

## The Highland Council No. 7 2025/2026

Minutes of Meeting of the Highland Council held in the Council Chamber, Council Headquarters, Glenurquhart Road, Inverness on Thursday, 26 June 2025 at 9.35 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  
Mr M Baird  
Mr A Baldrey  
Mr C Ballance (Remote)  
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 (Remote)  
Mr S Coghill  
Mrs T Collier (Remote)  
Mrs H Crawford  
Mr R Cross  
Ms L Dundas  
Mr J Edmondson  
Ms S Fanet  
Mr J Finlayson  
Mr D Fraser  
Mr L Fraser  
Mr R Gale  
Ms C Gillies  
Mr K Gowans (Remote)  
Mr J Grafton (Remote)  
Mr A Graham  
Mr M Green  
Mr D Gregg  
Dr M Gregson  
Mr R Gunn  
Mrs J Hendry  
Ms M Hutchison

Mr A Jarvie (Remote)  
Mrs B Jarvie (Remote)  
Ms L Johnston  
Mr R Jones  
Mr S Kennedy  
Ms E Knox  
Ms L Kraft  
Mr B Lobban  
Mr P Logue  
Mr D Louden  
Ms M MacCallum  
Mr W MacKay (Remote)  
Mr G MacKenzie  
Mrs I MacKenzie  
Mr S Mackie (Remote)  
Mr A MacKintosh  
Mr R MacKintosh  
Mrs A MacLean  
Ms K MacLean  
Mr T MacLennan (Remote)  
Mr D Macpherson  
Mrs J McEwan  
Mr J McGillivray (Remote)  
Mr D Millar (Remote)  
Mr H Morrison (Remote)  
Mr P Oldham  
Mrs M Paterson  
Mrs M Reid  
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  
Joint Democratic Services Managers

Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of Mr D McDonald, Ms L Niven and Mr M Reiss.

## **Preliminaries**

Prior to the start of formal business, appreciation was extended to the Armed Forces on what was Armed Forces Week 2025. Their dedication, courage and sacrifice were recognised and their commitment to protecting freedoms and values should never be taken for granted. Highland had a strong military heritage with local regiments and personnel and Armed Forces Week provided an opportunity for the community to show them their support.

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

The Council **NOTED** the following declarations of interest:-

Item 18 (Motions 2 and 3) – Mr M Green and Mrs T Robertson

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

Item 3 – Mr A Christie

Item 4 – Mr A Christie

Item 5 – Mr A Christie, Mr D Gregg, Mr D Macpherson

Item 6 – Mr A Christie, Mr D Gregg, Mr S Mackie

Item 7 – Mr A Christie, Mr D Gregg, Mrs J Hendry

Item 13 – Mr A Christie

Item 16.ii – Mr A Christie

Item 18 (Motion 2 and 3) – Ms M MacCallum

## **3. Annual Accounts for the Year to 31 March 2025 and Revenue and Capital Outturn for the year Cunntasan Bliadhnail airson na Bliadhna gu 31 Màrt 2025 agus Teachd-a- steach is Calpa Làithreach airson na Bliadhna**

**Transparency Statement: Mr A Christie made a Transparency Statement in respect of this item in his capacity as a General Manager of Inveress, Badenoch and Strathspey Citizens Advice Bureau, a Non-executive Director of NHS Highland and a Non-executive Director on Inverness BID Ltd. However having applied the objective test, he did not consider that he had an interest to declare.**

There had been circulated Report No. HC/18/25 by the Chief Officer – Corporate Finance.

During discussion, Members raised the following issues:-

- the outgoing Chair of Corporate Resources, Mr D Loudon, was thanked for his work and the positive working relationships he had fostered;
- the Chief Officer - Corporate Finance and his team were thanked for their work managing the transition to the new accounting system, which had been a complex process, but would provide a steadier state of operation going forward and faster access to vital information;

- this was the first set of accounts to include the international financial regulations standards, which would help to improve and inform future decisions. Further information on the implications of the new standards was sought and provided;
- while the 2024-25 outturn was disappointing, it was broadly in line with forecast;
- the ongoing improvements to the format and accessibility of the report were welcomed;
- the achievement of maintaining reserves at 3%, in line with policy, was commended;
- the £3.9m overspend on the Looked After Children budget was queried and information sought on the situation in the current year. The Chair of the Health, Social Care and Wellbeing (HSCW) Committee explained there was a recognition of the need not to repeat the overspend, but also to acknowledge the legacy savings from previous years. Mitigating action and discussion was being undertaken with NHS Highland, and detailed scrutiny would take place at the HSCW Committee in August. Focus sessions would also be held with finance colleagues and a brief summary of the breakdown of the £3.9m overspend was provided, the majority being the Looked After Children budget, of which £2.9m was for independent and third sector placements, £100k for respite refurbishments, £600k for legacy savings and £300k for Home in Highland. Recurring pressure fund investments exceeding £1m from the 2025-26 approved budget would go some way towards addressing the pressures, along with other officer actions and mitigations. Meeting the needs of Looked After Children, which could vary enormously, must remain one of the Council's priorities;
- attention was drawn to the estimated £370k of savings from the senior management restructure and the Chief Executive provided a summary of the current position with regard to the Senior Management Team, further details of which would be circulated to Members;
- highlighting reference in the report at paragraph 7.6 to 'renewed action in managing the 2025-26 budget to avoid the levels of unbudgeted overspend', it was queried whether this meant a 'grip and control' approach was to be adopted for vacant posts and, if this was the case, it should be reported to the Council;
- in response to a query about delays in the occupation of 49 newly built affordable homes near Balloch, which was resulting in a loss of rental and council tax income for the Council, this would be followed up with local Members;
- information was sought on the underspend on the Heating and Energy Efficiency budget, especially given the importance of these projects to reducing fuel consumption and costs, and it was confirmed that further detail would be provided outwith the meeting. The capital budget for this could be carried forward. Disappointment was expressed that a third of properties were not achieving the desired targets in this regard. The detail of this would also be scrutinised at the Housing and Property Committee;
- the workshop for Members on budget and accounting had been useful and it was hoped other similar events would be held;
- in relation to pension assets, information was sought, and provided, on the fluctuation in the reported value;
- an explanation for the £4.2m unallocated budget reported in Table A of Appendix 1 to the report, was sought and provided;
- information was sought, and provided, on the budget for affordable housing contribution from second homes council tax of £9,708m, which related to a Scottish Government opportunity for Councils to take a two-year payment holiday from those contributions, which was now being repaid;

- the approximate £1m underspend in the Roads and Flood Protection budgets was disappointing, as these were significant priorities for residents. It was suggested that more regular monitoring by Members would be beneficial to ensure budgets were met as forecast; and
- assurance was sought, and provided, that a trading account would be operated for the in-house bus service operation and a paper on the this would be presented to a future meeting.

## Decision

The Council:-

- i. **APPROVED** for issue the unaudited Annual Accounts for the Highland Council, Highland Council Charitable Trust Funds and the Highland Council Pension Fund for the year ended 31 March 2025 and **NOTED** that these would be presented to the appointed auditor by the prescribed date of the 30 June 2025; and
- ii. **NOTED** the revenue and capital out-turn for the 2024/25 financial year, subject to audit, as set out in section 7 and 8 of the report.

## 4. Highland Council Best Value Report Aithisg Luach as Fheàrr Chomhairle na Gàidhealtachd

**Transparency Statement: 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, he did not consider that he had an interest to declare.**

There had been circulated Report No. HC/19/25 by the Chief Executive.

During discussion, Members raised the following issues:-

- Members welcomed the overall positive tone of the report, which reflected significant progress since the previous audit in 2020. The Accounts Commission recognised an embedded culture of transformation, effective financial management and the alignment of operational delivery plans with budget-setting processes;
- the Council had implemented a reserves strategy in 2023 and set the 2025/26 budget without drawing on reserves. These developments were highlighted during a recent meeting with Audit Scotland and the Accounts Commission;
- in relation to borrowing costs, particularly concerning the General Fund and Housing Revenue Account (HRA), it was clarified that the Council's internal borrowing cap of 10% excluded service concession agreements, whereas the Accounts Commission's figure of 11.6% included them. Historical data showed that Highland's borrowing levels had consistently exceeded the Scottish average due to its extensive infrastructure responsibilities;
- Members discussed the implications of long-term borrowing and debt management. While inflation was recognised as a factor in reducing the real value of repayments over time, concerns remained about refinancing practices and the cumulative impact on future budgets;
- Members urged that the Council's borrowing strategy be reviewed, with a view to identifying alternative approaches that would enhance long-term financial sustainability;

- the Council's capital investment strategy was defended as necessary to address historic underinvestment in schools, roads and other assets. It was confirmed that all borrowing decisions were made in accordance with Treasury regulations and Council-approved strategies;
- concerns were raised about the lack of direct engagement with Members during the audit process. It was confirmed that the Accounts Commission had relied on webcast reviews to assess officer-member relations, which was widely considered insufficient. Members requested that future audits include more robust consultation with elected representatives;
- while improvements had been made in participatory budgeting and asset transfers under the Community Empowerment Act, Members highlighted ongoing challenges in community capacity building, support for local groups, and clarity of contact points within the Council;
- it was observed that some Community Councils had ceased operating due to workload pressures, particularly in relation to planning applications. Members called for improved support and clearer communication to enable communities to take on greater responsibilities;
- the need for better alignment across services and a more integrated approach to delivery was acknowledged. Work was underway to develop a future operating model and governance review, with updates expected in September;
- Members emphasised the importance of delivering tangible outcomes for communities, beyond strategic plans and internal processes. The need for accelerated progress in housing delivery, infrastructure investment and service improvement was repeatedly highlighted;
- questions were raised regarding the use of second homes council tax income. In this regard, it was confirmed that funds had been allocated in line with Scottish Government guidelines and used to support affordable housing through the land banking fund; and
- the Council reaffirmed its commitment to transparency, scrutiny and continuous improvement. Training opportunities for Members on financial matters and debt management were welcomed, with further sessions to be arranged as required.

Following the summing up by the Leader of the Council and the mover of the amendment, the Council proceeded to the vote as detailed below:-

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

As an **AMENDMENT**, Mr R Gale seconded by Mrs J McEwan **MOVED** that the Council address the concerns of the Accounts Commission and review the current borrowing strategy to seek an alternative approach to borrowing over the longer term.

On a vote being taken, the **MOTION** received 43 votes, and the **AMENDMENT** received 25 votes, with 1 abstention, and the **MOTION** was therefore **CARRIED**, the votes having been cast as follows:-

**For the Motion:**

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

**For the Amendment:**

Mr M Baird, Mr A Baxter, Mr J Bruce, Mr A Christie, Mr S Coghill, Mrs H Crawford, Mr R Cross, Mr J Edmondson, Mr R Gale, Mr J Grafton, Mr A Graham, Mr D Gregg, Dr M Gregson, Mr R Gunn, Mrs B Jarvie, Ms M MacCallum, Mrs I MacKenzie, Mr R MacKintosh, Mr D Macpherson, Ms J McEwan, Mr J McGillivray, Mrs T Robertson, Mrs L Saggars, Mr A Sinclair, Mr R Stewart.

