

The Highland Council

Minutes of Meeting of the **City of Inverness Area Committee** held in the Council Chamber, Council Headquarters, Glenurquhart Road, Inverness on Monday 19 May 2025 at 10.00 am.

Present:

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

In attendance:

Mr D Haas, Senior Community Development Manager
Ms D Sutton, Strategic Lead (Comm Ops and Logistics)
Ms F Shearer, Area Education & Learning Manager
Ms F Cameron, Programme Manager, Planning, Infrastructure & Economy
Mr N Osborne, Climate Change Manager
Ms R Burbaite, Project Manager
Mr G Munro, Revenues Manager
Mr R Bartlett, Principal Traffic Officer
Ms J MacRae, Principal Housing Manager
Mr G MacCormick, Senior Environmental Health Officer
Mr J MacLean, Bereavement Services Project Manager
Ms R Robertson, Project Co-ordinator
Ms S Lamb, Project Officer (Community Regeneration)
Miss J MacLennan, Joint Democratic Services Manager
Mrs K Arnott, Committee Officer

Also in attendance:

Mr A McLean, Station Commander, Scottish Fire and Rescue
Mr K Dingwall, Watch Commander, Scottish Fire and Rescue

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 in the Chair

Preliminaries

Prior to commencement of formal business, Members paid tribute to former Inverness Provost and Councillor Mr William John “Bill” Smith, who had recently passed away. Councillor Mr A Graham spoke warmly of Mr Smith, both as a friend and colleague, highlighting his long-standing dedication to public service, his integrity and his deep commitment to the local community.

Originally from Lewis and later based in Inverness, Mr Smith served the public for over two decades across Inverness District Council, Highland Regional Council and Highland Council, including two terms as Provost. He was remembered for his thoughtful and independent approach, his support for small business and civic initiatives and his deep connection to Dalneigh and the wider Highland area. Beyond his political contributions, Mr Smith was also recognised for his active involvement in the Royal British Legion, the Rotary Club and his local church.

Members extended their thoughts and condolences to his family. His legacy of public service and community engagement was fondly acknowledged and deeply appreciated.

Business

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

Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of Mr D Gregg, Mrs H Crawford, Ms E Knox and Mr A Sinclair.

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

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

Items 4, 7, 9, 11 and 16 – Mr A Christie

Items 14 – Mr M Cameron, Mr K Gowans and Mr D Macpherson

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/13/25 by the Local Senior Officer for Highland.

Members expressed condolences following the recent loss of two firefighters in Oxfordshire, acknowledging the risks routinely faced by Fire and Rescue personnel and their vital role in protecting lives and property.

During discussion, Members raised the following main points:-

- Members expressed appreciation for the continued dedication of the Service, including its rapid response to major incidents and proactive engagement with schools and communities to promote fire prevention. Thanks were extended to operational crews, with a request that this be formally passed on;
- the swift response to the recent major fire at Inverness Fairways Business Park fire was commended, with Members noting the proximity to other buildings and the potential escalation that was successfully prevented. The incident was also cited in support of previous decisions not to permit a battery storage facility nearby;
- the work of retained crews, particularly in rural areas such as Loch Ness, was commended where they regularly respond to road traffic collisions. Their significant contribution, and the support provided to them and their families, was acknowledged with gratitude;

- Members raised concerns about the stress placed on business keyholders responding to out-of-hours unwanted fire alarm signals (UFAS), especially in mixed-use buildings with residential accommodation above. It was suggested that reassurance and practical training be offered to city centre businesses. It was also proposed that businesses might be willing to pay for unwanted call-outs to ensure prompt safety confirmation in high-risk or multi-occupancy premises;
- Members requested that consideration be given to improving support and communication from control centres during such incidents. Officers clarified that UFAS consultation had been ongoing for several years and that full mobilisation would still occur where indicators of fire, such as smoke or heat, were present;
- the recent response to the Tomnahurich Cemetery Hill fire was praised, and the success of the Service's charity car wash was noted as a reflection of strong community support; and
- a further concern was raised regarding antisocial behaviour and suspected fire-raising by young people in the cemetery area, linked to gates being left open overnight. Members queried the extent of engagement with local schools and youth settings. In this regard, it was confirmed that a thematic action plan was in place, including educational visits to primary and secondary schools and youth development projects addressing fire safety and antisocial behaviour.

