding for roads maintenance. In terms of the Broadford car park, a bid would be submitted to the Capital Board for surplus funding to be reallocated to maintenance of Broadford car park.
- The high level of parking enforcement income at the Storr off street car park was highlighted. There were staff at the Storr who were monitoring the car parking there, so it was surprising to see a lot of people still being charged for using the off street car parks. A detailed breakdown of parking contraventions at this site would be provided to Members.
- There was a strong view that all of the money after costs generated on Skye from off street parking income should be retained and spent on Skye. All local Members would like to see more of the income received from parking charges in the area, retained locally. There was wider discussion to be had on this matter to see if Council parking policy could be changed to support this. But one also had to be mindful that income going to the Council's general fund from parking income to fund other services, would need to be replaced somehow if all money raised locally stayed locally.
- Parking enforcement officers provided an important traffic management function and their work and that of the whole parking services team was commended.
- The money the area received for investment from parking income since the shared income policy was introduced in 2019/20 was circa £1.4m. This was welcome funding to improve the infrastructure around Skye/Raasay and was used as match funding for other income streams from other sources.

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

**9. Community Regeneration Fund Assessment of Applications
Measadh Iarrtasan Maoin Ath-nuadhachadh Coimhearsnachd**

There was circulated Report No. SR/22/24 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Place which detailed current funding requests to the Isle of Skye and Raasay Community Regeneration Fund (CRF) allocation for discussion and decision by Members.

In terms of the Uig footbridge project, this was a much used community facility and would be a great long term asset for the community. In relation to the Council's procurement and design process, it was felt this made costs higher than they might otherwise be. There was a need to ensure value for money for the CRF funding available.

Following consideration, the Committee **AGREED**:-

- i. £40,000 CRF grant award for the application from The Highland Council, Uig footbridge, River Rha project;
- ii. £100,000 of CRF as match funding to the Islands Programme application – IP011 Community and Public Access Improvements; and
- iii. £100,000 of the local allocation of income generated from car parking charges in the 2023/24 financial year, as match funding for the Islands Programme application – IP011 Community and Public Access Improvements project.

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

The Committee **NOTED** the following Ward 10 Discretionary Fund Grants awarded since the last meeting of the Committee.

Viewfield Garden Collective SCIO	£2,800.00
Dunvegan Community Council	£1,393.80

The meeting ended at 11.50 a.m.

The Highland Council

Minutes of Meeting of the **Communities and Place Committee** held in the Council Chamber, Council Headquarters, Glenurquhart Road, Inverness on Wednesday 27 November 2024 at 10.30 am.

Present:

Mr A Baldrey (remote)
Mr J Bruce (remote)
Mr A Christie
Ms T Collier (remote)
Mr L Fraser
Mr R Gale
Mr A Graham
Mr R Gunn (remote)

Mrs J Hendry
Mrs B Jarvie (remote)
Mr W MacKay (remote)
Mr G MacKenzie (Chair)
Ms K MacLean
Mr H Morrison (Vice Chair)
Mr M Reiss
Ms M Smith

Non-Members also present:

Mr M Baird
Mr A Baxter
Dr C Birt (remote)
Mr R Bremner (remote)
Mr S Coghill (remote)
Mr D Fraser (remote)
Mr J Grafton
Dr M Gregson (remote)
Ms M Hutchison (remote)
Ms E Knox (remote)

Ms L Kraft (remote)
Mrs A MacLean (remote)
Mr T MacLennan (remote)
Mr D Macpherson
Mr P Oldham (remote)
Mrs T Robertson (remote)
Mr K Rosie (remote)
Mrs Liz Saggars (remote)
Mr R Stewart

In attendance:

Mr M MacLeod, Assistant Chief Executive – Place
Ms A Clark, Chief Officer – Housing and Communities
Ms D Sutton, Acting Head of Community Operations and Logistics
Mr A McKinnie, Strategic Lead, Waste Strategy and Operations
Mr A Yates, Strategic Lead, Environmental Health and Bereavement Services
Mr P Tomalin, Community Development Manager
Ms L Gray, Chief Registrar
Mr J MacLean, Bereavement Services Project Manager
Mr A Hunter, Service Lead – Transport and Logistics
Mr S Graham, Project Manager, Strategic Improvement Team
Ms C Maxwell, Service Finance Manager
Ms L MacGillivray, Community Support Coordinator
Ms M Murray, Principal Committee Officer
Ms R Ross, Committee Officer

Also in attendance:

Mr M Humphreys, Local Senior Officer Highland, Scottish Fire and Rescue Service

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

Mr G MacKenzie 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 M Green and Mr D Millar.

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 4: Mr A Christie
Item 7: Mr A Christie
Item 8: Mr A Christie
Item 12: Mr R Bremner

3. Good News
Naidheachdan Matha

The Chair informed the Committee of the following items of good news:-

- following competitive interview, two existing officers within the Environmental Health team had been provided with the opportunity to train as Environmental Health Officers. Esther MacRae and Lisa Roberts had received direct entry into year two of the BSc (Hons) in Environmental Health with Professional Practice degree at the University of the West of Scotland. They would be completing the degree through a hybrid/distance learning option and would be fully qualified in 2027. There was a national shortage of Environmental Health Officers, and this "grow your own" approach to workforce planning would greatly help with supporting the Highland team;
- The Amenities team at Diriebught Road depot had had a visit from Health and Safety Executive Pesticide Enforcement Officers on 26 September. The visit had gone very well, and officers had been able to not only furnish them with the required information but exceed their expectations in terms of the systems that were in place. What had been presented was a coherent and consistent approach to the management of pesticides that was well embedded in Amenities, and officers had been able to demonstrate elements of best practice in terms of record-keeping. The team had been thorough, professional, proactive, and organised in their approach in relation to the documentation, systems of work, planning and organising, and congratulations were expressed to all involved; and
- Ryen Campbell had been promoted from Play Technician to Play Technician Foreperson. Ryen had previously been nominated as Council Employee of the Year, and had won the Rising Star Award at the APSE Conference in May 2023, and it was great to see him progressing in his career and developing within his field.

The Committee **NOTED** the good news.

4. Scottish Fire and Rescue Service Highland Performance Report Aithisg Choileanaidh Seirbheis Smàlaidh agus Teasairginn na h-Alba airson na Gàidhealtachd

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 the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS) Highland Performance Report for the period 1 April to 30 September 2024.

The Local Senior Officer for Highland provided an introduction, highlighting the key areas of the report, including – domestic fire safety, unintentional harm, non-fire emergencies, deliberate fire setting, non-domestic fire safety, unwanted fire alarm signals, operational preparedness, and community engagement.

During discussion, the following main points were raised:-

- the fire skills course for vulnerable young people who were not attending school was welcomed, and it was hoped there would be more of these in the future;
- information was sought, and provided, on referrals to other agencies, the role of the Fire Service in consulting on applications for Battery Energy Storage Systems, the upward trend in the number of Road Traffic Accidents, the reasons why a large number of homes did not have interlinked smoke alarms, and the recycling of smoke detectors;
- concern was expressed regarding the low availability of appliances in Sutherland;
- on the point being raised, it was confirmed that the SFRS worked with local clubs, such as lunch clubs, regarding home fire safety visits for older people who felt uncomfortable about strangers visiting their homes. Members were encouraged to contact their local Station Commander if they were aware of any clubs etc the SFRS was not attending;
- the availability of appliances in Fort Augustus was welcomed; and
- in response to a question, it was confirmed that availability of appliances at Spean Bridge was not recorded as it was a volunteer service rather than a retained service.

The Committee scrutinised and **NOTED** the report.

In terms of Standing Order 9 the Committee **AGREED** to consider items 7, 8 and 9 at this stage.

7. Community Participation and Involvement Update Cunntas Bhliadhna mu Chom-pàirteachadh

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 CP/27/24 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Place.