**Abstentions:**

Mr S Mackie

**Decision**

The Council:-

- i. **NOTED** the change in approach to the audit of Best Value as set out in section 5 of the report;
- ii. **AGREED** the Council's Best Value report attached as Appendix 1 to the report with a summary of the key findings provided at section 6.3 of the report;
- iii. **AGREED** the Council response at section 7 of the report; and
- iv. **NOTED** the statutory requirements set out at section 8 of the report.

**5. Presentation – Director of Public Health – Annual Report**

**Taisbeanadh - Stiùiriche Slàinte Phoblaich – Aithisg Bhliadhnail**

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

**Mr A Christie – in his capacity as a Non-executive Director of NHS Highland.**

**Mr M Gregg – as an employee of NHS Highland**

**Mr D Macpherson – as a close family member was an employee of NHS Highland**

Prior to Dr Allison's presentation, the Convener informed Members that Dr Allison was due to retire imminently. He had been appointed to Director of Public Health at NHS Highland during the Covid epidemic when the importance of public health was paramount. He had worked tirelessly to keep vulnerable people safe and to roll out the vaccination programme. On behalf of the Council, the Convener wished Dr Allison well for the future.

Thereafter, Dr Tim Allison gave a presentation on the 2024 Director of Public Health Annual Report, which focused on health inequalities across NHS Highland. The report outlined key challenges, actions taken, and recommendations to reduce disparities. A copy of the report was available at the following link:

### Decision

The Council **NOTED** the 2024 Director of Public Health Annual Report.

**6. Highland Investment Plan and Thurso Masterplan Update  
Plana Tasgaidh na Gàidhealtachd – Fios às Ùr mu Phrìomh Phlanadh Inbhir Theòrsa**

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

**Mr A Christie – in his capacity as a Non-executive Director of NHS Highland  
Mr D Gregg – as an employee of NHS Highland  
Mr S Mackie – as the Chairman of Dounreay Stakeholders Group**

There had been circulated Report No. HC/20/25 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Place, who gave a presentation in amplification of the report.

During discussion, the following main points were raised:-

- thanks were expressed to officers for the excellent report, including the summary of the other workstreams currently being progressed, and the regular and thorough updates to Local Members;
- the redevelopment of Thurso High School as a Community Point of Delivery (POD) was a transformational investment, not only for Thurso but for Caithness and the wider Highlands. It was an opportunity to modernise education, integrate services and support local communities;
- through an innovative and collaborative place-based approach, the Administration was creating a hub for education, health, community and leisure services that would bring stakeholders together, reduce duplication and ensure better outcomes for all;
- the proposal in the report was rooted in ongoing public and stakeholder engagement and community consultation. Stakeholder workshops had shown support and enthusiasm for partnership working, innovation and long-term regeneration, fundamental principles which underpinned the Highland Investment Plan (HIP). Proposing the current Thurso High School site as the preferred location for the Community POD was building on clear evidence, shared ambition and a practical vision that aligned with the broader HIP, and was about delivering not only what was required but what was wanted by the people who lived and worked in Thurso;
- the proposed Thurso Community POD was fantastic news for Thurso and Caithness, and Local Members supported the Thurso High School site being the preferred location;
- local people were not yet aware how significant the Thurso Community POD would be for the area, or did not believe it would happen based on past experience. The importance of bringing the public along was emphasised, and it was suggested more publicity was needed – for example, a stall at the local Highland Games. Thurso Community Council, which would be a natural platform for Members to keep the community informed, was currently in abeyance. However, there were other means such as the Dounreay Stakeholders Group, the Chamber of Commerce and the Association of Caithness Community Councils;

- the report showed that progress was being made at pace, which was welcomed, and an assurance was sought that there was sufficient resource and capacity within the Council to maintain the momentum moving forward;
- Wick Community Campus was cited as an example of significant investment and redevelopment taking place when the local community had not initially believed it would happen. At that time, Local Members had held their own forums in local venues, and it was suggested Thurso Members could do the same to bring the community together and raise awareness of the proposals. Since the Wick development there had been a shift from silo working and the Council was engaging with stakeholders across the whole of the estate in Thurso. Lessons could be learned from Wick, and there would be further learning as the HIP progressed. Particular reference was made to the legacy buildings in Wick, including the former High School building, the Carnegie Library and the former swimming pool, and it was necessary to consider what would happen to any buildings in Thurso that became surplus to requirements;
- the importance of having governance in place, as set out in the report, was recognised;
- stakeholders were excited to have the opportunity to shape their community;
- with reference to the estimated sum of £100m to be invested in Thurso, it was queried when estimated totals would be available for other areas, specifically Skye;
- when key workers were considering moving to a particular area they looked at education and health services, and it was hoped the Thurso Community POD would help address depopulation;
- information was sought as to what sports facilities there would be at the new Tain 3-18 campus;
- the opportunity to collaborate with the private sector, in addition to the other public sector and third sector bodies, was significant, and was something publicly funded organisations often missed;
- the investment in Thurso was an opportunity to have fit-for-purpose facilities for decades to come and, in addition to core service delivery, to be innovative in terms of how to meet the demands for future employment in the area;
- it was suggested that consideration be given to holding a meeting of the Full Council in Thurso, with a visit to the relevant site(s) so Members could see what was proposed;
- the inclusion of a full running track in the planned layout at Appendix 2 of the report was welcomed;
- it was remarked that there was no Community POD proposed for Dornoch, and concern was expressed regarding any potential attempt to close Dornoch Service Point. Weddings were a critical part of the Dornoch economy, and the industry revolved around the Dornoch Service Point and the Assistant Registrar who worked there. There were 40 weddings scheduled to take place in the current year, and closing the Service Point would damage the local economy at a stroke. Local Members expected nothing for Dornoch from the HIP but wished to retain what little services they currently had;
- the importance of public convenience provision to tourists was emphasised, and it was suggested this be considered as part of any new developments;
- with reference to the Highland Housing Challenge and the need for 24,000 houses, 12,000 of which were programmed, it was necessary to consider where these houses would be and what facilities were needed to go along with them. New community facilities were needed in Inverness to cope with the significant amount of housing development taking place in areas such as Wester Craigs, Ness-side, Culloden and Ardersier; and



- the contribution of former Councillors John Rosie, Donnie Mackay and Deirdre Mackay in terms of planning and aspiration for the Thurso project was recognised.

## Decision

The Council:-

- APPROVED** the work to date on progressing the Highland Investment Plan workstreams and in developing a masterplan for Thurso;
- AGREED** to nominate the current Thurso High School site as the preferred location for the new Thurso Community POD and that a public drop-in event would be held after the summer holiday period to allow the Thurso community to consider this proposal and provide feedback; and
- AGREED** the proposed changes to the Scheme of Delegation and Contract Standing Orders identified in Section 6 of the report.

## 7. Highland Housing Challenge – Partnership Action Plan Dùbhlán Taigheadais na Gàidhealtachd – Plana-gnìomha Com-pàirteachais

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

**Mr A Christie – in his capacity as a Non-executive Director of NHS Highland**

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

**Mrs J Hendry – due to a connection to an employee in SSE Renewable Hydro.**

There had been circulated Report No. HC/21/25 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Place.

During discussion, Members raised the following issues:-

- housing had a critical role in supporting, sustaining and developing communities in Highland. The Partnership Action Plan set out a range of actions to address the challenges and barriers and deliver all housing types and tenures;
- the Council's public, registered social landlord, industry and development partners were thanked for the work already undertaken, these efforts having been praised by the Scottish Government;
- housing for key workers and public servants in communities should be a priority as it would allow them to take up employment offers and foster economic growth;
- the costs of known demand for social housing units across Highland had to be established before a credible case could be made to the Scottish Government for additional funding;
- there was a need to accelerate the supply of housing across all tenures if the Highlands was to realise the economic opportunities presented by the Inverness and Cromarty Firth Green Freeport;
- the priorities for overcoming barriers on building standards did not align with the Council's Net Zero Strategy to deliver future proofed, energy efficient and climate resilient new social housing and the Climate Change and Energy Team needed to be involved as plans progressed;
- an assurance was sought, and provided, that the importance of the agreed 'fabric first' approach to housing development to reduce overall energy demand was recognised and any changes to the agreed energy standards would require to be brought back to Members for approval;

- in overcoming barriers to development, there had to be a recognition of the economic affordability of developments given the scale of demand for housing in the area;
- an assurance was sought, and provided, that all Members would have a full opportunity to input into any proposed Masterplan Consent Areas (MCAs), particularly in the areas they represented;
- confirmation was sought, and provided, that a Members' workshop on MCAs would be arranged prior to a report being submitted to the Economy and Infrastructure Committee;
- there was an opportunity for community representatives to be engaged from the outset to help shape plans for MCAs;
- further information on the responses to the call for development sites should be brought back to Members, including any sites ready for development;
- the emphasis should be on delivering social housing as well as affordable and mid-market housing given the numbers on the Highland Housing Register waiting list, the fact Highland was a low wage economy and challenges with the private rental sector;
- the fact the private rental sector and availability of mid-market housing in Highland was restricted placed additional pressure on the social housing sector;
- concern was expressed at the pressure major new housing development would place on infrastructure and services in Inverness and wider Inner Moray Firth, including schools, health services, roads, transport and other services and the potential implications for the Highland Investment Plan;
- the appropriate infrastructure had to be in place prior to development and the focus of partners should be on building communities, with a good standard of health and wellbeing, reference being made to the Tornagrain masterplan;
- the development of the Highland Investment Plan involved a range of Council services and had reflected on the balance of demand for infrastructure provision in communities and there was flexibility in its review process going forward;
- the need for the Council and its partners to focus on rural areas across Highland where relatively small housing developments could be transformative in addressing depopulation, sustaining and developing communities;
- there was a need to address the poor condition of some existing social housing stock in Highland and to consider opportunities to transform homes or create new developments in those areas;
- there were concerns expressed at demands imposed on land suitable for housing development by Transport Scotland and the need to ensure accessible social housing was built in locations where people could access the public transport network and other services;
- highlighting that through the development of a finance strategy for the HRA, including a long-term rent strategy, consideration would be given to the options to target additional investment in social housing to increase and improve the housing stock;
- the new integrated housing service for developers aimed to ensure that delivery of development could be accelerated;
- an explanation was sought on how the need and demand for housing in rural communities was to be identified in terms of the agreed approach to developing housing in rural areas. A new Housing Needs and Demands assessment would help inform the Strategic Housing Investment Plan to be presented to the Housing and Property Committee;
- the investment in public services and schools required to support worker accommodation villages that sites identified by Scottish and Southern Energy Networks (SSEN) should be shared with Members;

- it was crucial there was community consultation on worker accommodation villages, that they were aligned with local place plans and the associated infrastructure fitted with plans for future housing development;
- there were issues with the lack of a power supply through SSEN distribution networks to new housing developments in Inverness. It was explained the Council had been making representations at Member and officer level on this issue;
- an explanation was sought, and provided, in relation to Highland Regional Skills and the single team concept (based on the rugby team structure) for matching supply to demand;
- it was questioned whether realising the target for building houses over the next 10 years was achievable given the scale of development required;
- an update was sought, and provided, on the ongoing engagement with the UK and Scottish Governments on the housing challenge and housing debt write-off;
- it would be helpful for the process for purchasing former Council houses to be shared with Members;
- it was important to engage with developers on undeveloped sites with planning permission and to work in partnership to overcome any barriers;
- further information was sought, and provided, on the nature of the compulsory purchases that might be pursued, mainly in relation to derelict buildings;
- there was potential to redevelop brownfield sites for housing and an assurance was sought that representations would continue to be made to the Scottish Government on this issue;
- there was an opportunity to bring more empty and derelict buildings back into use and a proposal on this was to be brought to the Housing and Property Committee to augment the Empty Homes team; and
- the issues raised in debate would be reflected upon and demonstrated the complexities around the housing challenge and need for a one Highland approach across the Council and with partners and stakeholders.