Thereafter the Committee **NOTED** the Area Performance Report

4. Inverness Common Good Fund: Discretionary Scheme for Winter Payments 2025/26

Maoin Math Coitcheann Inbhir Nis: Sgeama fo Ùghdarras airson Pàighidhean Geamhraidh 2025/26

Mr A Christie made a Transparency Statement in respect of this item in his capacity 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 CIA/14/25 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Corporate.

The Committee was informed that no changes were proposed to the scheme's criteria, apart from the Chair's amendment to recommendation (ii), which extended the end date from 28 February to 31 March, consistent with previous extensions.

In addition, the Committee was provided with clarification that recommendation (iv) would apply the Consumer Price Index (CPI) adjustment, increasing the winter payment to £115 for eligible applicants.

The Committee thereafter:-

- AGREED** to provide an Inverness Winter Payments Discretionary Scheme for 2025/26 having regard to the financial support available from Social Security Scotland (SSS) and other sources as set out in sections 6 and 7 of the report;
- AGREED** to accept applications from 1 December 2025 to 31 March 2026 inclusive;

- iii. **AGREED** to provide a total budget of £0.237m inclusive for the 2025/26 Scheme noting that payments for Landward Areas would be sourced from available income within the Inverness Benevolent Funds first, with the ICGF being utilised for the Landward Areas, in the event that officers decided it financially prudent to do so;
- iv. **AGREED** to apply a Consumer Price Index (CPI) increase to the £111 award rate for 2024/25 in order to determine the 2025/26 single tier payment rate;
- v. **AGREED** agree to use the annual CPI of 3.4% (March 2025 rate), noting this would establish the 2025/26 award amount at £115 for eligible applicants;
- vi. **AGREED** that the criteria utilised for the 2024/25 scheme as set out in paragraphs 8.2 to 9.6 of the report would be used as the basis for the 2025/26 Scheme;
- vii. **AGREED** this discretionary scheme was to be made available to residents in the City of Inverness and the Landward areas of the seven City Wards; and
- viii. **NOTED** BACS payments were used for this discretionary scheme as this was the most secure method of payment for recipients of the payment and the Council alike.

5. **Community Regeneration Fund – Approval of Process** **Maoin Ath-bheòthachadh Coimhearsnachd – Pròiseas Aontachaidh**

There had been circulated Report No CIA/15/25 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Place.

The Committee **AGREED**:-

- i. to utilise the existing delegated powers granted to Inverness Common Good Fund Sub Committee (ICGFSC) to make recommendations to CIAC on final funding awards for the sifting of expressions of interest and assessment of applications; and
- ii that the priority outcome for CRF funding in the City of Inverness and Area should be projects that met the outcome of reducing poverty and inequality.

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

There had been circulated Report No CIA/16/25 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Place.

Appreciation was expressed for the work carried out by the team, with recognition that their continued efforts were making a meaningful and lasting impact at a local level.

The Committee **AGREED**:-

- i. in Ward 12 £102,336 be allocated to the agreed projects as outlined at 6.5 of the report;
- ii. in Ward 13 £72,225 be allocated to the agreed projects as outlined at 6.6 of the report;
- iii. in Ward 14 £55,000 be allocated to the agreed projects as outlines at 6.7 of the report;

- iv. in Ward 15 £73,304 be allocated to the agreed projects as outlined at 6.8 of the report;
- v. in Ward 16 £56,000 be allocated to the agreed projects as outlined at 6.9 of the report;
- vi. in Ward 17 £93,187 be allocated to the agreed projects as outlined at 6.10 of the report;
- vii. in Ward 19 £60,000 be allocated to the agreed projects as outlined at 6.11 of the report; and
- viii. Ward 19 £60,000 be allocated to the agreed projects as outlined at 6.11 of the report.

7. Inverness Waiting and Loading Restrictions Consideration of Objections Beachdachadh air Gearanan mu Bhacaidhean Feitheimh is Luchdachaidh Inbhir Nis

Mr A Christie made a Transparency Statement in respect of this item in his capacity as Non-Executive Director on 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 CIA/17/25 by the Assistant Chief Executive - Place.