During discussion, the following main points were raised:-

- in response to a request, it was confirmed that the feedback from the Rate Your Estate inspections and information on the mapping of local groups and services could be shared with Members;
- having more engagement opportunities online would exclude some older people who were not comfortable using digital technology, and it was queried what efforts were being made to engage with harder to reach groups;
- more regular reviews and a clearer measure of what a good participation exercise looked like were requested;
- it was queried whether the number of Participation Requests was low because people were not aware of them and whether more communication with community organisations such as Community Councils was needed. In that regard, it was acknowledged that more could be done to promote Participation Requests and the Chief Officer – Housing and Communities undertook to take that forward;
- the Rate Your Estate inspections were commended for their efficiency in identifying a variety of issues in one place, making it easy to see where resources were needed, and it was suggested that better use could be made of the information gathered;
- on the point being raised, it was confirmed that consideration was being given to extending Rate Your Estate inspections to other areas, and how best to provide feedback to Members and tenants;
- the Ecology Strategy was welcomed, and it was hoped that the Council would use the evidence in the Strategy to be proactive in securing funding for flood defences in areas of costal erosion;
- with regard to the Participatory Resourcing Approach, it would be helpful to have details of the formulas across Highland;
- in relation to the Nairn Common Good Fund Engagement Group, it was clarified that the Common Good assets were for the benefit of the whole of Ward 18, not just the former Royal Burgh of Nairn;
- the importance of engaging with Service Point staff, GPs, the Police and Community Councils to gain an understanding of the needs of communities, was emphasised;
- this was an important report, and disappointment was expressed that it was not at the forefront of the Full Council agenda;
- information was sought, and provided, on how engagement and involvement was coordinated and how best practice was shared across the Council;
- the importance of engaging with communities of interest, such as young people and accommodation providers, was emphasised;
- with reference to the current Visitor Levy Consultation, it was queried how online consultations were tested before going live to ensure there were no issues that would affect public engagement, such as not being able to complete the consultation form on a mobile device or tablet, and whether consideration was given to the timing consultations;
- there were opportunities to develop community engagement in many different ways in local areas, and it was necessary to encourage Members and Community Councils to work together to tackle specific local issues;
- staffing and budget changes had resulted in some of the issues raised in Rate Your Estate inspections not being followed up;
- on the point being raised, it was confirmed that Council officers were working with the community to find a resolution in respect of the Bught Stop centre; and

- the extensive and detailed consultation exercise on the Whin Park Redevelopment Project was commended.

The Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the update on the work ongoing to increase participation and involvement of communities in Council activity across Highland; and
- ii. **AGREED** the Annual Participation Request report for the Scottish Government set out at Appendix 1 of the report.

**8. Highland Local Child Poverty Action Report 2023/24
Aithisg mu Ghnìomh Bochdainn Chloinne 2023/24**

Transparency Statement: Mr A Christie declared a connection to this item as General Manager of Inverness, Badenoch and Strathspey Citizens Advice Bureau and 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 CP/28/24 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Place.

During discussion, the following main points were raised:-

- on the point being raised, it was confirmed that there was third sector representation on the Poverty Reduction Delivery Group which coordinated the Highland Community Planning Partnership's child poverty response and had compiled the report;
- child poverty could only be addressed if poverty as a whole was addressed, and the importance of a holistic approach was emphasised;
- the focus on adult literacy and numeracy and getting unemployed parents into work was welcomed;
- the system of GP referrals needed to be revisited as the number of referrals was extremely low;
- there was a need for more financial literacy in schools;
- it was suggested that ways of using existing assets, such as school buildings and kitchens, to help tackle poverty be investigated;
- more focussed work within communities was needed to identify ways to address child poverty, and this could be discussed at Ward Business Meetings or Area Committees;
- the work of Income Maximisation Teams within the Council and Citizen's Advice Bureaux was commended;
- in rural areas, low incomes were exacerbated by higher fuel, food and transport costs. In addition, less accessible services often led to people not taking up the opportunity to participate in health clinics which therefore negatively impacted their health and wellbeing;
- reference having been made to instances of children being kept off school on non-uniform days due to stigma, information was provided on the rollout of the Cost of the School Day toolkit;
- the impact of domestic abuse in terms of child poverty was highlighted;
- there was a conflict between the Council's financial position and the need to rationalise Service Level Agreements and providing third sector partners with sufficient funding to deliver services, and Members were encouraged to attend the forthcoming workshop looking at SLAs;

- poverty looked different in different areas, and rural poverty was a unique issue that it was necessary to focus on, in conjunction with partners, to effect more positive outcomes;
- it would be helpful to collate and present the work being done by a large number of agencies to tackle poverty and match it against the Scottish Human Rights Commission Annual Report so Members could see the work taking place and home in on the areas that were still outstanding;
- many issues around poverty had been addressed in the Housing Challenge Conference and the Highland Investment Plan; and
- in response to a question, it was explained that a review of the Integrated Children's Services Plan would be taking place and that would be the best avenue for taking forward some of the priorities in the Child Poverty Action Report.

The Committee:-

- NOTED** the actions carried out in 2023/24 as set out in section two of Appendix 2 of the report; and
- AGREED** the actions for delivery in 2024/25, as noted in section three of Appendix 2 of the report.

9. Registration of Births, Deaths and Marriages - Annual Report Clàrachadh air Breith, Bàs is Pòsadh – Aithisg Bhliadhnail

There had been circulated Report No CP/29/24 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Place.

During discussion, the following main points were raised:-

- the photographs at the end of the report were welcomed;
- in response to a question, it was confirmed that the greater number of deaths than births was a national trend;
- the use of social media to promote the Highlands as a destination for “elopement” style weddings was suggested given the associated opportunities for income generation;
- information was sought, and provided, on the authentication measures in place when births and deaths were registered remotely, the possibility of conducting citizenship ceremonies in Nairn and Grantown on Spey, and what could be done to make Inverness a more popular wedding destination;
- in response to a question, it was clarified that the number of births in Caithness stated in the report was the number of births registered in both the Thurso and Wick Registration Offices;
- on the point being raised, it was confirmed that parents registering still births were provided with additional literature on available support;
- in response to a question, it was clarified that births and deaths were not the only factors affecting depopulation and that this was a challenge across Highland which needed to be dealt with collectively; and
- on the point being raised, it was confirmed that there had been an increase in the number of marriages taking place since lockdown and that this could have been due to a change in people's priorities and more people opting for small or “elopement” style weddings rather than saving up for big weddings.

The Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the work of the Registration team across the Highland area;
- ii. scrutinised and **NOTED** the performance of the team based on the most recent available data from 2023; and
- iii. **NOTED** the continued efforts to modernise and promote the Registration Service, ensuring Highland Council offered a cost effective, efficient but professional service to the public in all aspects of registration business.

5. Revenue Budget Monitoring and Service Performance Reporting for Q2 1 July 2024 to 30 September 2024
Sgrùdadh Buidseat Teachd-a-steach agus Aithris Coileanaidh Seirbheis R2 2024/25

There had been circulated Report No CP/25/24 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Place.

During discussion, the following main points were raised:-

- developing a marketing approach for civil ceremonies needed to be a priority;
- further information was sought, and provided, on the Community Volunteering Policy, the use of bulky waste shredders, the costs allocated to generating income targets, the staffing underspend, what would happen to the underspend that had not yet been reallocated, the forecast overspend on fleet and plant, and the possibility of purchasing rather than leasing fleet vehicles;
- on the point being raised, it was confirmed that Bereavement Services would look into the marketing of lairs, but this would be affected by burial ground capacity in different areas;
- the importance of gully clearing was emphasised and, in response to a question, the Assistant Chief Executive – Place undertook to liaise with Mr M Reiss concerning the status of the gully emptying machine for Caithness and Sutherland;
- it was queried how gully clearing and road sweeping could be coordinated;
- the importance of being ready for the winter months and thinking strategically about how best to use resources during this period was emphasised;
- it was necessary to have a plan to achieve income targets, and a more concise and easier to understand method of reporting on staff vacancies was requested. The Assistant Chief Executive – Place took these points on board;
- on the point being raised, an assurance was provided that there would not be a reduction in frontline posts;
- in response to a question about the possible relocation of the Diriebught Road depot it was clarified that Members had previously agreed that depots in poor condition or with health and safety concerns would be prioritised; and
- an underspend on maintenance could be worrying as it could indicate that maintenance was not being kept up to date which could lead to bigger problems in the future.

The Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the Service's revenue monitoring position; and
- ii. scrutinised and **NOTED** the Service's performance and risk information.

**6. Capital Budget Monitoring Report Q2 2024-25
Aithisg Sgrùdaidh Buidseit Calpa R2 2024–25**

There had been circulated Report No CP/26/24 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Place.

The Committee **NOTED**:-

- i. the forecasted capital outturn for the Communities and Place Service for 2024/25 as at Quarter 2; and
- ii. the current forecast for the major project for the Communities and Place Service for 2024/25.

**10. Bereavement Services – Project Update
Seirbheisean Call Neach-gaoil – Cunntas às Ùr mun Phròiseact**

There had been circulated Report No CP/30/24 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Place.