## Decision

The Council:-

- i. **NOTED** the update on the Highland Housing Challenge, including the Seminar held on Friday 6 June 2025;
- ii. **AGREED** the Highland Housing Challenge Partnership Action Plan found within Appendix 2 to the report;
- iii. **AGREED** the Highland Regional Skills Plan found within Appendix 4 to the report;
- iv. **AGREED** to assimilate the Highland Housing Challenge Action Plan into the Operational Delivery Plan; and
- v. **NOTED** that a further seminar on building developer capacity would be established later in 2025 and would be reported to a future Housing and Property Committee.

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

The Council **RESOLVED** that, under Section 50A(4) of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973, the public be excluded from the meeting for **item 9** 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.

**9. North Coast Care Facility  
Goireas Cùraim a' Chosta a Tuath**

There had been circulated to Members only Report No. HC/22/25 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Place.

Following discussion, the Council **AGREED** the recommendations as set out in the report.

**10. Membership of the Council  
Ballrachd na Comhairle**

The Council **NOTED** that, following the By-Elections held on 19 June 2025 for Wards 6 (Cromarty Firth) and 10 (Eilean a' Cheò), Mr Richard Cross had been elected as Councillor for Ward 6 and Ms Christine Gillies had been elected as Councillor for Ward 10.

Mr Cross and Ms Gillies formally introduced themselves and were welcomed by fellow Members.

At this juncture, the Council were informed that Mr Derek Loudon had intimated his resignation from the Council with effect from 30 June 2025. Members, cross-party, paid warm tribute to him. His considerate, inclusive and supportive approach had been welcomed, especially to new Members. Members wished him well for the future.

**11. Membership of Committees, etc  
Ballrachd air Comataidhean, msaa**

The Council:-

- i. **NOTED** the appointment of Ms C Gillies as the substantive Member and Mr J Finlayson as substitute Member for Ward 10 (Eilean a' Cheò) on the North Planning Applications Committee;
- ii. **AGREED** that the Leader of the Council, the Leader of the Opposition and Chair of Health, Social Care and Wellbeing be appointed to the Models of Integration Steering Group;
- iii. **AGREED** that the membership of the Poverty and Equality Commission as follows:
  1. Mr R Gale
  2. Ms M Hutchison
  3. Mr A Mackintosh
  4. Mrs M Ross
  5. Ms K Willis
- iv. **AGREED**:-
  1. Mr P Oldham be appointed as Chair of the Corporate Resources Committee and Mr M Cameron replace Mr D Loudon on that same Committee;
  2. Mr P Oldham be appointed as Chair of the Pensions Committee and Mrs J Hendry replace Mr D Loudon on that same Committee; and
  3. Ms K Willis be appointed as Chair of the Climate Change Committee and to Ms S Fanet be appointed as Vice Chair.

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

The Council **AGREED**:-

- i. that a Special meeting of the Council be held on 18 September 2025;
- ii. that the Dingwall and Seaforth Area Committee on 24 November 2025 be rescheduled to 27 November 2025; and
- iii. the calendar of meetings from 1 July to 30 September 2026 as circulated.

**13. Deeds Executed**  
**Sgrìobhainnean Lagha a Bhuilicheadh**

**Transparency Statement: Mr A Christie made a Transparency Statement in respect of this item in his capacity as a Non-executive Director on Inverness BID Ltd. However having applied the objective test, he did not consider that he had an interest to declare.**

There had been circulated a list of deeds and other documents executed on behalf of the Council since the meeting held on 15 May 2025 which was **NOTED**.

**14. Recess Powers**  
**Cumhachdan Fosaìdh**

The Council **AGREED** that, during the recess period, powers be granted to the Chief Executive and Assistant Chief Executives, in consultation with the Convener, Leader of the Council, relevant Committee Chair and the Leader of the Opposition, to deal with issues arising during that time and that a report should be prepared for the first meeting of the Council or relevant Committee following the period where these powers had been exercised.

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

The Minutes of the Meeting of the Council held on 15 May 2025 and the Special Meetings held on 29 May 2025 and 12 June 2025, as contained in the Volume which had been circulated separately, were submitted for confirmation as a correct record and were **APPROVED**.

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

**Transparency Statement: Mr A Christie made a Transparency Statement in respect of item 16.ii in his capacity as a Non-executive Director of NHS Highland. However having applied the objective test, he did not consider that he had an interest to declare.**

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

# 2026

|   |                      |
|---|----------------------|
| Black Isle and Easter Ross Committee        | 12 May 2025          |
| Lochaber Area Committee                     | 12 May 2025          |
| City of Inverness Area Committee            | 19 May 2025          |
| Housing and Property Committee              | 21 May 2025          |
| Climate Change Committee                    | 21 May 2025          |
| Communities and Place Committee             | 22 May 2025          |
| Nairnshire Committee                        | 26 May 2025          |
| Dingwall and Seaforth Committee             | 26 May 2025          |
| Badenoch and Strathspey Area Committee (Sp) | 27 May 2025          |
| Health, Social Care and Wellbeing Committee | 28 May 2025          |
| Audit Committee                             | 28 May 2025          |
| Sutherland County Committee                 | 2 June 2025          |
| Education Committee                         | 4 June 2025          |
| Gaelic Committee                            | 4 June 2025          |
| Comataidh na Gaidhlig                       | 4 An t-Og Mhios 2025 |
| Corporate Resources Committee               | 5 June 2025          |

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

## **Climate Change Committee 21 May 2025**

### **Starred Item: Item 4i Net Zero Programme Update**

The Council **AGREED** to approve the project brief templates in Appendix 2 of the report for inclusion in the Council's Net Zero Programme.

### **Starred Item: Item 5 Highland Adapts Update and Funding**

The Council **AGREED** to approve £15,000 of funding to support the Highland Adapts partnership during financial year 2025/26.

## **Audit Committee 28 May 2025**

### **Starred Item: Item 10 Audit Committee Annual Report 2024/25**

The Council **AGREED** to record that the Audit Committee had provided the necessary assurances to confirm it had fulfilled its purpose and demonstrated its impact for the year 2024/25.

## **Education Committee, 4 June 2025**

### **Starred Item: Item 5 Statutory Consultation: Closure of Badcaul Primary School**

The Council **AGREED** a further period of mothballing for Badcaul Primary School.

Since the report had been published, the outlook had changed:

- Most importantly, a small group of pre-school children in the area had become eligible for statutory Early Learning and Childcare (ELC).
- The construction of a major fish farm facility was well underway at Badcaul and should be operational this year, offering new employment opportunities.
- A community housing project was ongoing.

- Local estates, the Community Council and the local development trust had voiced their opposition to closure of the school.

Another period of mothballing would allow all stakeholders to work alongside the community, help it to thrive and support the Council's commitment to addressing depopulation.

**Starred Item: Item 6 Statutory Consultation: Merger of School Nurseries at Caol Primary School and St Columba's Roman Catholic Primary School, to create a new pre-school provision serving both schools**

The Council **AGREED** that the school nurseries at Caol Primary School and St. Columba's Roman Catholic Primary School be merged to create a new pre-school provision serving both schools.

**Starred Item: Item 7 Statutory Consultation: Closure of Kinlochewe Primary School**

The Council **AGREED** that education at Kinlochewe Primary School be discontinued and its catchment transferred to that of Gairloch Primary School.

**Starred Item: Item 8 Statutory Consultation: Creation of Gaelic Medium Catchment Areas for Craighill Primary School and Tain Royal Academy**

The Council **AGREED** that Gaelic Medium catchment areas be created in line with the proposal set out at paragraph 1.2 of the report, namely, overlaying the current English Medium catchments of all primary schools within the Associated School Groups of Tain Royal Academy, Invergordon Academy, Dornoch Academy and Golspie High School.

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

- i. Highland and Western Isles Valuation Joint Board 18 February 2025 (approved by the Board on 10 June 2025) – **NOTED**
- ii. Community Planning Board 21 February 2025 (approved by the Board on 6 June 2025) – **NOTED**
- iii. Redesign Board 5 June 2025 – **APPROVED**; and
- iv. Chief Officer Recruitment Panel 17 June 2025 – **APPROVED**.

**17. Question Time Booklet A  
Àm Ceiste**

There had been circulated separately in Booklet A, Public and Members Questions received by the Chief Officer - Legal and Corporate Governance.

**Member Questions**

**1. Mr A Christie**

**To the Leader of the Council**

Please could the Leader detail the key topics discussed as well as the position Reached on them on at the last two meetings of the Convention of the Highlands and Islands (CoHI) and Highlands and Islands Regional Economic Partnership (HIREP)?

The response had been circulated.

In terms of a supplementary question, it was queried whether it was a conflict of interest for the Leader to serve of the North Planning Applications Committee in view of his position as Chair of the Highlands and Islands Regional Economic Partnership which had commissioned a report on Regional Transformational Opportunities to target renewable energy an energy sectors for inward investment in Highland?

In response, the Leader confirmed that he would consider if he had a declaration of interest if a matter relating to the Regional Transformation Opportunities report were to arise in respect of any item at the North Planning Applications Committee.

## **2. Mr A Christie**

### **To the Leader of the Council**

By vacant post please could you detail, explain and provide key statistics including the impact on service users for the People Cluster, Place Cluster and Corporate Cluster in relation to the current situation on staff vacancies?

The response had been circulated.

In terms of a supplementary question, it was queried if the Leader was sure that these vacant posts (approximately 200) were not causing harm to young people in Highland?

In response, it was explained that the Council was trying it's very best to recruit to these posts and reduce any impact.