In discussion, Members raised the following main points:-

- permit parking should be extended to Ballifeary Lane residents given the overflow of vehicles from Ballifeary Road and these areas included in the same parking zone. It was confirmed that officers would progress this matter going forward;
- officers were thanked for resolving the issues in relation to Greig Street, Inverness;
- in response to a query, it was explained that businesses on Carsegate Road had been contacted and advised of the proposed loading changes. Officers had offered to meet with them but to date no response had been received;
- it was important to monitor parking and safety issues in central areas of Inverness on a continual basis given the condition of road surfaces in some areas and pressures created by visitor and events attractions and the re-opening of Inverness Castle;
- in terms of feedback received from disabled persons, the report recommended that the changes proposed for limited waiting disabled bays be removed from the Traffic Order to allow for further engagement activity;
- with regard to the objections received to Cullaird Road, a report would be presented to a future meeting that scoped the issues regarding parking outside schools in the City. The report should offer solutions to allow parents to drop off and collect children safely and should look at the situation in Lochardil as a priority first;
- support was expressed for the proposed restrictions on Cullaird Road on the basis it was not suitable as a school drop off zone taking account of the submissions of all parties and information provided in the report;
- confirmation was sought, and provided, that officers, in conjunction with the Road Safety Team, would arrange a site visit with Members to consider safety issues at Inshes Primary School;

- concern was expressed about parking issues in a number of specific locations in Ward 17: Culloden and Ardersier, and it was confirmed arrangements would be made for a walkabout at these locations involving local Members and officers;
- in response to query, it was confirmed that Councillor Robertson would be provided with further clarity in relation to the issue of disabled parking permits and blue badges to persons/households;
- in relation to the further engagement activity in respect of Old Mill Road, it was important a full and public consultation with the community was carried out and a site visit held to allow residents to emphasise their safety concerns in this area; and
- it would be helpful for one large map to be provided, marked and numbered with the relevant information, to help Members navigate to specific areas.

The Committee **NOTED**:-

- i. the extents of the proposed Variation Eight;
- ii. the intention to remove the changes proposed for: Greig Street, Balnain Street from the Order;
- iii. the intention to remove the changes proposed for: Limited waiting disabled bays, Old Mill Road and Station Lane from the Order to be considered after further engagement activity;
- iv. the impact assessment in Appendix 1 of the report;
- v. the outstanding objections received to The Highland Council (Prohibition and Restriction of Waiting and Loading and Parking Places) (Decriminalised Parking Enforcement and Consolidation) Variation Eight Order 2024;

AGREED:-

- vi. that a report be presented to a future meeting that scopes the issues regarding parking outside schools in the City. The report should offer solutions to allow parents to drop off and collect children safely and should look at the situation in Lochardil as a priority first;

APPROVED:-

- vii. subject to i. to vi. above, the making of the Road Traffic Regulation Order.

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

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

There had been circulated Report No. CIA/18/25 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Place. A copy of supporting documentation had also been circulated as Booklet A.

The Committee **APPROVED** the following applications taking into account that a pro-rata reduction of 30% had been applied to the successful application in this category due to the limited budget available:-

- i. Highlands & Islands Blood Bikes (HAIBB) - £10,500
- ii. Crown Church, Inverness - refused a grant but would engage with applicant

- iii. Inverness Rowing Club - £7,000
- iv. Apex Scotland - £7,000
- v. Shopmobility Highland SCIO - £21,000
- vi. Calman Trust - £18,380

In relation to the application from Visit Inverness Loch Ness (VILN), the Committee **AGREED** to defer determination at this stage pending more detailed information on the proposed 'familiarisation trips' and how the requested funding would be spent along with the links to the VILN business plan with a Members private briefing to be provided by VILN detailing progress on the VILN Business Plan and how the application for funding supported this

9. Potential Heat Network Development in Inverness

Leasachadh Lìonra Teasa a dh'Fhaodadh a Bhith ann an Inbhir Nis

Mr A Christie made a Transparency Statement in respect of this item in his capacity as Non-Executive Director on 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 CIA/19/25 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Place.