During discussion, the following main points were raised:-

- information was sought, and provided, on how many funerals were being paid for by the Council, direct cremations, the disparity in cremation costs across Scotland, burial ground capacity in Cawdor, long-term planning for a new burial ground for Inverness, the possibility of a crematorium in Lochaber, the Glen Nevis Cemetery extension, the Inverness Crematorium cremator replacement project, and recovering costs for repairs in burial grounds;
- congratulations were extended to officers and contractors on the recent cemetery extension at Canisbay, and it was highlighted that extensions were still needed in Thurso, Wick, Keiss and Reay;
- the resolution of issues in respect of Inverness Crematorium was welcomed; and
- on the point being raised, it was confirmed that there would be no impact on service charges resulting from the purchase of new cremators for Inverness Crematorium.

The Committee **NOTED**:-

- i. the progress of current projects on burial ground extensions and Inverness Crematorium refurbishment; and
- ii. future burial ground extension projects in Highland.

**11. Long-term Waste Management
Stiùireadh Sgudail Fad-ùine**

There had been circulated Report No CP/31/24 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Place.

During discussion, the following main points were raised:-

- this was one of the biggest decisions the Committee had had to make for some time as it ruled out any form of local Energy from Waste (EfW) facility;
- the recommended approach was still an EfW solution, just not a local one;

- new EfW facilities were under development elsewhere in Scotland, and there might be a closer option than the current merchant facility;
- in response to questions regarding landfill tax, it was explained that the Recycling Improvement Fund initiative had provided the opportunity to reduce the amount of waste going to landfill and that by July 2025 there would be no waste from Highland going to landfill; and
- on the point being raised, it was confirmed that all transport options, including rail, would be included when considering haulage contracts. However, efficiency of plant had a greater effect on the carbon impact of waste processing than the distance the waste needed to be transported.

The Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** that the most appropriate strategic approach for The Highland Council's long-term residual waste management was considered to be one of seeking a long-term contract with a merchant service provider operating within Scotland. (A merchant provider was one which sold residual waste processing capacity within its facility to customers which might include local authorities and commercial organisations);
- ii. **NOTED** that the feasibility study findings previously reported to this Committee identified that the current medium-term merchant provider contract represented good value;
- iii. **NOTED** that continuing to investigate the possibility of developing an energy-from-waste facility within the Highlands was not considered to be a suitable course of action;
- iv. **NOTED** that the basis for the perspective is based on the likelihood of a better cost outcome and more certainty of provision through using a merchant provider and these factors being more favourable for the planning and delivery of effective, strategic waste management operations;
- v. **NOTED** that the Waste Service would seek, through tendering at the appropriate time, and subject to the Communities and Place Committee agreeing vi below, a long-term waste management solution through a merchant facility to succeed the current medium-term contract; and
- vi. **AGREED** that the most appropriate long-term strategic direction for residual waste management was to tender for a merchant provider solution.

12. Play Park Strategy Update for 2024

Cunntas às Ùr mu Adhartas le Ro-innleachd nam Pàircean-cluiche

Transparency Statement: Mr R Bremner declared a connection to this item as Vice Chair of Thrumster Community Development Association but, having applied the objective test, did not consider that he had an interest to declare.

There had been circulated Report No CP/32/24 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Place.

The Chair drew Members' attention to the key points of the report and confirmed that he had begun discussions with officers about allocating funds to Play Park maintenance when setting the budget for 2025.

During discussion, the following main points were raised:-

- in response to a question, it was clarified that there had not been found to be an impact on the physical and mental health of children as play areas would still be available for children to use even if equipment needed to be removed;
- consultations on playparks were some of the most responded to which highlighted how important they were to communities;
- the proposal that 10% of funds raised by communities be set aside to cover future maintenance costs was welcomed;
- on the point being raised, it was confirmed that work was ongoing to secure the post of Play Strategy Coordinator which was currently a fixed term role;
- the £2.9m awarded to the Council by the Scottish Government had enabled much more to be spent on playparks than would have previously been the case;
- officers were commended for their work in engaging with Members to create a plan for maintenance of the play areas in the Inverness West ward and for working with communities in the Dalneigh area;
- the Play Strategy Coordinator was commended for her work in helping communities find money to upgrade playparks;
- the importance of working with community groups was highlighted;
- the high cost of play equipment was emphasised;
- it was highlighted that communities in Caithness would prefer that funds were spent on new play equipment rather than Gaelic signage;
- information was sought, and provided, on the role of National Planning Framework 4, the possible use of contributions from windfarms to improve playparks, and the safeguards for playparks that did not have community funding;
- due to press coverage, there was fear from communities that playparks would be closed. However, an assurance was provided that no playparks were at risk of closure although there was a risk of some items of play equipment having to be removed if funding for maintenance was not found;
- upcoming new and refurbished playparks in Thurso and Wick were welcomed;
- it was queried what could be done to ensure that developers built more inclusive playparks as many were very small and aimed at younger children;
- it was emphasised that playparks were not a statutory service;
- businesses should be encouraged to make contributions to playparks;
- the playparks at Castletown and Glenelg were excellent examples of community funded playparks and it was queried what other communities could learn from them;
- in response to a question, it was clarified that specialist skills were needed to maintain play equipment but the service could work with the Community Payback team regarding the possibility of carrying out non-specialist maintenance and repairs in playparks;
- many communities relied on Ward Discretionary Funding for projects such as playparks so it would be helpful if there were no further cuts to these budgets;
- SSEN was currently building a camp for over 300 workers in Lochaber, and it was suggested that the possibility of SSEN funding a playpark and providing workers to carry out some of the work be investigated; and
- it was confirmed that a breakdown of the information in the tables in the report could be provided for individual Wards.

The Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the contents of the report; and

- ii. **AGREED** the principle that 10% of funds raised by communities be ringfenced for future maintenance.

13. Approach to Public Conveniences and Action Plan Goireasan Poblach agus Plana-gníomha

There had been circulated Report No CP/33/24 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Place.

During discussion, the following main points were raised:-

- information was sought, and provided, on the possibility of installing turnstile systems that accepted payment by card or app, the Council's policy on charging for public conveniences, where it was envisaged that the funding for the proposed Public Conveniences Action Plan would come from, and the proposals for public convenience provision at the Northern Meeting Park;
- public conveniences would be needed in the city centre once Inverness Castle was open to the public;
- the public conveniences in the Victorian Market were commended. However, there was a need for signage for visitors;
- in response to a question, it was clarified that many public conveniences did not have formal charging in place as the payment machines were often vandalised so honesty boxes were seen to be the better option;
- on the point being raised, it was confirmed that consideration would be given to prioritising public conveniences on strategic routes such as the A82, the A9 from the north, and the routes from Skye to Inverness as they were important for both tourists and residents;
- while it was understood that vandalism could lead to the closure of public conveniences, it was hoped that permanent closure would be a last resort;
- the importance of public conveniences to communities was emphasised, and it was questioned why public convenience provision was not a statutory requirement;
- the importance of providing assistance to community groups with Community Asset Transfers, the building process and the administrative workload of opening and running public conveniences was emphasised;
- attention was drawn to arrangements whereby community groups and businesses monitored, opened and closed public conveniences, including an arrangement with High Life Highland in Invergordon which could be considered for other areas;
- in response to a question, it was confirmed that the Community Toolkit referred to in section 4.2 of the Approach to Public Conveniences and Action Plan included case studies of successful projects, the Wick project could be added; and
- the new public conveniences in Foyers, Storr and Wick and the re-opening of the public conveniences at Whin Park were welcomed.

The Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the contents of the report; and
- ii. **AGREED** the Approach to Public Conveniences and Action Plan (Appendix 1 of the report), and that it was subject to funding.

14. Operational Fleet Compliance, Policies and Procedures Cunntas às Ùr mu Phoileasaidhean Cabhlaich

There had been circulated Report No CP/34/24 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Place.

During discussion, information was sought, and provided, on the use of trackers and cameras on vehicles, how to reduce costs and make the fleet greener, and where vehicles were kept overnight.

The Committee **NOTED**:-

- i. the requirements relating to the Operator Licence, that the licence was due for renewal in January 2026 and that the Council's performance was currently rated externally as compliant;
- ii. the requirements relating to the Light Fleet; and
- iii. that the refreshed Fleet policies and procedures reflected legislative requirements and were aligned to the Council's budget.

15. Neurodiversity Review Group Buidheann Comhairleachaidh Niùro-dhiofaran

There had been circulated Report No CP/35/24 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Place.