## **3. Mr D Gregg**

### **To the Chair of Economy and Infrastructure**

Residents of Hilton and Milton have submitted numerous concerns to the council about the state of their paths, such as those on Oldtown Road and Oldtown Place. These are made up of slabs, many of which are uneven and make trips with buggies or wheelchairs difficult, and for our elderly and vulnerable residents, make every trip to the shops a journey where they risk tripping and breaking an arm. They continue to deteriorate season by season.

What plans, including budgets and timeframes if they exist, has the council made to repair the footpaths in Hilton and Milton?

The response had been circulated.

There was no supplementary question.

## **4. Mr M Reiss**

### **To the Chair of Economy and Infrastructure**

Highland Council have announced that it is anticipated that the newly established Road Marking Team envisage treating 340 km of public roads this summer.



Approximately how many kilometres of the Highland Council's 6785 km of roads will still require new white lines after this summer's work is completed by the team of four operatives, using 2 lorries?

The response had been circulated.

There was no supplementary question.

## **5. Mr D Macpherson**

### **To the Chair of Education**

The Highland Council recently introduced the 'Improving Relationships and Behaviour in Schools Action Plan'.

How many pupil behaviour incidents of a violent nature, committed by pupils against teachers and teaching staff, have been submitted and reported by teaching staff and recorded by the Education Department in the Highland Council area during the last two academic years?

The response had been circulated.

In terms of a supplementary question, it was queried whether the number of instances where violent assaults had taken place against other members of school staff, such as canteen, janitorial and support staff, could be collated.

In response, it was indicated that the newly released Scottish Government report on Positive Inclusion and Safe School Environment could provide the information sought.

## **6. Mr C Ballance**

### **To the Chair of Communities and Place**

The Council's website points out that "Volunteering brings many health benefits" and it is also a crucial part of Community Wealth Building. Community Volunteering is something which I hope we would all support.

So is it reasonable that volunteers who offer their services to Youth and Adult services and who used to be able to claim expenses when the service was with High Life Highland, are no longer able to claim for necessary expenses incurred to volunteer now the service has transferred to the Council?

The response had been circulated.

In terms of a supplementary question, it was queried whether it was fair that Members were paid expenses to attend meetings while Youth and Adult Service volunteers, who were giving up their time for free, could not claim such expenses?

In response, the valuable contribution volunteers made across the Highlands was acknowledged, however any approach to this issue had to be fair and equitable and in view of this work was ongoing to develop a volunteering framework.

**7. Ms K Willis**

**To the Chair of Economy and Infrastructure**

The arrangements for the local/strategic split of parking income are detailed in the Parking Strategy 2021 Report (ECI/50/21) approved at the December 2021 Economy and Infrastructure Committee. The Strategy requires that where new tariffs are introduced at legacy carparks (or have been introduced since October 2019) during the Council budget process they will be subject to a local/strategic split of 50:50, once costs are deducted, so that the income can be distributed locally by Area Committees.

At the March 2024 Council budget meeting and the May 2024 Lochaber Area Committee (LAC), members agreed to increase short-term and long-term stay parking tariffs respectively. Six new mandatory Pay and Display carparks in Lochaber have also been approved by LAC members.

Please can the Chair advise when the Lochaber Area Committee will receive the local split of the income generated from the legacy carpark tariff increases (as per the 2021 Parking Strategy) and the new Pay and Display carparks in Lochaber?

The response had been circulated.

In terms of a supplementary question, it was queried when would the areas that charged for car parking see the revenue that was raised in their area be reinvested in their area to improve deteriorating parking infrastructure?

In response, it was explained that until there was a positive position, revenues would not be split between areas, and any changes to the way that car parking was charged would have to be agreed by the relevant committee.

**8. Mr R MacKintosh**

**To the Chair of Economy and Infrastructure**

Does the Council have a formal mechanism in place for recording of potential breaches of Tree Preservation Orders across Highland?

The response had been circulated.

In terms of a supplementary question, it was asked, how many potential breaches to Tree Preservation Orders across Highland had been reported and led to prosecution since 2022.

In response, the Chair of Economy and Infrastructure undertook to circulate this information following the meeting.

**9. Mr A Baxter**

**To the Leader of the Council**

Given widespread concern across Highland communities about the deteriorating condition and loss of access to woodland paths and trails — including designated Core Paths — as a result of Forestry and Land Scotland's failure to carry out routine maintenance due to budgetary decisions, what representations has the Highland

Council made to Forestry and Land Scotland and to Scottish Ministers to demand urgent action and ensure these vital local and visitor routes are properly maintained?

The response had been circulated.

In terms of a supplementary question, the Leader was asked to formally press the Scottish Government and Forestry Land Scotland to fulfil their statutory duties to keep routes free from obstruction.

In response, the Leader agreed to communicate with the Scottish Government regarding this issue.

**10. Mrs I MacKenzie**

**To the Leader of the Council**

We know there is an increasing concern regarding the impact of Short Term Lets (STLs) on the availability of housing for Highland and Islands residents. It is known that the original draft of the STL Licensing Order included overprovision powers, which were later removed in favour of planning-based controls such as STLCAs (Short-Term Let Control Areas), which does not seem to have helped the situation. Here in the Highlands one size fits all approach does not adequately reflect local housing pressures.

When will Highland Council recognise that there are areas with overprovision of STLs and contact the Scottish Government to request revision to the legislation that would enable the council to refuse STL licence applications where the number of lets is excessive, and contributing to a shortage of permanent homes?

The response had been circulated.

There was no supplementary question.

**11. Mr R Gale**

**To the Chair of Economy and Infrastructure**

The Scottish Government guidance for touring caravans on sites (which includes Camper Vans) states that the minimum distance between units should be 6M for residential units and 5M for touring units. Given that Camper vans that park overnight in Highland Council car parks are parked less than two metres apart when will the Council enact the guidance and provide clear separation of 5M between Camper vans in Car parks?

The response had been circulated.

In terms of a supplementary question, it was queried why the same rules on overnight parking did not apply across all of Highland?

In response, it was explained that there were different considerations for different parts of the Highlands and the Car Parking Scheme had been launched to help with this along with support from the Access Rangers.

## 18. Notices of Motion Booklet A Brathan Gluasaid

There had been circulated separately in Booklet A, Notices of Motion received by the Chief Officer - Legal and Corporate Governance.

### 1. Policing in Highland

New figures reveal that there are almost 1000 fewer police officers in Scotland than at the formation of Police Scotland in March 2013, there being 16,553 full-time-equivalent officers at present as compared with 17,496 twelve years ago.

Official Police statistics show a dramatic rise in crime in the Highlands, particularly in Antisocial Behaviour, Violence and Disorder, Serious Organised Crime, and Acquisitive Crime. The latter category has seen a 40.8% rise (818 more crimes) against the 5-year average.

While we applaud the efforts of all police officers in their work to respond to this wave of criminality, and we appreciate that the targeting of resources is undertaken with skill and professionalism, nevertheless we believe the Scottish Government must show greater support for the police service.

This being the case, this Council asks that the Leader write to the Scottish Government, expressing our concerns, and urging the First Minister to intervene and reinstate adequate funding for Police Scotland, in order that this most important service is able to protect and support Highland communities, as intended.

**Signed:** Dr M Gregson                      Mr A Christie

### Decision

The Council **AGREED** the terms of the Notice of Motion as detailed.

### 2. Short-Term Lets Control Zone

**Declarations of Interest: Mr M Green and Ms T Robertson made a Declaration of Interest as owners of short term lets and, in accordance with paragraph 5.6 of the revised Code of Conduct, they left the meeting for this item.**

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

**Ms M MacCallum – as her family owned a short term let  
Mr D Macpherson – family run a B&B and short term let.**

- The Council notes that, while 7,011 Short Term Let licences have been granted across Highland, only 4 have been refused. Licensing legislation has limited criteria: in regard to location, character or condition of the premises, the nature and extent of the proposed activity, the kind of persons likely to be in the premises, the possibility of undue public nuisance, and public order & safety concerns. It is small wonder that virtually every license application is being granted. And the growth of short-term letting has taken place at an alarming rate.

- There are long-term detrimental effects of this trend on the housing and accommodation available. The private long-term rental market has shrunk disastrously: estate agents are withdrawing from letting out properties because of the shortage of properties available. Even taking into account the efforts of Highland Council and the Housing Associations, there is a shortage of affordable housing.
- At the same time, there are estimates of over 2,300 long-term empty homes in Highland, and 3,500 second homes. This exacerbates the Housing Emergency. Highland Council figures suggest that over 24,000 new homes are needed in the next 10 years. The Green Freeport, the increase in net zero electricity transmission, as well as the need to recruit key workers in health, education, social care, tourism and hospitality, depend on adequate housing across the region.
- Taking these factors into account, the Council recognises that the limited regulation of Short-term Lets is part of the problem and is removing too much accommodation from the market.
- We know that the original draft of the legislation included overprovision powers and therefore wish the Council to ask the Scottish Government to revisit the legislation, in order that the Council is enabled to refuse STL applications on 'overprovision' grounds, i.e. where the number of Short-term Lets is excessive and is contributing to a shortage of permanent homes.
- Failing that, Highland Council having had the experience of a Control Area, with Planning criteria, in Badenoch & Strathspey, this Council will ask the Scottish Government to allow Control Area status to Highland, where local interests demand.

**Signed:** Dr M Gregson

Mr D Macpherson

Speaking in support of his Motion, Dr Gregson highlighted the following concerns:-

- land banking and the purchase of multiple properties for the purpose of creating short term lets;
- the decline in private renting;
- empty and underused houses; and
- houses becoming a source of income rather than a home.

Dr Gregson offered to incorporate Mr Gowans' Amendment into his Motion.

During discussion, examples were shared of challenges experienced by some full time residents living nearby to multiple short term lets and the difficulties they sometimes faced when contacting the Council with a complaint.

Members expressed differing views and the following further points were raised:-

- tourism was a mainstay for many areas of the Highlands;
- the introduction of any short term let control area should only be considered at local level, and by way of place based decision making. Community engagement and local opinion was important. Operators of short term lets were often local people making a living, but in some instances the short term let scheme had contributed to tension between communities;
- Skye was the second busiest tourism destination in Scotland and although the area had a housing challenge, it was said that the local community did not see the remedy of that challenge in this Motion;
- the majority of short term let licence applications to come to the Council related to properties already in the system;

- short term lets were popular, convenient, efficient and were a vital part of tourism economy, however, balance between supporting the tourism industry and retaining local identity and affordable housing was needed;
- there were differing views in terms of the general housing crisis and it was suggested that short term lets were not to blame for this, more the lack of new homes being built in the area that would be available for social rent, as well as the number of empty homes. Social affordable housing was important;
- Badenoch and Strathspey was currently the only area to benefit from a short term let control zone and examples of the benefits were highlighted. A considered approach would be to learn from Badenoch and Strathspey then consider each area on a ward by ward basis. However, not everyone felt that control zones throughout Highland were the way forward;
- an overprovision policy would come at a cost and could not work retrospectively; and
- short term let businesses who had complied with the current legislations should be supported.