In discussion, Members raised the following main points:-

- confirmation was sought, and provided, that the potential for households or businesses to have individual heat control on the network was being investigated, albeit the Council would have to retain an element of control in terms of pricing and usage;
- clarification was sought, and provided, that the intention was to bring forward a final business case model by the end of December 2025, progress being guided by the Scottish Heat Network;
- it was questioned whether the start date for projects would coincide with SSEN's recabling of the City. It was explained the Council was working with SSEN to try and align, this being dependent on the final business case model;
- in response to a query, further clarity was provided on the timescales for the recabling and ongoing discussions with SSEN on this issue;
- there was potential for households in poverty in the City Centre to benefit from a local heat network. It was explained a key priority with incoming investors was to understand how to tackle fuel poverty in each of the areas;
- in response to a query, it was noted that discussions in respect of a data centre on the River Ness were at an early stage;
- further clarity was sought, and provided, on how the Council would ensure key partners and large heat users were committed to the project in future, and the impact on local residents and future new housing development. It was reported the legislation was moving towards the public sector having to connect to local heat networks and the Scottish Government considered it a viable project;
- an explanation was sought, and provided, on the funding arrangements for the development, the Scottish Heat Network Fund being the main source of public funding to be supported by private investment, there having been significant commercial interest to date;

- the benefits that would be delivered were acknowledged, including to the Council, through a heat network on the west bank of the River Ness, and potential to incorporate Inverness Leisure, Botanic Gardens, Council Headquarters and Inverness Ice Centre;
- an assurance was sought, and provided, that there had been engagement with Inverness Ice Centre and a proposal to bring forward a joint project with Inverness Leisure was being considered as a priority;
- an update was sought, and provided, on progress being made with SSEN to resolve the issues with the electricity supply to the Victorian Market;
- concern was expressed that it was not possible to tap into the large amount of energy being generated in the Highlands, currently being transmitted outwith the area; and
- it would be helpful for Members to receive a briefing on the potential heat network development so that more detailed information could be provided.

The Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** progress to date; and
- ii. **AGREED** that a Members' Briefing be held to provide more detailed information.

10. **Housing Management Performance Report – 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025** **Aithisg Coileanaidh Stiùireadh Taigheadais – 1 Giblean 2024 gu 31 Màrt 2025**

There had been circulated Report No CIA/20/25 by the Assistant Chief Executive - Place.

In discussion, Members raised the following main points:

- the report provided an overview of the good work being undertaken by the Service in challenging circumstances;
- the investment in emergency and non-emergency repairs showed a high level of commitment to ensuring the housing stock was maintained at its best possible level;
- the reduction in rent arrears was welcomed and it was hoped this trend would continue going forward and the information showing the value of current rent arrears by band for each ward was helpful as it gave a better perspective on the age of the debt;
- there was intensive work being undertaken with tenants who had higher end and thereby longer term rent arrears;
- the Council had agreed a budget allocation for poverty including additional staff resources to encourage the uptake of benefits and it was hoped this had been realised;
- information was sought as to how the Service addressed the high demand for one bedroom properties in relation to homeless cases and that this be considered in the mix of new house build developments. It was explained the Service considered those in temporary accommodation for lengthy period of time for two bedroom properties;
- the downward trend in homeless presentations was welcomed and a point as to whether this would sustained going forward;

- a report was sought to the Committee on the measures that could be taken to significantly reduce the time spent in temporary accommodation and to make Highland an exemplar across the UK;
- it would be helpful in future reports to have information on the number of lets to homeless applicants that did not have a local connection to the area;
- further clarity was provided on the assistance provided by the Council and partner organisations if evicted persons subsequently became homeless and the approach taken to overcrowding; and
- the Service was commended on organising the estate walkabouts involving Members which helped highlight specific issues in areas.

Thereafter, concern was expressed at the impact of anti-social behaviour on Council properties and the lives of neighbours, and the potential for the Committee to consider this issue in more detail. It was suggested that more extensive reporting and detail was required in relation to anti-social behaviour, further clarity being sought on the significant increase in the percentage of cases resolved and what this constituted.

Members were advised that consideration was being given to better ways of reporting anti-social behaviour in future reports and that significant improvements in performance on the number cases resolved had been achieved.

The Committee:-

- NOTED** the information provided on housing performance in the period 1 April 2024 – 31 March 2025; and
- AGREED**, following consideration by the Housing and Property Committee, a report be submitted to a future meeting detailing how the time spent in temporary accommodation could be reduced.