During discussion, the following main points were raised:-

- thanks were expressed to officers for the report and the time and attention given to this matter;
- the report was important given that 1 in 7 people were on the neurodivergent spectrum;
- on the point being raised, it was confirmed that a human rights based approach would be taken to how the proposals were taken forward;
- in relation to risks, there was a risk of not being credible to the neurodiverse community. In that regard, the importance of hearing the voice of those with lived experience was emphasised, and their inclusion in the proposed process was welcomed; and
- there was an opportunity for the Council to be one of the first Council's to look at this matter and make changes.

The Committee:-

- i. **AGREED** the proposed approach, as set out in section 5 of the report, to developing a new equality outcome to reflect and take account of neurodiversity in Council service delivery and as an employer; and
- ii. **NOTED** that this would inform the review of equality outcomes with a new equality outcome and associated actions being considered as part of the Equality Outcomes and Mainstreaming Report to Communities and Place in May 2025.

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

There had been circulated, and were **APPROVED**, the Minutes of the Waste Strategy Working Group held on Friday 8 November 2024.

17. Membership of the Waste Strategy Working Group
Ballrachd Buidheann Obrach Ro-innleachd an Sgudail

The Committee **AGREED** the revised membership, in accordance with the political formula, which had been tabled at the meeting.

The meeting concluded at 3.45 pm.

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The Highland Council

Minutes of Meeting of the **Audit Committee** held in the Council Chamber, Council Headquarters, Glenurquhart Road, Inverness on Thursday, 28 November 2024 at 10.30am.

Present:

Ms S Atkin (substitute)	Mr G MacKenzie
Mr M Baird	Mr D McDonald
Mr C Ballance	Ms J McEwan
Mr B Boyd (remote)	Mr P Oldham
Mr L Fraser	Mrs T Robertson
Mr R Jones (remote)	Mr R Stewart

Non-Members also present:

Mr A Baxter (remote)	Mr K Gowans
Mr A Christie	Mr P Logue
Mr J Finlayson (remote)	Mr T MacLennan (remote)
Mr D Fraser (remote)	Mr D Macpherson (remote)

Officials in Attendance:

Mr A Gunn, Assistant Chief Executive – Corporate
Mr S Fraser, Chief Officer – Legal and Corporate Governance
Ms S McKandie – Chief Officer – Revenues and Commercialisation
Mr B Porter, Chief Officer – Corporate Finance
Mr J Shepherd, Chief Officer – Business Solutions
Miss D Sutherland, Strategic Lead (Corporate Audit and Performance)
Mr M Watters, Corporate Performance and Information Governance Manager
Mr J Thurlbeck, Corporate Audit Manager, Corporate
Mr J Campbell, Senior Auditor, Internal Audit, Corporate
Ms E Barrie, Head of People
Ms A Morrison, Customer Resolution and Improvement Manager
Ms R MacDonald, Principal Accountant
Mr P Nevin, Legal Manager
Ms P Betts, Common Good Fund Officer
Ms M MacKenzie, Strategic Commercial Manager, Commercial and Procurement Shared Services
Mr S McBride, ICT Operations Manager
Mr N Osborne, Climate Change Manager
Ms F Daschofsky, Project Manager
Miss J MacLennan, Joint Democratic Services Manager, Corporate
Mrs G MacPherson, Committee Officer, Corporate

Also in attendance:

Ms E Scoburgh, Audit Scotland
Ms C Gardiner, Audit Scotland
Ms J McBride, Audit Scotland

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

Business**1. Apologies for Absence
Leisgeulan**

Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of Mr A Jarvie, Ms M Ross and Mr A Sinclair.

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

There were no declarations of interest.

**3. Code of Corporate Governance – 2024/25 Code
Còd Riaghlachais Chorporra – Còd 2024/25**

There had been circulated Report No. AC/27/24 by the Chief Officer – Legal and Corporate Governance.

In response to a request to change wording, it was thought that the core principles in section 5.4 of the report reflected advice from the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy, however if possible, the authority would be referred to as Highland Council in principle E.

The Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the progress on delivering the 2023/24 Code of Corporate Governance; and
- ii. **APPROVED** the 2024/25 Code of Corporate Governance.

**4. 23/24 Report to those charged with governance (Highland Council); and
23/24 Highland Council Annual Audit Report
Aithisg 23/24 dhaibhsan a tha an urra ri riaghlachas (Comhairle na Gàidhealtachd); agus Aithisg Sgrùdaidh Bhliadhnail Chomhairle na Gàidhealtachd 23/24**

There had been circulated Report No. AC/28/24 by the Chief Officer – Corporate Finance.

During discussion, the following points were raised:-

- clarification was sought regarding documentation provided for audit and it was confirmed that Audit Scotland received sufficient audit evidence to support their opinion;
- the £3.8 million unadjusted error in Exhibit 3 of the Annual Audit Report was confirmed as having no ongoing impact and no impact on general funds, as it related to assets and was approximately 0.1% of the value of assets on the balance sheet;
- it was asked what effect the cost of the Council's plan to finance a capital programme would have on ongoing budgets and, in response, Members were reminded of the Highland Investment Plan and the ongoing monitoring of all treasury management activities;

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- information was sought, and provided, regarding the budget gap and the effect this might have on Council investments and plans for the future. It was asked if, for comparison purposes, a chart could be provided relative to the size of the budget of the Council;
- reserves were at a minimum but they were clearly identified and at the level agreed by Members;
- it was asked if the new management structure would achieve the £310,000 savings target and it was said that savings were being tracked;
- concern was expressed as a slight number of key performance indicators were missing targets and data. A response was provided and it was confirmed that the Strategic Lead (Corporate Audit and Performance) would circulate further information to Members outside of the meeting;
- in terms of Exhibit 8 in the Annual Audit Report, Members asked for reassurance that the impact of hybrid working would be monitored;
- the Common Good Fund was referred to singularly in Exhibit 2 of the Annual Audit Report and it was suggested that it should be plural to reflect the multiple Common Good Funds held;
- information was sought regarding the loan to Inverness Airport and it was confirmed that a response would be provided by the Chief Officer – Corporate Finance outside of the meeting;
- information was sought, and provided, regarding charges to the pensions account and it was confirmed that details would be provided after the meeting;
- progress reports for digital technology and workforce planning would be shared at the upcoming Corporate Resources Committee and it was asked when a progress report for developing future skills and capacity would be shared; and
- the Audit Scotland Best Thematic Review would come to Committee in August 2025.

The Committee:-

- i. **APPROVED** the audited accounts for signature;
- ii. **NOTED** the report to those charged with governance on the 2023/24 accounts;
- iii. **AGREED** that the letter of representation be signed by the Chief Officer – Corporate Finance (Section 95 Officer); and
- iv. Scrutinised, considered and **NOTED** the annual audit report findings, in particular the key messages on pages 16-17 and the follow up of prior year recommendations at Appendix 1 of the report.

5. Charities Accounts Cunntasan Charthannasan

There had been circulated Report No. AC/29/24 by the Chief Officer – Corporate Finance.

The Committee:-

- i. **APPROVED** the audited accounts for signature, noting that the accounts to be approved would include the name of the trustee appointed as a result of the Fort William and Ardnamurchan by-election held on 22 November 2024;
- ii. **NOTED** the report to those charged with governance on the 2023/24 accounts; and

- iii. **AGREED** that the letter of representation be signed by the Treasurer on behalf of the Trustees.

6. Annual Complaints Performance Report – 2023/24
Aithisg Choileanaidh Bhliadhnaidh Ghearanan – 2023/24

There had been circulated Report No. AC/30/24 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Corporate.

Members were concerned with the increase in complaints. During discussion, Members felt:-

- there were certain areas of the Council where it was becoming prohibitively difficult to get in contact with the right person;
- not all complaints forwarded by Members were being resolved and officers did not always reply to Members even when correctly signposted;
- it was disappointing that schools received the highest number of complaints, having risen 150% over the past 2 years. A breakdown of complaints was requested and it was asked that it be analysed in more detail next year; and
- complaints were made due to frustration.

A comparison of closed cases was made and pressure on resources was acknowledged. Members asked if there was a more efficient way of streamlining the Service and filtering complaints.

The following further points were raised:-

- the Child Friendly Complaints process was welcomed;
- it was asked how enquiries, requests for service and complaints were measured, as if other local authorities in Scotland defined them differently, it would be difficult for the Council to benchmark it's effectiveness; and
- for ease of reading, it was asked if pages 4 and 5 of the Annual Complaints Performance Report might be re-ordered so that the definition of Frontline would be provided before the report headlines.