Speaking in support of the Amendment, Mr Gowans explained that he had used the wording from Motion 3 to form his Amendment as it offered an effective outcome, without financial implication. He advised that he did not wish for the Amendment to form part of the Motion.

During summing up, Dr Gregson pointed out that local decision making was part of his Motion. He recognised the importance of supporting tourism but felt that short term lets exacerbated housing issues. He suggested the Amendment would have a financial implication by way of officers preparing reports, however, he accepted that the reports would provide beneficial information.

Thereafter, the Motion was withdrawn.

## Decision

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

Following the success of the Badenoch and Strathspey Short Term Let Control Area, Council asks officers to bring forward a paper to September Council outlining the process for implementing Short Term Let Control Areas, giving options for introducing STLCAs either on a Highland-wide basis, or by ward/area where the majority of members in the ward/area have voted for it; including the minimum timescales for implementation and, extrapolating from the experience of Badenoch and Strathspey, indicating the resource implications in terms of officer time for both options.

### 3. Short Term Let Control Areas

Following the success of the Badenoch and Strathspey Short Term Let Control Area, Council asks officers to bring forward a paper to September Council outlining the process for implementing Short Term Let Control Areas, giving options for introducing STLCAs either on a Highland-wide basis, or by ward/area where the majority of members in the ward/area have voted for it; including the minimum timescales for implementation and, extrapolating from the experience of Badenoch and Strathspey, indicating the resource implications in terms of officer time for both options.

**Signed:** Mr C Ballance  
Mr R Mackintosh

Ms K Willis

Dr M Gregson

**Decision**

The Council **NOTED** that this motion had been addressed as the amendment to Motion 2.

The meeting ended at 5.20pm.

**The Highland Council**

**Minutes of Meeting of the Isle of Skye and Raasay Committee (Comataidh an Eilein Sgitheanaich agus Ratharsair)** held remotely on **Monday, 30 June, 2025 at 10.30 am.**

**Present:**

Mr J Finlayson  
Ms C Gillies

Mr D Millar  
Mr R Stewart

**Officials in attendance:**

Mr R Campbell, Service Lead, Property and Facilities Management  
Ms S Fraser, Principal Architect, Property and Facilities Management  
Ms F Cameron, Programme Manager, Community Regeneration Fund, Place Service  
Mr D Swanson, Project Officer, Active Travel, Place Service  
Mr D Lamont, Amenity Services Manager, Place Service  
Mr M Sutherland, Roads Operations Manager, Place Service  
Mr R Bartlet, Interim Principal Traffic Officer, Place Service  
Mr A McKinnie, Strategic Lead, Waste Management, Place Service  
Ms M Ross, Principal Housing Officer, Place Service  
Mr J Murray, Senior Environmental Health Officer, Place Service  
Mr W MacKinnon, Community Development Officer (West & Mid Highland)  
Mr A MacInnes, Senior Committee Officer, Corporate Service

**Also in attendance:**

Mr H Ross, Development Officer, Staffin Community Trust

**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**

Prior to the commencement of formal business the Chair gave a warm welcome to Councillor Christine Gillies, who was a new Councillor for the Isle of Skye and Raasay area.

**1. Apologies for Absence  
Leisgeulan**

There were none.

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

The Committee **Noted** the following transparency statements:-

Item 10 – Mr D Millar  
Item 15 – Ms C Gillies

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



There was circulated Report No SR/8/25 by the Area Commander for Police Scotland.

Members were advised that the Chief Inspector, Police Scotland was unable to attend the meeting due to urgent operational matters concerning wildfires in the Grantown area. Members requested that the local Inspector be invited to attend a future Ward Business Meeting to present the performance report from a local perspective and noted that the next performance report would be submitted to the Area Committee at its meeting in December, 2025.

#### **4. Staffin Community Trust - Presentation** **Urras Coimhearsnachd Stafainn – Taisbeanadh**

The Development Officer, Staffin Community Trust was in attendance to give a presentation in relation to the Staffin Harbour project which was the main project the Trust was currently working on for the community. Works being carried out were highlighted and included construction of a new Harbour Facilities Building with retail space, work sheds, WCs and showers. The Trust were concentrating initially on construction of onshore facilities in order to generate revenue in order to support businesses and jobs. Revenue streams included boat lifting, vessel storage and fees for specific services and usage. The project had been broken down into phases to make it more achievable. Details were also provided on the Trust's Nurse's Cottage project which aimed to provide more accommodation in Staffin.

Issues raised in discussion included:- the demise of Organic Sea Harvest who had leased workshops in the area; the Trust would continue to work with businesses to promote job creation; income generation to support the ambitions of the Trust; the provision of more accommodation through the Nurse's project would be very much welcomed in the area; dgood partnership working the Trust had with the Council and Highlands and Islands Enterprise in order to stimulate economic growth in the area.

The Committee were impressed with the ambition and progress made by the Trust on projects in the Staffin area, and Members would continue to support the Trust where possible.

The Committee **Noted** the presentation.

#### **5. Housing Performance Report** **Aithisg Coileanaidh Taigheadais**

There was circulated Report No. SR/9/25 by the Assistant Chief Executive Place.

Following a summary of the report by the Principal Housing Officer, issues raised in discussion included:- the number of homeless applications specifically for Skye/Raasay area would be available in future reports; while it was right to support those in a homeless situation, more focus should be placed on providing housing for young people, other local applicants on the waiting list and key workers. It was noted that there was to be a review of the housing allocations policy and the timescale for this review would be advised to Members. Allocations were made to the greatest housing need.

In terms of the Council policy of acquiring properties from the private market for use as Council houses, 2 houses in Portree were highlighted as potential for acquisition for this purpose. The Council had recently approached NHS Highland to take over 2 houses for their key workers, but they declined on this occasion.

Continuing, reference was made to rent arrears being significantly lower than the same period last year. The aim should be to see a quarter by quarter reduction in rent arrears. Given the demand for housing on Skye, there was a need to ensure all the income due was received in order to continue to be able to provide affordable housing. In this respect, it was queried if there were any particular trends or factors that caused tenants to fall into rent arrears. This information would be useful in order to put in place early intervention measures, so that rent arrears did not happen. The Housing team worked hard with tenants to reduce rent arrears and to keep people in their homes. Tenants were also referred to other agencies, such as money advice for support. The Council would take court action if rent remained unpaid and thankfully there were very few evictions.

In terms of table 3 of the report 'value of current rent arrears by bands' information was sought on how much rent arrears are reducing by bands. This suggestion would be considered for inclusion in future reports.

Anti social behaviour in the Highlands was on an upwards trend and it was important for the Council to address such cases. Early intervention was key in resolving such cases and the Council worked with other public agencies to resolve incidents of anti social behaviour.

The Principal Housing Officer undertook to attend a future Ward Business meeting to discuss any other matters arising from the housing performance report.

The Committee **Noted** the information provided on housing performance in the period 1 April 2024 – 31 March, 2025.

## **6. Public Sector Co-location - Presentation**

### **Co-shuidheachadh Roinne Poblach – Taisbeanadh**

The Service Lead, Property and Facilities Management and Principal Architect were in attendance and gave a presentation in relation to the Council's Strategic Asset Management Plan and activity throughout the Highlands and a project overview and outcomes of the redevelopment of the Council's Tigh na Sgìre office in Portree to provide a public services hub.

Following the presentation, issues raised during discussion included a query regarding the space difference between the old and planned Registrar Ceremony Room given that there had been some large weddings and meetings held there. An undertaking was given to provide this information to Members. The community looked forward to this redevelopment being finalised, good progress was being made with it and it was encouraging to see a good number of agencies that would be co-located in Tigh na Sgìre. It was disappointing that Police Scotland would not be involved in this public services hub given the Police station in Portree had limited availability to the public. Information would be provided to Members on the final position with the Police on this, as they had been engaged in the early stages of the project.

It was confirmed that there would be some flexibility should other public services agencies wish to be located in Tigh na Sgìre in future. A further issue raised was in relation to whether parking could be identified for the future occupants of Tigh na Sgìre.

The Committee **Noted** the presentation.

## **7. New Schools in Broadford and Dunvegan** **Sgoiltean Ùra san Àth Leathann agus ann an Dùn Bheagain**

The Service Lead, Property & Facilities Management was in attendance to give an update report on the new schools for Broadford and Dunvegan.

In relation to the new school in Broadford, 4 tenders had been received all from main contractors who had a base in the Highlands. The design of the new school was nearing completion and once a contractor had been appointed, they would finalise the remaining work packages for the project. If the contract was awarded soon, work on site should commence later this year, with project completion in late 2026. There were still a few planning issues to be resolved and there would be meetings on these soon with Sepa, Transport planning and Environmental Health.

There was discussion regarding the Planning issues still to be resolved and it was advised that it should be possible to resolve these issues without delaying the timescale for the project programme. If there were any lessons learned from this, that would benefit future projects, these would be taken on board.

In relation to the new school in Dunvegan, Planning application matters were being progressed and it was anticipated that this process should be relatively straightforward, given that the masterplan had already been approved in principle. The design of the school was progressing and was similar to that of the new Broadford school and was based on a standard template for the design of schools across Highland as contained in the Highland Investment Plan. The access road to the school was nearing completion and was a major investment by the Council in Dunvegan. The Dunvegan school was due to be completed by the summer 2027.

In discussion, Members were pleased with progress on this project. The engagement with the community on it was also recognised. There was a problem of speeding in Dunvegan and this was a particular concern in the vicinity of the school. It was suggested that the safer routes to school team put in traffic calming measures to stop speeding in the vicinity of the new school.

The Committee **Noted** the updates provided in relation to the new schools in Broadford and Dunvegan.

## **8. Community Regeneration Funding Award** **Duais Maoineachaidh Ath-bheothachadh Coimhearsnachd**

There was circulated Report No. SR/10/25 by the Assistant Chief Executive Place, which summarised the background to the homologation of £14,291.56 Community Regeneration Funding (CRF) investment in the Broadford Toilets – Access Improvements project.

The Committee:-

- i. **Noted** the risk of external grant conditions not being met; and
- ii. **Agreed** by homologation the Council investing £14,291.56 CRF grant for access improvement works to the Broadford Toilets.

## 9. Active Travel Post Overview

### Foir-shealladh Dreuchd Siubhail Ghnìomhaich

There was circulated Report No. SR/11/25 by the Assistant Chief Executive Place which provided an overview of the aims of the 2-year fixed term Active Travel post, funded through income available to the Committee.

Following a summary of the report by the Project Officer, Active Travel, issues raised in discussion included the Portree active travel masterplan and specifically junction improvements from Wentworth Street, Bank Street to Portree Harbour, with the suggestion that a yellow box junction be installed there; traffic issues on Home Farm road; the new link road would ease pressure on Bosville terrace road; the lack of pedestrian crossings in Portree and what could be done to improve traffic movement around Somerled Square.

Continuing, active travel projects would require liaison with the roads team to make the best use of resources and efforts should continue to obtain as much external funding for active travel projects as possible. In particular, if funding was sought from Transport Scotland, they would look for match funding from the Council to help unlock this funding. Timescales for receipt of funding from Transport Scotland would be shared with Members once information was available.

