

The Highland Council
No.8 2024/2025

Minutes of Meeting of the Highland Council held in the Council Chamber, Council Headquarters, Glenurquhart Road, Inverness on Thursday 12 December 2024 at 9.30am.

Ken Gowans in the Chair

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

Present:

Mrs S Atkin
Mr M Baird
Mr C Ballance
Mr A Baxter
Dr C Birt
Mr B Boyd
Mr R Bremner
Mr I Brown
Mr J Bruce
Mr M Cameron
Mrs I Campbell
Mrs G Campbell-Sinclair
Mr A Christie
Mrs M Cockburn
Mr S Coghill (remote)
Mrs T Collier (remote)
Ms L Dundas
Mr J Edmondson
Ms S Fanet
Mr J Finlayson
Mr D Fraser
Mr L Fraser
Mr R Gale
Mr K Gowans
Mr J Grafton
Mr M Green
Mr D Gregg
Dr M Gregson
Mr R Gunn
Mrs J Hendry
Ms M Hutchison (remote)
Mr A Jarvie
Mrs B Jarvie (remote)
Ms L Johnston
Mr R Jones

Mr S Kennedy (remote)
Ms E Knox
Ms L Kraft
Mr P Logue
Mr D Louden
Ms M MacCallum
Mr W MacKay (remote)
Mr G MacKenzie
Mrs I MacKenzie
Mr S Mackie
Mr A MacKintosh
Mr R MacKintosh
Mrs A MacLean (remote)
Ms K MacLean
Mr T MacLennan (remote)
Mr D Macpherson
Mr D McDonald
Mrs J McEwan
Mr J McGillivray (remote)
Mr D Millar (remote)
Mr H Morrison (remote)
Mr C Munro (remote)
Ms L Niven
Mr P Oldham
Mrs M Paterson
Mrs M Reid (remote)
Mr M Reiss
Mrs T Robertson
Mr K Rosie
Mrs M Ross
Mrs L Saggars
Mr A Sinclair
Mr R Stewart
Ms K Willis

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 A Baldrey, Mrs H Crawford, Mr A Graham, Mr B Lobban and Ms M Smith.

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

There were no Declarations of Interest or Transparency Statements.

3. Review of the Highland Scheme of Establishment for Community Councils 2024/25 Ath-sgrùdadh de Sgeama Stèidheachaidh na Gàidhealtachd airson Chomhairlean Coimhearsnachd 2024/25

There had been circulated Report No. HC/40/24 by the Chief Officer - Housing and Communities.

During discussion, Members raised the following issues:-

- attention was drawn to recommendation ii. as it should refer to Section 8 of the report instead;
- clarification was sought and provided as 13.3 of the report referred to dissolving a Community Council (CC) if membership fell to below 2 members, however the quorum in the standing orders at 11.1 required 4 members. In this regard it was queried what happened to the CC bank account if the CC was dissolved;
- regarding 8.11 of the report, it was queried what the difference was between abeyance and dissolution;
- attention was drawn to question 15 of the October 2024 CC questionnaire as it did not flow from question 14 which had questioned if there should be increased membership of 16- to 18-year-olds on a CC and only allowed for a yes/no response. In this regard, it was felt that further research should be undertaken to identify any other age groups who were under-represented at CC's;
- young persons were encouraged to be involved in their CC. In this regard it was queried if there was scope to lower the minimum age for young persons to become involved, such as 14 years of age and above;
- it was queried if members of the Highland Youth Parliament could be invited to join a CC;
- many CC found monthly bookkeeping obligations to be onerous especially as they were volunteers and often had no movement of finances within a month. In this regard, it was queried if the HC could hold the CC bank accounts to reduce CC banking fee's;
- it was felt that being part of a CC was a good stepping stone to potentially becoming a Councillor;
- suggestion was made that the HC make financial provision to CC's to employ a minute taker as it was felt to be a daunting and onerous task;
- it was felt that a more robust advertising and marketing process was required to encourage people to join their local CC;
- regarding the change of boundaries of CC areas, it was queried what measurements were used to facilitate this and if it was underpinned by an objective tool;
- suggestion was made to increase the grant percentages to CC's to help them reinforce, strengthen and exist. In this regard, further suggestion was made that CC's were able to apply for additional donated grant funds if required, but be provided with practical hardware such as a printer and appropriate laptop to fulfil their duties;

- it was highlighted that not all CC's were equal in terms of accessing available funding sources in their area, such as wind farm funding, which greatly impacted how they operated. In this regard, it was felt that HC required to assess how equitable they were in terms of accessing support and facilities to develop their own place plans; and
- it was requested that the HC review and consider further financial support of CC's as much of their financial grant was spent on insurance policies.

Thereafter, the Council:-

- AGREED** to the formal review of the Highland Scheme of Establishment for Community Councils as required under section 53 of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973;
- AGREED** the draft proposals outlined in Section 8 of the report and in appendices 1-3 of the report;
- NOTED** that a three-month consultation would take place seeking public views on the draft proposals and seeking further representations for amendments to the Scheme; starting in January 2025; and
- NOTED** that a report outlining the feedback and proposed amendments would come forward to Council on 8 May 2025.

The meeting was concluded at 10.05am.