The Customer Resolution and Improvement Manager provided reassurance that a lot of work was occurring in the background, which included updates to the Council website. It was confirmed that a record of school complaints was held and the Service had been pro-actively engaging with head teachers, providing training in terms of complaint handling and the Child Friendly Complaints process.

The Committee:-

- i. scrutinised and **NOTED** the performance outlined in the Annual Complaints Report for 2023/24 at Appendix 1, including:
- that most complaints (57%) closed in the period were considered Frontline and did not require investigation, with 68.5% of those closed considered to be resolved to the satisfaction of the customer.
 - the time to respond to a Frontline complaint continued to be within the target of 5 working days with an average of 3.7 days in 23/24 showing a maintained positive position.
 - that work was still required to improve the performance of

Investigation complaints and that this was an ongoing improvement process.

- ii. **AGREED** to publish the appended report on the Council's website and submit this to the SPSO.
- iii. **NOTED** the additional Child Friendly Complaints process which became law on 16 July 2024.

7. **Review of Corporate Risks Ath-Sgrùdadh air Cunnartan Corporra**

There had been circulated Report No. AC/31/24 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Corporate.

Various concerns were raised in terms of Risk CR3, Sustainability of the Workforce. Members felt this risk was understated given that the risks included a failure to deliver statutory services. It was felt that the details should include a recognition of harm to health and life, and the need for housing and family jobs.

It was thought that relief workers were a great cost to the Council and that contracting some of them would provide savings as well as stability to the workers, and it was felt that the number of those employed under modern apprenticeships was low.

It was asked if the Committee might review the risk as an individual item in the future and the Chair requested confirmation that the actions would be tackled quicker than implied in the wording of the report. It was confirmed that this risk and the actions were currently being reviewed as part of the review of the Workforce for the Future workstream.

Members were informed that regular reports would be presented to relevant Strategic Committees for scrutiny and an update would be provided to a future Committee.

Concerns were also expressed in terms of Risk CR9, Net Zero Programme, and it was felt that the responsible officer for the risk and the action owners should be reassessed. It was confirmed that this would be the case and an update would be provided at the next meeting.

It was remarked that there was no mention of financial risk in terms of the Net Zero Programme, however it was indicated that this had been recognised, as per Mitigating Action HCR9.3. Clarification of costs involved was requested, and it was said that the progression of work was slow. Members were urged to take part in moving it forward.

The Committee **NOTED** and:-

- i. scrutinised the Corporate Risk Register provided at Appendix 1; and
- ii. considered the risk profile and Appendix 1.

8. **Audit Committee Annual Report 2023/24 Aithisg Bhladhnaidh Comataidh an Sgrùdaidh 2023/24**

There had been circulated Report No. AC/32/24 by the Audit Committee Chair.

The Committee:-

- i. **AGREED** the Audit Committee Chair's annual report including the identified areas for improvement. The report was provided at Appendix 1;
- ii. **NOTED** that the self-assessment toolkits provided in the CIPFA guidance would be revisited by the Committee in order to measure progress made since the guidance was first considered; and
- iii. **AGREED** that this report should be recommended to Council to acknowledge that the necessary assurances had been provided by the Audit Committee to demonstrate that it had fulfilled its purpose and could demonstrate its impact for 2023/24.

**9. Internal Audit Reviews and Progress Report
Ath-sgrùdaidhean In-sgrùdaidh agus Aithisg Adhartais**

There had been circulated Report No. AC/33/24 by the Strategic Lead (Corporate Audit and Performance).

The update included copies of the following final reports issued:-

- a) Corporate - Procurement of ICT Cloud Hosted Systems (Reasonable Assurance)

Whilst welcoming the proposals there were wider implications to take into account, an example being how apprenticeships could be supervised if staff could work from home.

- b) People - Workforce Planning Arrangements (Reasonable Assurance)

It was suggested that Members needed to consider what assurance they could take if, despite all the appropriate procedures and policies being in place, there was an inability to recruit frontline staff, the number of Childrens Services Social Worker vacancies in the Mid Area being cited as an example. It would be useful in future if those pockets where there were staff shortages could be highlighted. A long term approach was required and it was hoped there were resources in place to accomplish this.

- c) Corporate - ICT Asset Registers (Limited Assurance)

In response to queries Members were provided with assurances as to the controls in place to make ICT equipment, which was either lost or stolen, secure.

- d) Corporate - Common Good Fund Asset Registers (Substantial Assurance)

Officers were commended for their prompt response to Members' queries regarding Common Good Funds. It was recognised however that there was always the possibility of assets being misclassified, especially bearing in mind the huge number of physical assets, and the Terra Tracker was proving to be a very useful tool. In particular, a number of areas of land in Lochaber had been identified as belonging to the Common Good Fund so the work now taking place was reaping rewards.

The Committee **NOTED**:-

- i. the Final Reports referred to in Section 5.1 of the report; and

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- ii. the current work of the Internal Audit Section outlined at sections 6 and 7, and the status of work in progress detailed at Appendix 1.

10. Internal Audit Action Tracking Tracadh Ghnìomhan In-sgrùdaidh

There had been circulated Report No. AC/34/24 by the Strategic Lead (Corporate Audit and Performance).

Concern was raised regarding revised action dates and it was asked if target dates could be more realistic when first set. It was also asked if the Committee could assist in moving forward the Corporate Landlord Model. The Strategic Lead (Corporate Audit and Performance) confirmed that she would raise the Committee's concerns with the Corporate Management Team.

The Committee, having scrutinised and commented upon the action tracking information provided, including the revised target dates for the completion of outstanding actions.

11. Update on the Global Internal Audit Standards Cunntas às Ùr mu Inbhean In-Sgrùdaidh Cruinneil

There had been circulated Report No. AC/35/24 by the Strategic Lead (Corporate Audit and Performance).

The Committee **NOTED**:-

- i. the changes arising from the new GIAS which would affect the Audit Committee; and
- ii. that further updates would be provided to Committee as work progressed with implementing the new GIAS.

12. Internal Audit Plan 2024/25 Plana In-Sgrùdaidh 2024/25

There had been circulated Report No. AC/36/24 by the Strategic Lead (Corporate Audit and Performance).

During discussion, the following items were raised:-

- the Council was focusing on improving educational standards and attainment, when benchmarked against other Local Authorities. The Audit Plan referred to Primary and Secondary Schools and it was hoped that the scope might incorporate that and ensure that the statistics and data collated was robust;
- it was hoped the internal audit on Climate Strategy and Sustainability would involve the risk identified in Item 7 of the agenda relating to the Council's Net Zero targets. In response to Member's comments it was stated that the scope for the audits could not be agreed at this time due to the new planning assessment required by the GIAS. However, this would require due consideration of risks and discussion with senior management to understand the current issues within the audit area;
- in relation to Roads Operations and Maintenance, reference was made to an audit report to the Committee earlier in the year around a depot and it was questioned if this Audit Plan would revisit that. Reviews had been

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undertaken on that specific depot already but Action Tracking would be monitored; and

- in identifying areas for audit, Members had a role to play given their insight in communities and, from an overall Council point of view, where they considered a focus was necessary.

The Committee **APPROVED** the 2024-2025/26 Internal Audit Plan provided at Appendix 1 of the report.

13. Payroll Overpayments Update Cunntas às Ùr mu Phàighidhean Anabarrach Rola-pàighidh

There had been circulated Report No. AC/37/24 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Corporate.

During discussion, the following items were raised:-

- the net value of overpayments had seen a 25% reduction and it was hoped that this would continue;
- it was the responsibility of each individual to indicate if they had received an overpayment;
- a note at the bottom of payslips, reminding employees to check the amount they had been paid, was suggested;
- in addressing the issue, it was important to take a person-centred approach;
- an indication of how much it was hoped to recoup was sought;
- the reason for the sudden increase in overpayments was also sought;
- the overpayment figure for 2023/24 was queried, as was the current total being pursued, recognising that former employees would be the more difficult group to recover overpayments from;
- there were incidents where employees had reported overpayments and when the overpayments had continued;
- the vast majority of payments were accurate and it was only 0.11% where overpayments had arisen. However, the Council had a duty to the public to recover as much as possible. Nevertheless, there would always be some instances where debts might have to be written off;
- the process review identified that late notification to the Payroll Team of changes was the most common cause of overpayments; and
- the gross figure being quoted was because of employer costs, such as National Insurance and Super Annuation contributions, which also had to be recovered.

The Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the progress in relation to the Audit Recommendations agreed in June 2024 Audit Committee including all actions that had either been completed on-time or remained on target; and
- ii. **NOTED** that a further update report would be taken to May 2025 Audit Committee.

The meeting ended at 12.55 pm.

The Highland Council

Minutes of Meeting of the **Corporate Resources Committee** held in the Chamber, Council Headquarters, Inverness on Thursday 5 December 2024 at 10.30am.

Present:

Mr M Baird	Mr G Mackenzie
Mr J Bruce (remote)	Mrs K MacLean (substitute)
Mrs G Campbell-Sinclair (remote)	Mr C Munro
Mrs M Cockburn (substitute) (remote)	Mr P Oldham
Mr A Christie	Ms M Reid (remote)
Mr R Gale	Mr M Reiss (remote)
Mr A Jarvie (remote)	Mrs T Robertson
Mr B Lobban	Mrs M Ross (substitute)
Mr D Louden	

Non-Members also present:

Mr A Baxter	Mr T MacLennan (remote)
Mr M Cameron (remote)	Mr D Macpherson (remote)
Mr J Finlayson (remote)	Mr J McGillivray (remote)
Mr D Fraser (remote)	Mr S Mackie (remote)
Ms L Kraft (remote)	Mr D Millar (remote)
Mr P Logue	

Officials in Attendance:

Mr A Gunn, Assistant Chief Executive – Corporate
Mrs S Armstrong, Chief Officer - Revenues and Commercialisation
Mr S Fraser, Chief Officer - Legal and Corporate Governance
Mr B Porter, Chief Officer - Corporate Finance
Mr J Shepherd, Chief Officer - Business Solutions
Ms E Barrie, Head of People
Ms D Sutherland, Strategic Lead Corporate Audit & Performance
Mr C Donaldson, Principal Project Manager
Mrs L Dunn, Joint Democratic Services Manager
Ms F McBain, 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

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

Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of Mr R Bremner, Mr S Kennedy, Mr S Mackie, and Mr R Stewart.

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

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

Item 7: Mr A Christie

Item 10.a: Mr A Christie

Item 10.b: Mr D Louden, Mr C Munro, and Mrs T Robertson

3. Good News
Naidheachdan Matha

The Chair congratulated Carolyn Pieraccini and Jennifer McGonagle on their appointment to the promoted posts of Strategic Lead – Financial Services and referred to the important role they would play in supporting the Council's financial management.

Thereafter, the Chair congratulated the Payroll team on winning an award at the recent i-care High Life Highland Awards in the category of The Highland Council Collaboration Award for their sterling work on a number of projects.

The Committee **NOTED** the good news.

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.

Members were reminded that it was their responsibility to submit their expenses claims on time.

The Committee **APPROVED** the following claims:

- Mrs Angela MacLean - £202.05 for mileage in May 2024;
- Mr John Grafton - £278.95 for mileage in May and June 2024; and
- Mr John Bruce - £932.40 for mileage in April, May and June 2024 and for Broadband in April, June and July 2024.

5. Appointments to Sub-Committees, Working Groups, etc
Cur an Dreuchd gu Fo-Chomataidhean, Buidhnean-obrach is eile

The Committee **AGREED** the memberships to the Sub-Committees and Working Groups as circulated and **NOTED** that further changes would be referred to the next meeting of the Council on 12 December 2024 .

6. Corporate Revenue and Capital Monitoring Report to 30 September 2024
Aithisg Teachd-a-steach Corporra agus Sgrùdadh 30 an t-Sultainn 2024

a. Corporate Revenue Monitoring to 30 September 2024
Sgrùdadh Teachd-a-steach Corporra gu 30 an t-Sultainn 2024

There had been circulated Report No RES/33/24 by the Chief Officer - Corporate Finance.

In discussion, Members raised the following main issues:

- the potential for the Committee to be provided with more current financial information going forward;
- concern at the projected overspends on the Service budgets and the overall year end variance;

- a detailed update be provided on the actions being taken to address the overspend on the Health and Social Care budget and whether the historical savings would be delivered;
- an explanation was sought and provided on the overspend and year end estimate shown on the Property & Housing budget;
- further detail was sought and provided on the main reasons for the overspends on Fleet and Plant and the mitigating actions being taken;
- concern that overspends were being mitigated through staff vacancies when the onus should be on filling those posts in terms of tackling depopulation and generating growth in the area;
- the impact on the budget in the event issues with the breakdown of the Corran Ferry vessels were experienced in the current year. It was confirmed that officers would follow up on this matter;
- the potential for more detail to be provided in future reports on overspends categorised as 'other' to allow them to be tracked and monitored;
- concern at the level of unallocated savings and confirmation it was anticipated more would be allocated to services and the figure reduced by the end of Quarter 3;
- the detail and analysis of Service budgets was currently reported to the relevant Strategic Committee. The remit of the Corporate Resources Committee should therefore be reviewed with a view to elevating its scrutiny role to allow Members to consider and address issues on the budgets;
- it was suggested that officer representatives from each Service attend the Committee to respond to Members questions;
- the potential for future reports to include a section on the mitigating actions being undertaken in response to overspends;
- in response to a query, it was explained that loan charges could only be calculated and applied at the year end and further details were provided in this regard; and
- further information was sought and provided on the processes in place to ensure estimates of income and savings targets were reasonably accurate. It had also been made clear as part of the budget setting process that some proposals were new and innovative and therefore carried more risk.

The Convener advised that it was within the gift of Members to consider the remit of the Committee under the Scheme of Delegation subject to certain legal restrictions. He confirmed that further consideration would be given to this matter and a report brought back to a future Council.

Thereafter, the Chair responded to a question in response to the Scottish Human Rights Commission's report on the Highlands and Islands. He emphasised the importance of the Council's budget setting process, Highland Investment Plan and the role of individual services in addressing the difficulties identified. He advised the opportunity to have discussions with the Commission on its conclusions would be welcomed.

Thereafter, the Committee:

- i. **NOTED** the financial position of the General Fund and HRA revenue budgets as at 30 September 2024 and the estimated year end forecast;
- ii. **NOTED** the status of delivery of budget savings in the year; and

- * iii. **AGREED** to recommend to Council, that further consideration would be given to the remit of the Corporate Resources Committee and a report brought back to a future meeting of the Council.

**b. Corporate Capital Monitoring to 30 September 2024
Sgrùdadh Calpa Corporra gu 30 an t-Sultainn 2024**

There had been circulated Report No RES/34/24 by the Chief Officer - Corporate Finance.

In discussion, Members raised the following main issues:

- a more detailed update was sought on the projected overspend in relation to the Uig Ferry Terminal and Link Span Redevelopment and the discussions ongoing with Transport Scotland. It was confirmed the potential for Members to receive a further briefing on this matter would be considered;
- it would be helpful if future reports had some narrative on the main reasons for the delay in the Tain 3-18 Campus and Broadford Primary projects; and
- whether the planned delivery of 189 Council houses by 31 March 2025 remained on target. It was confirmed a response would be provided directly to Mrs T Robertson on this issue.

Thereafter, the Committee **NOTED** the:

- i. net spend to the end of Q2 2024/25, the forecast year end outturn and the funding profile; and
- ii. update provided regarding main project spend variances.

**7. Corporate Service – Revenue Budget and Performance Q2 Monitoring
2024/25**

**Seirbheis Chorporra – Sgrùdadh Buidseat Teachd-a-steach agus
Coileanaidh R2 2024/25**

Mr A Christie made a Transparency Statement in respect of this item in his capacity as a Non-executive Director of NHS Highland and as General Manager of Inverness Badenoch and Strathspey Citizens 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/35/24 by the Assistant Chief Executive - Corporate.

In discussion, Members raised the following main issues:-

- the Service's staff be commended on the level of performance achieved in delivering services to people in the Highlands. This included the work of the Welfare Team in supporting individuals and families in communities;
- the new format of the report for the Corporate cluster and the fact it would provide for better scrutiny of services be welcomed;

- in relation to the information provided on the average number of days per employee lost through sickness absence, it would be helpful for future reports to include the actual numbers of days/employees involved. It was confirmed that further clarity would be provided on this matter;
- concern that the number of days lost due to work related stress/debility appeared to be low and confirmation that while this figure would be checked, it was significantly below that for non-work related reasons;
- noting the development of the new HR system as part of the Corporate Systems update would improve the level of sickness absence information the Service could provide;
- an update was sought and provided on the recruitment and training programme in place for mental health representatives and ongoing work around prevention and ensuring staff were aware of how to access support; and
- information was sought and provided on performance on the percentage of contracts with fair work practices included and that the Council's recently updated Community Benefit policy would be a key driver in moving towards this target.