In terms of the capital allocation funding for active travel, there was a need to look at pragmatic, low cost interventions. However in terms of the more expensive elements of the proposed active travel programme, it was felt the community wanted to see more money spent on roads. Therefore a view was expressed that the £100k allocated for active travel should be put to roads maintenance. However, it was generally felt that there was an active travel programme with money allocated to it and this should continue. In addition, the Committee should look at its disaggregated budget and other income generation in the area to support additional funding for road maintenance.

The Committee:-

- i. **Noted** the overview and aims of the post;
- ii. **Noted** the budget which has been allocated to support Active Travel projects on Isle of Skye and Raasay;
- iii. **Agreed** the proposed Programme of Work for 2025/26; and
- iv. **Agreed** to support efforts to secure additional funding for delivery of Active Travel projects on Skye & Raasay.

## 10. Uig Public Conveniences

### Goireasan Poblach Ùige

**Transparency Statement – Mr D Millar declared a transparency statement in relation to this item as he had a family member who works with the Council.**

**However, having applied the objective test he did not consider that he had an interest to declare.**

There was circulated Report No. SR/12/25 by the Assistant Chief Executive Place, which proposed that the Uig public conveniences be closed on 31 August 2025, following the full commissioning of the new facilities at the ferry terminal. The new terminal included publicly accessible toilets which will be maintained to a high standard and will be open during all ferry operating hours.

It was highlighted that the local Development Trust were interested in acquiring the Uig public convenience and the old Calmac building. There was discussion regarding the new ferry terminal public conveniences opening times and the need to maximise the opening hours. It was advised that discussions with Calmac regarding opening times were ongoing. Members of the Committee were strongly supportive of extending the new ferry terminal public conveniences opening hours.

The Committee:-

- i. **Agreed** closure of the Uig Public Conveniences from 31 August 2025; and
- ii. **Agreed** formal disposal of the asset, to allow the Uig public convenience be marketed for sale or made available for asset transfer.

*At this point the meeting was adjourned for a comfort break and the meeting resumed at 12.35 p.m.*

## **11. Roads Maintenance Update**

### **Cunntas às Ùr mu Chàradh Rathaidean**

There was circulated Report No. SR/13/25 by the Assistant Chief Executive Place, which provided an update on the Area Roads Capital Programme 2024/25, 2025/26 Programme and additional works programmed for the remainder of the financial year.

Following commentary on the report by the Roads Operations Manager, it was advised that the appendices to the report which showed the works programme would be updated and shared with Members.

Members acknowledged the scale of work in the programme and commended the significant efforts of the road repairs team and there were many positive comments from the community regarding the works being undertaken.

Issues raised in discussion included the importance for flexibility in the roads maintenance programme in order to get more work done in a particular area; an update on the new thermal road repairs team to support pre surface dressing work; the more money that could be obtained for road maintenance the better to deliver more for communities; there were lots of roads in need of patching and examples were provided and all these works would be carried out in due course; suggested traffic calming measures in Dunvegan.

Continuing, the roads team were working at full capacity at the moment and additional staff were being brought into the area to support the team. Deterioration of road surfaces caused by water showed the importance of ditching and drainage works. There had been a significant programme of white lining carried out on Skye.

An update on staffing in the roads team was also provided and there was a great commitment in the team to undertake all the work required.

The Committee **Noted** the update report.

## **12. Parking Income**

### **Teachd-a-steach Parcaidh**

There was circulated Report No. SR/14/25 by the Assistant Chief Executive Place, which provided an update on pay and display income generated from parking in Council car parks in Skye.

Following commentary on the report by the Interim Principal Traffic Officer, issues highlighted in discussion included that income received from parking charges and retained in the local area was now substantial compared to in the past when no income was retained locally. The income received had been reinvested in projects in the local area; the local area did not receive penalty charge notice (PCN) or on street car parking income and Members were supportive of more car parking income being retained locally.

Continuing, it was queried what car parking income and PCN money was invested on maintenance of car parks, employment of Parking Enforcement Officers etc. in Skye. It was felt the current car parking income allocation model was not right for Skye and more of the money should be retained locally. In particular more Parking Enforcement Officers were required.

It was suggested that Officers bring forward options for devolving to the local area some car parking services such as parking maintenance and enforcement activities. This information would inform Members if the local area was receiving best value from the income generated through car parking charges and PCNs. Members undertook to discuss this suggestion further at a Ward Business meeting with appropriate Officers.

It was advised that the maintenance fee for parking bays went into the Councils general budget. There was no maintenance funding allocated to the Parking Enforcement team. The team did undertake minor repairs to car parks. However, car parks were an area roads asset and the roads team understandably prioritised money being spent on roads. On street car parking income and PCN income went to the running of the Parking Enforcement Service and roads related projects. An undertaking was given to provide Members with a breakdown of costs for car parking maintenance and where the money received from car parking income was spent.

The Committee **Noted:-**

- i the contents of the report; and
- ii that a breakdown of costs for car parking maintenance and where income from car parking was spent would be submitted to a Ward Business meeting.

## **13. Waste Management Service Update**

### **Cunntas às Ùr mun t-Seirbheis Rianachd Sgudail**

There was circulated Report No. SR/15/25 by the Assistant Chief Executive Place, which provided updated information on the implementation of the Recycling Improvement Funded Waste and Recycling service change project.

Following commentary on the report by the Strategic Lead, Waste Management, some of the issues raised in discussion were:- the new facility at the Portree Waste Transfer Station, which would receive, aggregate and dispatch recyclable materials to contracted processors. Members would be invited to the new facility once completed. Some views received from the public were that the new black bins were too small and not robust, however these bins were what was available on the market to purchase; opportunities for investment for street recycling bins would be looked at and public communications to get the most out of these bins.

The Committee **Noted**:-

- i. the information connected to new waste and recycling collection services; and
- ii. the progress being made on the essential waste management infrastructure project that will support service change in Skye.

#### **14. Environmental Health – Annual Report and Activity 2024/25 Slàinte Àrainneachdail – Aithisg agus Gnìomhachd Bhliadhnail 2024/25**

There was circulated Report No. SR/16/25 by the Assistant Chief Executive Place which provided an update on the Environmental Health team and an annual report on local activity during 2024/25.

Following commentary on the report by the Senior Environmental Health Officer, issues raised in discussion included – the range of services the Environmental Health team covered was recognised and the work staff in the team were undertaking was commended. A list of the Environmental Health team serving the Skye and Raasay area would be provided for Members. It was queried what the ideal staffing numbers to cover all the work of the team would be. It was advised that a restructure of the team had been approved and details were provided and there had been a significant increase in staff resources for Skye and Raasay.

An update on staffing to administer the short-term lets licensing regime was provided. Members were supportive of the Environmental Health team being adequately resourced. Short-term licensing would continue to be a priority for the team. It was not felt the new regime was putting people off short term lets and the licence would last for a 3 year period. Short term licensing did ensure properties for let were safe to do so, to protect the health and safety of the public.

Reference was made to the problem of fly tipping and abandoned vehicles and it was queried if there was anything that could be done to encourage larger landowners to address this problem in liaison with the Environmental Health team.

The Committee **Noted**:-

- i. the range and volume of work being undertaken locally by the Environmental Health team;
- ii. the Highland wide issues; and
- iii. the report format and content.

## 15. Islands (Scotland) Act 2018 Achd nan Eilean (Alba) 2018

**Transparency Statement – Ms C Gillies declared a transparency statement in relation to this item as a Director of the Isle of Raasay Development Trust and had been involved in the Carbon Neutral Islands Project. However, having applied the objective test she did not consider that she had an interest to declare.**

There was circulated Report No. SR/17/25 by the Assistant Chief Executive Corporate which provided an update on the implementation of the Islands (Scotland) Act 2018 as it related to the Highland Council area for the financial year 2024/25.

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

## 16. Ward Discretionary Budget Buidseat fo Ùghdarras Uàird

The Committee **Noted** the following Ward 10 Discretionary Fund Grant awarded since the last meeting of the Committee.

2024/25 Budget:

Rag Tag & Textiles Ltd - Flourish Garden - £740

Remembrance day wreaths - £160

Portree & Braes Community Trust - Portree Village Maintenance - £3800

Skye & Lochalsh Archive Centre - Curious Travellers Art Events - £2446.20

2025/26 Budget:

The Skye Youth Pipe Band - Scottish Week Festival - £1000

## 17. Trusts – Skye and Raasay Committee Urrasan – Comataidh an Eilein Sgitheanaich is Ratharsair

The Highland Council holds funds for a number of Trusts and Bequests. As per the Charities and Trustee Investment (Scotland) Act 2005 some of these Trusts are at risk of becoming dormant as no payments have been made for 5 years. The following list of Trusts were those at risk of dormancy in Skye and Raasay, and it was **Noted** that funds would be distributed to the community organisations named below.

| Fund name - Type             | Amount £         | Recipient Community Organisation         |
|------------------------------|------------------|--|
| HCT Skye Poor Fund (Ward 10) | <b>782.82</b>    | Skye and Lochalsh Citizens Advice Bureau |
| King George V Playing Field  | <b>230.00</b>    | Portree and Braes Community Trust        |
| MacIver Trust                | <b>334.48</b>    | Sleat Local History Society              |
| <b>Total:</b>                | <b>£1,347.30</b> |  |



**18.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 17 February, 2025 which were approved at the Highland Council meeting held on 27 March, 2025. The terms of the minute were **Noted**.

The meeting ended at 2.07 p.m.

The Highland Council

Minutes of Meeting of the **Badenoch and Strathspey Area Committee** held in **Courtroom, Grantown Courthouse, Grantown-on-Spey/Remotely** on 4 August 2025 at 10.30 am

**Present:**

Mr John Bruce  
Ms Muriel Cockburn

**Mr Russel Jones**  
Mr Bill Lobban

**In attendance:**

Mr L Hannah, Community Development Manager  
Mr A Lawrie, Principal Repairs Officer  
Mr C Irvine, Community Works Officer  
Ms A Tanner, Community Heritage Officer  
Ms P Sheldon, Senior Environmental Health Officer  
Mr R Murdoch, Environmental Health Officer  
Ms R Ross, Committee Officer

**Also in attendance:**

Mr S Walsh, Chief Executive, Highlife 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.**

**Business**

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

There were no apologies for absence.

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

There were no declarations of interest or transparency statements.

**3. Recess Powers**  
**Cumhachdan Fosaidh**

The Committee **NOTED** that the recess powers granted by the Council at its meeting on 26 June 2025 did not require to be exercised in relation to the business of the Badenoch and Strathspey Area Committee.

**In terms of Standing Order 9, the Committee AGREED to take item 8, followed by item 5, at this stage.**

**8. Housing Repairs Performance and Capital Report – 1 April 2025 to 30 June 2025**

**Aithisg Coileanaidh is Calpa Càradh Thaighean – 1 Giblean 2025 gu 30 Ògmhios 2025**

There had been circulated Report No BSAC/17/25 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Place.