11. Environmental Health - Annual Report & Activity 2024/25 Slàinte Àrainneachdail – Aithisg Bhliadhnail & Gnìomhachd 2024/25

Mr A Christie made a Transparency Statement in respect of this item in his capacity as Non-Executive Director on NHS Highland and Non - Executive Director of Inverness BID. 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. CIA/21/25 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Place.

In discussion, Members raised the following main points:

- in response to a query, confirmation was provided that arrangements could be made for Ward briefings or Ward level reports to be produced containing more specific data such as complaint types, response times and enforcement outcomes;
- there was a need for a single point of contact for the public to report issues and it was explained work was ongoing to improve the online reporting system on the Council's website;

- it was questioned how the Council could raise awareness of the short term let licensing regime and the public encouraged to report a neighbour operating without a licence;
- there was concern regarding the cycle for renewal of short term let licences would commence later in the year and an update was provided on the resources and plans in place to address pressures on the Service;
- concern was also expressed that a main source of complaints continued to be in relation to dog control and littering;
- a proactive approach needed to be taken with developers when commencing work on site to identify colonies of rats and deal with them at source to avoid them being displaced into people's houses. It was noted the Council no longer provided a free pest control service, however officers would give advice and take enforcement action if there was an identifiable source;
- there was potential for the pilot scheme for abandoned vehicles being trialled in Easter Ross to be extended to the Inverness area;
- a more robust approach needed to be taken so that abandoned vehicles were uplifted, and any identifiable owner charged for the cost;
- a collaborative approach was needed with businesses and schools in respect of the disposal of waste at Steven's Brae and an update was provided on the work ongoing to find a solution to current issues around bin storage in this location. The newly appointed Education and Enforcement Officers as part of their remit would be undertaking work within schools;
- there was a plea for cross service working between Environmental Health and Amenities in relation to shredded cans and glass deposits left following grass cutting and strimming of public areas. It was confirmed this point would be fed back to the Amenities Team;
- it be emphasised to business not to overfill and secure their bins properly to prevent gull problems being exacerbated and to exercise their social responsibilities by clearing up litter dropped by customers;
- as a measure to support enforcement and compliance in the City Centre, the potential to introduce by laws to give powers to officers to ensure the best possible standards was highlighted; and
- there was concern at the condition of the domestic bins the Council provided for locals and tourists in the City Centre, and how rectifying this problem could be resourced. It was confirmed that officers would take this matter forward with the relevant teams.

Thereafter, it was suggested a culture change was required within the Council and a zero-tolerance approach taken to the issues around waste, littering and abandoned vehicles in the City Centre for the benefit of the public and as a tourist destination, recognising this would involve resource and cost. It was suggested the matter be considered in more detail in consultation with Inverness BID and a report brought forward on this issue.

During further debate, the City Manager gave a commitment to continue to work with Inverness BID and Environmental Health colleagues to address the issues raised by Members in discussion.

The Committee **NOTED:-**

- i. the variety and volume of work being undertaken locally by the environmental health team;

- ii. the Highland wide issues; and
- iii. the report format and content.

12. Environmental Health - Air Quality Report Slàinte Àrainneachdail - Càileachd an Adhair

There had been circulated Report No. CIA/22/25 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Place.

In discussion, the following main points were raised:-

- information on air quality was available on the Scottish Air Quality website;
- there had been an improvement in air quality within Inverness City Centre;
- a “clean air day” would take place on 19 June 2025 and aimed to raise awareness about air pollution;
- Council Services needed to work together to educate the public on road transport safety in relation to vehicle idling and traffic congestion around schools given the public concern about air quality. Residents in the locality of schools were also concerned about traffic congestion. It was explained that there was an anti vehicle idling campaign and the Scottish Government’s clean air day this year was mainly focused on anti vehicle idling. There were also a number of Council Services that had input into traffic congestion around schools. Education Services carried out a lot of work on this, such as safer routes to schools;
- air quality could be affected by a change in traffic around schools due to proposed large developments. If such developments proceeded, a before and after comparison of air quality should be undertaken;
- in relation to the A82 trunk road which went through Inverness, it was queried what air quality monitoring had been undertaken, particularly in light of 20 mph speed restrictions on part of the route meaning vehicles would be travelling at much slower speeds and a risk that emission levels might increase. It was explained that it was not the speed of traffic that would cause increased emissions but, if the volume of traffic was to increase, particularly HGV’s, this would have the biggest impact on emissions. Air quality monitoring was carried out on part of the A82 route through Inverness and this could be extended if necessary;
- the guidance from SEPA was that a local air quality strategy should continue to be developed. There were issues that the A82 route through Inverness could affect other parts of the City Centre; and
- the responses from Primary and Secondary schools about the effects of climate change and the importance of air quality was commended as was the work of Education Service and Highland One World Group and other associated organisations.