Thereafter, the Committee **NOTED** the performance of the Corporate Cluster.

**8. Treasury Management
Rianachd Ionmhais**

**a. Treasury Management – Mid Year Report 2024/25
Stiùireadh Roinn an Ionmhais – Aithisg Meadhan Bliadhna 2024/25**

There had been circulated Report No RES/36/24 by the Chief Officer - Corporate Finance.

The Committee **NOTED** the Treasury Management Mid-Year Review 2024/25.

**b. Treasury Management – Summary of Transactions
Rianachd Ionmhais - Geàrr-chunntas Ghnothaichean**

There had been circulated Report No RES/37/24 by the Chief Officer - Corporate Finance.

The Committee **NOTED** the Treasury Management Summary of Transactions report for the period from 1 July 2024 to 30 September 2024.

**9. Corporate Systems Update – Finance, HR/Payroll and Pensions
Programme
Cunntas às Ùr mu Shiostaman Corporra – Ionmhas, Goireasan
Daonna/Rola-pàighidh agus Prògram Pheinnseanan**

There had been circulated Report No RES/38/24 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Corporate.

In discussion, Members raised the following issues:

- officers be commended on the progress being made on the Programme and reference to the significant benefits it would deliver going forward;

- further clarity was sought and provided that a revised milestone for the Pensioners payroll Go-Live of February 2025 had been agreed;
- an explanation was sought and provided on the reasons for the new HR/Payroll system Go live milestone being on hold pending the outcome of the Socitm Advisory review;
- further details were sought and provided on the costs of engaging external consultants to date and proposals for further consultancy for identified key specialisms and to augment the expertise within the Council and core project team; and
- further clarification was sought and provided on the type of support being provided by TechnologyOne AMS consultants with a focus on collaborative working with Council staff to build in house capacity and capability.

Thereafter, the Committee **NOTED** the:

- updates regarding the Finance, HR/Payroll and Pensions Programme; and
- update regarding the Human Resources and Payroll project including the delivery of an external strategic review and Outline Business Case to support future strategy and programme roadmap.

10. Delivery Plan Budget Monitoring & Progress Update

Sgrùdadh Buidseat a' Phlana Libhrigidh & Cunntas air Adhartas

a. Delivery Plan Budget Monitoring & Progress Update – Corporate Solutions

Sgrùdadh Buidseat a' Phlana Libhrigidh & Cunntas air Adhartas – Fuasglaidhean Corporra

Mr A Christie made a Transparency Statement in respect of this item in his capacity as a Non-executive Director of NHS Highland. However, having applied the objective test, reviewed his position in relation to the item and any personal connection, he did not consider that he had an interest to declare.

There had been circulated Report No RES/39/24 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Corporate.

During discussion, the importance of the delivery plan, with particular reference to the Audit Scotland transformation work that was covered at Item 13, was highlighted.

The Assistant Chief Executive – Corporate welcomed the opportunity to thank the work undertaken by the ICT staff and he highlighted the benefits of the Terra Tracker project, a systems approach to Highland Council land & building ownership, creating a map-based property dataset to improve efficiency, facilitate income generation and empower the Council and its communities. The project was interactive in real time, and Member feedback was sought on any further means to promote access to the project.

The Committee **NOTED** the progress on the projects covered in the report.

b. Delivery Plan Budget Monitoring & Progress Update – Income Generation

Sgrùdadh Buidseat a' Phlana Libhrigidh & Cunntas air Adhartas – Togail Teachd-a-steach

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

Mr D Louden as the owner of a second property, currently for sale. As the policy covers a wide area of life in the Highlands he is not required to make a declaration of interest.

Mr C Munro, and Mrs T Robertson, as their families operated a self-catering business and in due course, depending on Council policy decisions, might have to implement the Visitor Levy on guests in their accommodation.

There had been circulated Report No RES/40/24 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Corporate.

During discussion, several Members expressed concern that the Income from Campervans and Motorhomes project was ragged red and was unlikely to meet its targets. Some Members queried the validity of continuing with the project, and it was suggested that further information to enhance understanding of the mitigations, and how income would be generated would be helpful. In response, officers summarised plans being progressed to invest in improved infrastructure such as secure wastewater disposal and access to fresh water to continue to aim to provide sustainable tourism opportunities while protecting communities in the Highlands, and generating some income. It was suggested that any issues ragged red should include more detail in future, and that the mechanism for facilitating a Members decision on the issue should be clarified. The need to take continued action to tackle the challenges faced from the increasing numbers of camper vans / motorhomes travelling around the Highlands was reiterated. Some Members suggested the scheme should be continued, and referred to the success achieved in some areas from charging motor caravans etc for overnight stays and use of facilities.

Other issues raised included the following:

- measures to improve infrastructure, for example waste disposal, would, in addition to income, bring indirect benefits and encourage sustainable tourism;
- concern was expressed that the HMRC VAT requirements in relation to the Visitor Levy could lead to accommodation providers choosing to close before reaching the VAT registration threshold and concerns were express regarding the impact of this on tourism;
- also in relation to the visitor levy, it was suggested that exceptions should be made for Highland residents travelling from remote and rural areas to access services, such as hospital visits. The desire for simplicity in relation to the levy scheme was summarised and Members were urged to respond to the ongoing consultation with their views, after which the matter would be reported to Members;

- the £750k budget usage was queried and explained, and assurance was sought and provided that the project would be reported on at each meeting of the Committee; and
- the difference between camper vans and motor caravans was highlighted, and attention was drawn to the need for more 'Aires' to provide overnight parking for them, with reference to how, in some areas of the Highlands in peak season, camp sites filled up rapidly.

Thereafter, the Committee **NOTED** the progress of each of the Income Generation projects.

11. Corporate Charging Policy Poileasaidh Teàirrsidh Corporra

There had been circulated Report No RES/41/24 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Corporate.

During discussion, Members raised the following issues:

- the Charging Policy was welcomed and surprise was expressed that the Council had not had one in place until now;
- several Members expressed concern that charging for the use of Council facilities such as community halls could restrict the use of those facilities by youth groups, sports groups, or groups caring for vulnerable or elderly adults, who were providing a valuable service to the Council and for their communities. Officers clarified wording in the policy which they felt provided the appropriate flexibility when pricing for the use of facilities was being decided, and the Chair emphasised that the situation would be monitored to ensure no communities were disadvantaged;
- a fund to which community groups could apply for financial assistance in renting Council premises was suggested;
- assurance was sought and provided that appropriate climate change, and remote and rural, impact screening had been undertaken;
- it was queried whether charging for some services, for example public conveniences, could result in unwanted alternative behaviour, and whether the flexibility in the policy could result in concessions being removed inappropriately from some services; and
- it was important to ensure charging was undertaken fairly and consistently across the Highlands.

Mr D Louden, seconded by Mrs K MacLean, **MOVED** the recommendations as detailed in the report.

Mr A Christie, seconded by Mrs T Robertson, moved, as an **AMENDMENT**, to defer approval of the Policy to the Council's budget setting meeting in February 2025.

On a vote being taken, there were 8 votes for the motion, and 5 for the amendment, with one abstention, and the **MOTION** was carried, the votes having been cast as follows:

For the Motion: Mrs G Campbell-Sinclair, Mrs M Cockburn, Mr B Lobban, Mr D Louden, Mr G MacKenzie, Ms K MacLean, Mr P Oldham, Mrs M Ross.

For the Amendment: Mr M Baird, Mr A Christie, Mr R Gale, Mr M Reiss, Mrs T Robertson.

Abstention: Mr J Bruce

The Committee:

- i. **NOTED** the contents of the report; and
- ii. **APPROVED** the Council's Charging Policy.

12. **Corporate Workforce Planning Strategy 2025-2027** **Ro-innleachd Planadh Feachd-obrach Corporra 2025-2027**

There had been circulated Report No RES/42/24 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Corporate.