During discussion the following main points were raised:-

- tenants were switching off air source heating as it was expensive to run and it was therefore queried whether more education was needed on how to use this type of heating system more efficiently;
- information was sought and provided on the ages of houses that needed replumbing and what material was used to replace thin walled copper, how many properties still had night storage heaters, and whether there were still biomass units operating successfully in properties; and
- it was queried what the process was for monitoring and dealing with damp in properties as this could be linked with respiratory health conditions.

Thereafter, the Committee **NOTED** the information provided on housing performance in the period 1 April 2025 – 30 June 2025.

**5. Winter Service Plan for 2025/26**

**Plana Seirbheis Geamhraidh airson 2025/26**

There had been circulated Report No BSAC/14/25 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Place.

During discussion, the following main points were raised:-

- it was queried whether there were any plans to put out extra communication about winter gritting routes, as had been done in the previous year, to ensure that routes were not blocked by parked cars;
- information was sought and provided on staffing levels for gritter operators, the filling of grit bins, and the parking bays on Grantown Road in Aviemore;
- it was requested that information be provided to Community Councils on the use of grit bins and the Community Resilience Scheme;
- an update on the speed limit signs of the Ruthven to Kingussie road was provided; and
- it was requested that a report on the signage on the Glentruim to Catlodge road be brought to the next meeting of the Committee.

Thereafter, the Committee:-

- i. **APPROVED** the Winter Service Plan for 2025/26; and
- ii. **AGREED** that a report on the Glentruim to Catlodge road be brought to the next meeting of the Committee in respect of public objections received.

#### 4. **Highlife Highland Services Report** **Aithisg Sheirbheisean High Life na Gàidhealtachd**

There had been circulated Report No BSAC/13/25 by the Chief Executive, High Life Highland.

During discussion the following main points were raised:-

- it was queried what was being done to work with Early Years Childcare Providers and new parents to encourage engagement in the Book Bug scheme, and if there would be an opportunity to expand the scheme to Kincaig;
- it was good to hear that year-round opening was being considered for the Highland Folk Museum;
- it was queried whether Tala nan Ros Hall was breaking even;
- on the point being raised, the Chief Executive undertook to report back to a future meeting of the Committee on what was being done to encourage engagement between Primary Schools and Libraries;
- in response to a question, it was suggested that the location of the Service Point in Grantown library had helped to increase traffic to the library, and it was queried whether locating more Service Points within libraries could be considered;
- it was requested if parking and donation revenue information for the Highland Folk Museum could be separated in the next report;
- information was sought, and provided on the music tuition service in Badenoch and Strathspey, and virtual music tuition was commended;
- the work of the new manager at the Badenoch Centre was commended;
- on the point being raised, it was clarified that a balanced view would be taken on re-wilding with a focus on biodiversity;
- information was sought and provided on accessibility and concessions for elderly and disabled people across Highlife Highland sites, and opportunities for youth engagement outside of sporting activities; and
- clarification was sought on charges for visiting the Highland Folk Museum as several internet sites had the incorrect information concerning this.

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

#### 6. **Community Regeneration Fund Applications** **Iarrtasan Maoin Ath-bheothachadh Coimhearsnachd**

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

An update on the Loch Vaa project was provided.

During discussion, the following main points were raised:-

- the collaboration between the Council, the National Park and the landowner was commended and it was suggested that this type of collaborative approach be considered for other projects;
- the additional £30,000 requested was a small amount given the scale of the project; and

- it was requested that a site visit be arranged for after a Badenoch and Strathspey ward business meeting.

Thereafter, the Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the Community Regeneration Funds currently available in Badenoch and Strathspey;
- ii. **APPROVED** the full request of CRF funding of £80,000 to deliver the full Laggantygown Cemetery Car Park/Loch Vaa Project; and
- iii. **NOTED** that a site visit for Members would be organised.

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

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

During discussion, the following main points were raised:-

- the Environmental Health team was commended for the breadth and depth of work undertaken;
- information was sought and provided on the enforcement capacity for food hygiene cases and what was being done to mitigate, and educate on, food borne infections, who to contact with a complaint about the inadequate disposal of waste-water, and the Environmental Health team's involvement in Short-term Let Licensing;
- in response to a question, it was clarified that members of the public should contact the environmental health team to report abandoned cars in residential areas;
- on the point being raised, the difficulty of recruiting Environmental Health Officers was explained and it was clarified that the service was currently working to upskill current team members; and
- a Member's workshop on the role and scope of the Environmental Health team was requested.

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

- i. variety and volume of work undertaken locally by the Environmental Health team;
- ii. Highland wide issues; and
- iii. report format and content.

**9. Badenoch and Strathspey Area Funds use 2024/25**  
**Cleachdadh Mhaoinean Sgìre Bhàideanach is Shrath Spè**

There has been circulated Report No BSAC/18/25 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Place.

During discussion the following main points were raised:-

- attention was drawn to the ward discretionary fund award for Newtonmore Camanachd Club which had been originally allocated for safety padding but was later authorised for use of fencing;

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- in response to a suggestion from Members, The Community Development Manager undertook to work with the Corporate Communications team to advertise which projects had been supported from ward funds;
- it was suggested that pictures of the projects supported by ward funds be requested; and
- it was requested that this report be presented to the committee annually.

The Committee **NOTED** and scrutinise the use of Badenoch and Strathspey Ward funding allocations for financial years 2023/24 and 2024/25.

### 10. Minutes Geàrr-chunntas

There had been circulated and **NOTED** Minutes of Meeting of the Badenoch and Strathspey Area Committee held on 28 April 2025 which were approved by the Council on 15 May 2025 and the Special Meeting of the Badenoch and Strathspey Area Committee held on 27 May 2025 which were approved by the Council on 26 June 2025.

The meeting concluded at 12.15pm.

## The Highland Council

Minutes of Meeting of the **Caithness Committee** held **remotely** on Monday, 4 August 2025 at 10.00 am

### **Present:**

Mr R Bremner  
Mr R Gunn  
Mr A Jarvie  
Mr S Mackie

Ms J McEwan  
Mr M Reiss  
Mr K Rosie

### **In attendance:**

Mr P Tomalin, Community Development Manager  
Ms J Sutherland, Roads Operations Manager  
Mr A Hunter, Service Lead (Transport and Logistics)  
Mr M Crowe, Project Officer - Community Regeneration  
Ms I MacMillan, Programme Manager  
Mr G Ralph, Repairs Manager  
Ms F MacBain, Senior Committee Officer

### **Also in attendance:**

Station Commander G Cringles, Scottish Fire & Rescue Service

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

**Mr A Jarvie in the Chair**

### **Business**

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

There was an apology for absence from Mr W Mackay.

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

There were no declarations of interest/transparency statements.

#### **3. Recess Powers Cumhachdan Fosaidh**

The Committee **NOTED** that the recess powers granted by the Council at its meeting on 26 June 2025 had not been exercised in relation to the business of the Caithness Committee.

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

There had been circulated Report No CC/17/25 by the Local Senior Officer for Highland.

In discussion, Members raised the following main points:-

- an update was sought and provided on recent wildfires in the area, specifically the significant incident near Thurso and the Service was commended on its response. Information was also provided on the challenges in identifying the causes of wildfires and the work being undertaken by the Service to build partnerships in terms of prevention;
- the Service be commended on the excellent work being undertaken in schools in the area and on its positive impacts and it was hoped this initiative would continue going forward; and
- in response to a query, clarification was provided on the seasonal fluctuations in the statistics for deliberate fires and it was confirmed more detail would be provided to Members on trends with a view to prevention.

Thereafter, Members raised a number of issues in relation to battery energy storage systems (BESS) as follows:-

- an update was sought and provided on the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service's latest guidance for BESS planning applications and on the newly formed working group on this issue;
- information was sought and provided on the chemicals present in the smoke and fumes generated by a BESS fire and confirmation that in terms of the guidance the Service asked for two separate access routes on sites;
- details were sought and provided on how the Service would combat an actual BESS fire at a Caithness site;
- the need to provide assurance to the public on the design features built into BESS in relation to fire suppression systems and the requirements for manufacturers/builders of sites to comply with the Service's and partner emergency response plans and operational intelligence processes and documentation;
- the relationship between the industry, legislators and planners in terms of the design and development of BESS sites and the importance of the Service being recognised as a statutory consultee in respect of planning applications;
- in response to a query, details were provided on the Service, Police Scotland and Highland Council's partnership response to any potential issues of public safety arising from a BESS fire to nearby residents, businesses and farm animals;
- concern the statistics showed the majority of BESS fires occurred during construction and the first year of operation and therefore the importance of fire mitigation measures being in place prior to the construction phase; and
- the potential to calculate and identify a minimum safe distance for the location of BESS sites from other buildings and infrastructure.

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

## 5. **Winter Service Plan for 2025/26** **Plana Seirbheis a' Gheamhraidh airson 2025/26**

There had been circulated Report No CC/18/25 by the Local Senior Officer for Highland.

In discussion, Members raised the following main points:-



- an explanation was sought and provided on what determined the resource in terms of the Winter Service Plan for 2025/26, this being a combination of the revenue budget allocation, hierarchy of road network, winter service policy and level of service to be provided;
- an explanation was sought and provided that the policy which determined the replacement of the HGV fleet was constantly under review with leasing options being considered;
- an update was sought on the work being undertaken with the aim of ensuring a full complement of winter fleet outwith spares was available to ensure the Winter Service Plan for Caithness was delivered. it was confirmed an update would be provided to Members in the run up to the winter season on fleet availability and the procurement of new vehicles;
- in response to a query, it was confirmed the potential use of dedicated snow/ice tyres on the winter gritting fleet and associated costs would be considered in conjunction with the Roads Service and an update provided to Members;
- further clarity was sought and provided on the Service's approach to the deployment of footpath tractors in the area;
- the information provided on the Winter Resilience scheme for communities and provision of salt/grit bins was helpful; and
- the assistance the Service provided to the Trunk Roads Authority as the responsible authority to deal with fallen trees on the A9 in storm conditions.

The Committee **APPROVED** the Winter Service Plan for 2025/26.

## 6. Community Regeneration Fund Assessment of Applications Measadh Iarrtasan Maoin Ath-nuadhachadh Coimhearsnachd

There had been circulated Report No CC/19/25 by the Assistant Chief Executive - Place.

In discussion, Members noted that the following projects, which had been invited to make an application for funding by Members, had asked for more time to develop their applications. The applications would be brought to a future meeting once they had been submitted and assessed as eligible:-

- Caithness KLICS – Wick Base Building Extension;
- John O'Groats Development Trust – Destination Playpark Project; and
- The Watten Shop Ltd – Shop Refurbishment.