The Committee **NOTED**:-

- i. the acceptance by Scottish Government (SG) of the 2024 AQMA Action Plan;
- ii. the general improvement in air quality in the City Centre;
- iii. the Revocation of the Inverness City Centre Air Quality AQMA;
- iv. the project work carried out in Primary Schools to monitor air quality and raise awareness;

- v. the proposed delivery of a city centre anti-idling campaign on Clean Air Day 2025;
- vi. the continued provision of Local Site Operator (LSO) service to the UK Automatic Urban and Rural Network (AURN); and
- vii. the report format and content.

13. Bereavement Services – Project Updates **Cunntas às ùr mu sheirbheisean bàis**

There had been circulated Report No CIA/23/25 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Place.

In discussion, Members raised the following main points:-

- there had been significant improvement in reporting on bereavement services at Committees which was welcomed as burials and cremations were among the most sensitive services that the Council provided to the community;
- many of the shortages in burial ground capacity had now been addressed, particularly in the Inverness area. Kilvean cemetery had the potential to be extended for more burial capacity;
- it was queried if other sites in Inverness had been identified for future burial grounds. It was confirmed that areas of land for burial grounds were being investigated, including East Inverness;
- Tomnahurich cemetery was a beautiful cemetery with a lot of history behind it. However, occasionally there were concerns about its upkeep and the lodge at the entrance was also in need of maintenance. It was explained that resources were restricted but maintenance had been carried out on the paths at the cemetery. The lodge was in private ownership but contact had been made with the owner. Also, the gates had been closed at the Bruce Gardens entrance to this cemetery, as the cemetery had been used as a “rat run” by drivers. The gates were opened when there was a funeral taking place;
- an update was sought on the crematorium upgrade. It was advised that the programme of works was being finalised with the contractor, with works anticipated to commence in the Autumn. More detail would be provided to Members once the programme had been completed;
- it was good to hear that work was being undertaken on Kilmorack cemetery and it was queried if this would include problems with water and mud at the entrance. An undertaking was given to look at these issues;
- a request was made for a waste bin to be located outside the entrance to Fasnakyle cemetery;
- in relation to Kilmore cemetery there was a row of graves against the boundary wall preventing anyone from walking past them. The Local Member undertook to discuss this further with the Bereavement services team;
- it was queried how much of the budget was allocated for maintenance on historic cemeteries. An undertaking was given to look into this.
- an update was sought as to when the new Dores cemetery would be able to take funerals. It was advised that the work on the access road was due to commence in June and progress would be reported to the Local Member;
- there were a lot of headstones in burial grounds that were in a very poor state of repair. Members were informed that there was an ongoing programme for memorial safety, albeit headstones were owned by the families of the deceased. Headstones were inspected on a five year rolling programme and

temporary repairs could be carried out. Given the limited budget, a permanent solution to maintaining headstones in a poor state would need to be addressed; and

- the Burial Grounds Commutation Fund had around £1m invested in it for the benefit of added value works to cemeteries in the Inverness area. Ways to utilise this fund on burial grounds would continue to be progressed and an update would be provided to Members in due course.

The Committee **NOTED**:-

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

14. Associated School Group Attainment Overview Foir-shealladh air Buileachadh Buidheann Sgoiltean Co-cheangailte

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 M Cameron - as a relative worked at Charleston Academy

Mr K Gowans – as an employee of UHI

Mr D Macpherson – as a relative was employed as a teacher

There had been circulated Report No CIA/25/25, No CIA/25/25, and No CIA/26/25 by the Assistant Chief Executive - People.