During discussion, Members raised the following issues:

- given the importance of the work detailed in Appendix 3 to the report, an update report to the next meeting was requested;
- it was queried why some skilled jobs were being advertised as short-term contracts rather than permanent, which reduced the attraction of the job for potential candidates and reduced staff retention rates. This was often because of time defined funding or for project-based posts;
- the Council's reputation as a good employer should be publicised, in addition to the benefits available, such as the pension provision. It was hoped the offering of permanent positions would help to retain young people in the Highlands; and
- assurance was sought and provided that the publicised wellbeing sessions on posture and relaxation by physio for staff were being held in a variety of Highland locations.

Thereafter, the Committee:

- i. **APPROVED** the Corporate Workforce Planning Strategy 2025-2027 and priorities outlined in the corporate workforce action plan over the next three years, aligned to the Council's medium term budget plan; and
- ii. **AGREED** a report with further detail on Appendix 3 be submitted to the next meeting of the Committee.

13. **Audit Scotland Report: Transformation in Councils** **Aithisg Sgrùdadh Alba: Cruth-atharrachadh Chomhairlean**

There had been circulated Report No RES/43/24 by the Strategic Lead (Corporate Audit).

During discussion, the report and transformation progress was welcomed, and further information was sought on the transformation plans. The Strategic Lead Corporate Audit & Performance indicated that links had been provided in the report to the Council's key plans and the Operational Delivery Plan was effectively the Council's main transformation plan. However, further detailed information could be already accessed via the PRMS system and details of how to access PRMS would be circulated to Members.

The Committee **NOTED**:

- i. the Audit Scotland report and in particular the key messages on pages 3 and 4 of the report and the Commission expectations set out on page 5 of the report;
- ii. the information set out in section 5 of the report including the assessment against Audit Scotland's the transformation principles which they expect all Councils to follow; and
- iii. that Transformation was the third Best Value thematic topic and Audit Scotland would commence this review shortly with the findings reported next year.

**14. Banking and Related Financial Transactions – Authorised Signatories List
Tar-ghnìomhan Bancaireachd is Ionmhasail Co-cheangailte – Ath-
sgrùdadh gu Soidhnichean Ùghdarraichte**

There had been circulated Report No RES/44/24 by the Chief Officer - Corporate Finance.

During discussion, it was suggested it would be preferable for the authorised signatories not to be part of the same workplace team. The rationale for this was explained, including that the proposal continued to comply with financial regulations.

The Committee **APPROVED** the:

- i. deletion of Allan Gunn, Assistant Chief Executive - Corporate and Sheila Armstrong, Chief Officer – Revenues and Commercialisation from the list of authorised signatories for banking and related financial transactions with immediate effect; and
- ii. addition of Jennifer McGonagle, Strategic Lead – People, Carolyn Pieraccini, Strategic Lead - Place and Catriona Stachan, Pensions Manager to the authorised signatories list with immediate effect.

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

The following Minutes of Meetings were circulated and:

- i. **APPROVED** - Central Safety Committee held on 25 September 2024;
- ii. **APPROVED** - Staff Partnership Forum held on 7 November 2024; and
- iii. **NOTED** – Non-Domestic Rates Appeals Committee held on 22 November 2024.

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

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

17. Debt Management
Stiùireadh Fhiachan

There had been circulated to Members only Report No RES/45/24 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Corporate.

The Committee **AGREED** the recommendations as set out in the report.

The meeting was closed at 2.50pm.

The Highland Council Pensions Committee and Pension Board

Minutes of special Meeting of the **Pensions Committee and Pension Board** held remotely on **Friday 6 December 2024 at 2pm.**

Present:

Pensions Committee

Mr R Gale
Ms L Kraft
Mr D Louden
Mr A MacKintosh
Mr T MacLennan
Mr P Oldham
Mrs M Paterson

Pension Board

Mr G MacKenzie, Highland Council
Mr R Fea, representative for the other Employers
Ms E Johnston, GMB

Non Members present:

Mrs J Hendry

Officials in attendance:

Mr B Porter, Chief Officer Corporate Finance, Corporate Service
Ms C Strachan, Pension Fund Manager, Corporate Service
Mr J Thurlbeck, Corporate Audit Manager, Corporate Service
Ms A Scott, Technical & Communications Officer, Corporate Service
Mrs L Dunn, Joint Democratic Services Manager, Corporate Service
Ms F MacBain, Senior Committee Officer, Corporate Service

Also in attendance:

Ms L McInroy, Hymans Robertson, Fund Actuary
Mr M Oliphant, Audit Scotland
Ms C Abernethy, Audit Scotland

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

Mr D Louden in the Chair

1. Apologies for Absence Leisgeulan

Committee: Mr C Ballance, Mr B Lobban, Mrs T Robertson.

Board: Mr C Munro, Highland Council, Mr N MacDonald, Comhairle nan Eilean Siar, Mr D MacSween, Unison, Mr D Main, Unite/Ucatt.

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

There were none.

3. **External Annual Audit**
Sgrùdadh Bliadhnaile on Taobh A-muigh

3a Audited Accounts 2023/24
Cunntasan Sgrùdaichte 2023/24

The Audited Statement of Accounts (Report No. PC/17/24) for the financial year 2023/24 were available at the link below:-

[Pension fund accounts | Audited Accounts April 2023 to March 2024](#)

There were no material changes in the Audited Statement of Accounts compared to the Unaudited Statement of Accounts which had been presented to the Accounts presented to The Highland Council meeting on 27 June 2024.

The Chief Officer - Corporate Finance summarised the report and the Committee **APPROVED** the accounts for signature.

3b Letter of Representation 2023/24
Litir Riochdachaidh 2023/24

There had been circulated Report No. PC/18/24 a copy of the annual audit letter of representation 2023/24.

The Committee **AGREED** that the letter be signed on behalf of the Highland Council by the Chief Officer – Corporate Finance.

3c External Annual Audit Report to Members of the Pensions Committee and the Controller of Audit
Aithisg In-sgrùdaidh Bhlìadhnaile on Taobh A-muigh do Bhuill de Chomataidh nam Peinnsean agus Rianadair an Sgrùdaidh

There had been circulated Report No. PC/19/24 by the External Auditor, Audit Scotland.

During discussion, Members welcomed the timeliness of the report, thanked all involved for their work, and made reference to the highlighted staffing challenges. It was suggested that ten rather than five year performance benchmarking would have been helpful, and the reasons for this were explained.

The Committee **NOTED** the report.

4. **Mansion House Reforms**
Ath-leasachaidhean Thaighean Mòra

There had been circulated Report No. PC/20/24 by the Chief Officer - Corporate Finance.

During discussion, clarity was sought and provided on two consultations that were underway on the UK Government's plans for reform of the Local Government Pension Schemes in England and Wales, these being 'workplace defined contribution', and 'LGPS schemes', both of which would close on 16 January 2025.

While acknowledging that this only affected England and Wales, concern was expressed in relation to plans for pooling funds, and how the term 'local' would be defined in relation to this if similar plans were introduced in Scotland.

The Committee **NOTED** the report.

5. **Revision to Highland Council Pension Fund Internal Audit Annual Plan 2024/25** **Plana Bliadhna In-Sgrùdadh Maoin Peinnsein Chomhairle na Gàidhealtachd 2024/25**

There had been circulated Report No. PC/21/24 by the Strategic Lead (Corporate Audit).

The Committee **APPROVED** the substitution of an audit on the 2024/25 Plan as detailed in section 5.1.

6. **Membership of Investment Sub-Committee** **Ballrachd na Fo-Chomataidh Tasgaidh**

As a result of the By-Elections the political make-up of the Investment Sub Committee was now as follows:-

SNP – 2/ Highland Independent – 2/ Scottish Liberal Democrats – 2/ Highland Alliance – 1

On that basis, the Committee **APPROVED** the revised Investment Sub Committee membership as follows:-

2 – SNP – Mr P Oldham; Mr C Balance (Scottish Green Party)
2 – Highland Independent – Mr B Lobban; Mrs M Paterson
2 – Liberal Democrat – Mr R Gale; Mrs T Robertson
1 – Highland Alliance – Mr A Mackintosh (Scottish Labour Party)

- One representative Comhairle nan Eilean Siar, (non-voting); and
- One representative for the trade unions (non-voting).

7. **Exclusion of the Public**

The Sub-Committee **RESOLVED** that, under Section 50(A) of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973, the public be excluded from the meeting during discussion on the following item on the grounds that it involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 6 of Part 1 of schedule 7A of the Act.

8. **Partial Cessation**

There had been circulated to Members only Report No. PC/22/24 by the Chief Officer, Corporate Finance.

Following discussion, the Committee **APPROVED** the recommendations detailed in the report.

The meeting ended at 3pm.