In discussion, Members raised the following main points:-

- in relation to the Inverness Associated School Group, increasingly in the upper primary classes and throughout secondary schools, there were challenges evidenced by the statistical performance which highlighted the importance of adequate staffing support to support young people in their attainment and attendance at school. It was reassuring to know this was being addressed by the Education Service;
- Skills Development Scotland's annual participation measure had the potential to be a much more useful measurement of school leaver destinations and therefore the success or otherwise of education provision to young people. It was queried if this was something that could be taken forward or to encourage Skills Development Scotland to use this as their main measure on school leaver destinations. It was advised that a longer term measure of young people destinations was being discussed;
- in relation to positive leaver destinations, when young people left school and contact was lost with them, it was very difficult to track them;
- the attendance at Charleston Academy was below both the national and Highland average but it was reassuring that the Education Service was addressing this. The impact on young people not being in school for a long time could have long term effects. There was an ongoing project to improve attendance, particularly in secondary schools, and this was a high priority for the Service. There was a need to improve the culture and ethos amongst young people to want to go to school;

- in relation to Beauly Primary School, the results for year 2022/23 were very good. This was a great achievement particularly given the condition that teachers and young people had to work in at the school;
- Glenurquhart Primary School was commended on their work with the community in developing a polytunnel;
- attainment in schools was still below average, albeit there had been considerable improvement. However, statistical data could be skewed by a number of very small schools in the area. An undertaking was given to provide more information on this issue to Councillor A MacKintosh; and
- the issue of meaningful attendance was highlighted. Improving attendance was good, but actually encouraging young people to engage in education provision while at school could be challenging. In many cases non attendance at school was out with the control of the Education Service and it was queried if more could be done to work with the NHS, GPs and Social Work to improve attendance.

The Committee **NOTED** the content of the reports related to Charleston Academy, Glen Urquhart High, Inverness High School.

15. 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 3 February 2025:-

Ward 12

- | | |
|---|--------|
| - Balnain Primary School Parent Council: Playground Update | £750 |
| - Beauly Gala: Gala Weekend | £990 |
| - Beauly Community Council: Maple Vale Beauly Playpark Planting | £1,628 |
| - Glen Urquhart Childcare Centre: ELC Room Provisions Upgrade | £703 |

Ward 13

- N/A

Ward 14

- | | |
|--|---------|
| - Crown Connects SCIO: Hill District Place Plan | £461.04 |
| - Partnership for Wellbeing: Friendship Bus / Club Expansion | £1,200 |
| - Inverness Foodstuff: Public Diner Feasibility | £1,000 |

Ward 15

- | | |
|---|-----------|
| - Westwing + Core (Inverness Royal Academy ASN Support Bases):
Annual Outdoor Education Trip | £1,000 |
| - Inverness Royal Academy: Bothy Nature Base | £2,000 |
| - Partnership for Wellbeing: Friendship Bus / Club Expansion | £1,200 |
| - Ness Castle Primary School Parent Council: Health & Happy-Ness | £6,840.50 |

Ward 16

- | | |
|---|-----------|
| - Hilton Primary Parents & Friends: P7 School Trip | £5,115.93 |
| - Partnerships for Wellbeing: Friendship Bus / Club Expansion | £1,200 |

Ward 17

- | | |
|--|-----------|
| - HLH Culloden Active Schools: Culloden ASG School Football Groups | £2,592.94 |
| - Culloden Community Council: New Benches & Bench Replacement | £4,500 |

- Cameron Drive Play Park £2,968.06

Ward 19

- Partnership for Wellbeing: Friendship Bus / Club Expansion £1,200
- Inshes Library: Fèis a' Bhaile & Inshes Library Community Piano Project £1,428
- Play Parks £4,553

16. Minutes

Geàrr-chunntas

Mr A Christie made a Transparency Statement in respect of this item in his capacity as Non - Executive Director of Inverness BID. However, having applied the objective test, reviewed his position in relation to the item and any personal connection, he did not consider that he had an interest to declare.

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

- City of Inverness Area Committee held on 3 February 2025 - **NOTED**;
- Inverness Events and Festivals Working Group held on 20 February and 19 March 2025 - **APPROVED**; and
- Inverness Common Good Fund Sub-Committee held on 6 May 2025 - **APPROVED**.

The meeting concluded at 2.45 pm.