Following discussion, the Committee **AGREED** the application presented for a funding award from the Community Regeneration Fund as follows:

| Organisation            | Project Title                          | Grant Approved |
|-------------------------|--|----------------|
| Halkirk Village Council | Church Lane, Halkirk, Playpark Upgrade | £43,000        |

**7. External Funding for Energy Efficiency Projects**  
**Maoineachadh on Taobh A-muigh airson Pròiseactan Èifeachdas Lùtha**

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

The Committee:-

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

**8. Wick Common Good Fund – Q4 2024/25 and Q1 2025/26 Monitoring**  
**Maoin Math Coitcheann Inbhir Ùige – Sgrùdadh Ràithe 4 2024/25 agus Ràithe 1 2025/26**

There had been circulated Report No CC/21/25 by the Chief Officer Community and Housing and Chief Officer Corporate Finance.

The Committee **NOTED** the Quarter 4 24/25 and Quarter 1 25/26 monitoring statements for the Wick Common Good Fund.

**9. Thurso Common Good Fund - Q1 2025/26 Monitoring**  
**Maoin Math Coitcheann Inbhir Theòrsa – Sgrùdadh Ràithe 1 2025/26**

There had been circulated Report No CC/22/25 by the Chief Officer Community and Housing and Chief Officer Corporate Finance.

The Committee **NOTED** the Quarter 1 25/26 monitoring statement for the Thurso Common Good Fund

**10. Housing Repairs Performance Report – 1 April 2025 to 30 June 2025**  
**Aithisg Coileanaidh Càraidhean Taigheadais– 1 Giblean 2025 gu 30 Ògmhios 2025**

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

In discussion, it was confirmed that officers would provide a breakdown on how many of the bathroom replacements detailed in the report had been carried out to sheltered properties. It was explained there was scope under the aids and adaptations budget to carry out adaptations to such properties, subject to medical/occupational therapy assessment.

The Committee **NOTED** the information provided on housing performance in the period 1 April 2025 – 30 June 2025.

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

**Thurso and Northwest Caithness Ward Discretionary Budget applications approved**

The Committee **NOTED** that the following Thurso and Northwest Caithness Ward Discretionary Budget applications had been approved for the period 1st April 2025 – 15th July 2025:

- Caithness Youth Pipe Band – Edinburgh Tartan Parade - £1000.00
- Caithness Chamber of Commerce – Caithness Transport Forum - £500.00
- Home Start Caithness – Summer Day Trip for Families in Need - £960.00
- Highlife Highland – Active Schools Coaching & Equipment - £1,500.00
- Thurso Football Academy – Professional Football Coaching Sessions - £750

## **Wick and East Caithness Ward Discretionary Budget applications approved**

The Committee **NOTED** that the following Wick and East Caithness Ward Discretionary Budget applications had been approved for the period 1st April 2025 – 15th July 2025:

- Caithness Youth Pipe Band – Edinburgh Tartan Parade - £1000.00
- Caithness Chamber of Commerce – Caithness Transport Forum - £500.00
- Newton Park Parent Council – Newton Park Breakfast Club - £242.98
- Highland Council – Step Forward Wick Youth Summer London Visit - £1,500.00
- Thrumster Parent Council – ELC Container - £1,400.00
- Royal Burgh of Wick Community Council – Town Works - £761.72

## **12. Minutes Geàrr-chunntas**

There had been circulated and **NOTED** Minutes of the Caithness Committee held on 28 April 2025 which were approved by the Council on 15 May 2025.

The meeting concluded at 11.50pm

**The Highland Council**

Minutes of Meeting of the **Wester Ross, Strathpeffer and Lochalsh Committee**  
held remotely on 4 August 2025 at 11am.

**Present:**

Dr C Birt

Ms L Kraft

Mrs I Campbell

Mr P Logue

**In attendance:**

Mr E Marsh, Repairs Manager

Mr J Mackay, Amenity Services Manager

Mr J MacLean, Bereavement Services Project Manager

Ms L Bauermeister, Community Development Manager

Mr W MacKinnon, Community Development Manager

Mr B Cumming, Senior Environmental Health Officer

Mr M Crowe, Project Officer - Community Regeneration

Ms R Robertson, Project Co-ordinator

Mr A Bone, Roads Officer

Mrs O Marsh, Committee Officer

**Also in attendance:**

Chief Inspector Mr C Smith, Police Scotland (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.**

**Due to power cuts during the meeting, Mrs I Campbell took the Chair for Items 1–5, with Ms L Kraft assuming the Co-Chair for Items 5–12.**

**Business**

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

There were no apologies for absence.

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

There were no declarations of interest or transparency statements.

**3. Recess Powers**  
**Cumhachdan Fosaidh**

The Committee **NOTED** that the recess powers granted by the Council at its meeting on 26 June 2025 had not been exercised in relation to the business of the Wester Ross, Strathpeffer and Lochalsh Committee.

**4. Police – Area Performance Report**  
**Poilis – Geàrr-chunntas Coileanaidh Sgìreil**

There had been circulated Report No WRSL/13/25 by the Chief Inspector - Area Commander.

During discussion, the following main points were raised:-

- Members raised concerns about the growing prevalence of fraud and the challenges in tackling crimes committed from outside the UK. It was recognised that post-Brexit, access to EU crime databases had been restricted. Officers confirmed that coordination was ongoing at national and international levels, with increasing focus on cybercrime and prevention;
- Members sought clarification on whether drink driving rates were higher in the North Highland area. Officers advised that detections were higher, likely due to rurality and limited transport options;
- Members enquired about road traffic accidents, particularly involving drivers from outside the UK and the North Coast 500 (NC500). It was confirmed that both tourists and locals contributed to speeding offences. Regarding international drivers, it was acknowledged that accidents had occurred due to driving on the wrong side of the road, particularly at junctions. Officers undertook to provide further data on this and confirmed that proactive work is ongoing;
- concern was expressed about the geographical coverage of the report, with Members highlighting that Lochalsh appeared underrepresented. It was explained that the police reporting boundaries did not align precisely with Council ward boundaries. It was accepted that this issue could be discussed further outside the meeting and that relevant data for Lochalsh could be provided; and
- reference was made to a serious incident in Kyle two years previously, with Members querying its absence. Officers clarified that the case was outside the current reporting year but was included in longer-term averages.

The Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the progress made against the objectives set within the Highland Local Policing Plan 2023-2026 Year 1, attached as Annex A to the report, for the period covering 01 April 2024 – 31 March 2025; and
- ii. **AGREED** to provide further data on road traffic accidents involving drivers from outside the UK.

## 5. **Environmental Health Annual Report and Activity 2024/25** **Slàinte Àrainneachdail – Aithisg Bhliadhnaidh & Gnìomhachd 2024/25**

There had been circulated Report No WRSL/14/25 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Place.

The Senior Environmental Health Officer gave a presentation providing information on the scope of environmental health duties, including reactive service requests, proactive inspections and enforcement activity. Key issues in Ward 5 included short-term let licensing, private water supply sampling, export health certification, food premises registration and abandoned vehicles.

During discussion, the following main points were raised:-

- Members queried the volume of short-term let licensing cases and whether each property was physically inspected. It was confirmed that inspections were carried out, but clarification would be provided on whether all properties were visited or assessed by risk rating;
- concerns were raised regarding faulty septic tanks, particularly in rural areas. It was confirmed that environmental health might become involved where statutory nuisance was reported and it was indicated that the matter would be investigated to determine whether septic tank conditions formed part of short-term let assessments;
- Members highlighted ongoing issues with septic tanks discharging into the sea in Dornie. It was confirmed that environmental health had a role in such cases and it was acknowledged that the matter would be looked into;
- clarification was sought on the inspection backlog and automatic approvals for short-term let applications. Members recognised the pressure on the Licensing Committee and the importance of timely input from Environmental Health;
- Members praised the department's swift response to fly tipping and asked for clarification on responsibilities. It was confirmed that both Environmental Health and waste services were involved, with Environmental Health able to issue fixed penalty notices where evidence was available;
- concerns were raised about antisocial behaviour at overnight campervan sites, including public urination. It was suggested this might fall under Police Scotland's remit, though Environmental Health could act where fly tipping or waste disposal was involved;
- Members raised the issue of long-term empty hotels in Strathpeffer and Garve. In this regard, it was indicated that the matter would be explored further in liaison with relevant colleagues;
- concerns were expressed regarding Mackay's Hotel in Strathpeffer, particularly in relation to its licensing status and the standard of accommodation being offered; and
- mention was made of a noisy incinerator in Strathpeffer. It was confirmed that complaints had reduced, and the matter would be checked to confirm the current status.

The Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the range and volume of work being undertaken locally by the
- ii. Environmental Health team;
- iii. **NOTED** the Highland wide issues;
- iv. **NOTED** the report format and content;
- v. **AGREED** that confirmation be sought whether all short-term let properties were physically inspected; and
- vi. **AGREED** to review the role of Environmental Health in assessing septic tanks.

## 6. **Community Regeneration Fund Assessment of Applications** **Measadh Iarrtasan Maoin Ath-nuadhachadh Coimhearsnachd**

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

Members considered five applications totalling £78,775.71, with £555,393.80 available in area funds. If approved, £476,618.09 would remain.

Projects included Clachan Lochbroom Heritage Trust, Strathpeffer Residents' Association, Dornie Moorings Associations and Gairloch and Loch Ewe Action Forum.

It was indicated that two projects had requested additional time to develop their applications for the November Committee: Wester Ross Radio and Kyle & Lochalsh Community Trust.

During discussion, Members expressed general support for all five applications. It was acknowledged that while some projects might appear lower priority, the availability of funds allowed for their approval. Specific reference was made to the value of clean energy initiatives and the positive impact of cycling infrastructure in Strathpeffer. Clarification was also sought regarding a separate bid from Westview for land purchase for housing. It was confirmed that the application had been submitted to the Scottish Land Fund and that further discussion would take place at the next area business meeting due to a miscommunication in the submission process.

Thereafter the Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the CRF applications presented; and
- ii. **APPROVED** the five grant applications as detailed in the report.

## 7. **Bereavement Services- Project Updates** **Seirbheisean Caoidh – Cunntasan às Ùr mun Phròiseact**

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

During discussion, the following main points were raised:-

- it was confirmed that there were no major problems in relation to burial ground provision at present;
- concern was expressed regarding access to land for burial ground extensions, with reference made to the significant work required to prepare sites, such as the recent extension at Fodderty Cemetery;
- it was highlighted that the most frequent issues raised by constituents related to maintenance, including grass cutting and general upkeep, rather than lair availability;
- positive feedback had been received regarding the standard of maintenance at certain sites, with specific reference to the graveyard adjacent to the Tarbat Discovery Centre, which was described as difficult terrain but well maintained; and
- concerns were raised regarding Clachan Church in Lochbroom, where the graveyard was under Council ownership but the church was managed by the community. The community had expressed interest in developing an accessible path around the site, and it was confirmed that the Burial Grounds Team would engage with the group to explore options.

The Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** current capacities and progress of burial ground extensions in the Wester Ross, Strathpeffer and Lochalsh area;
- ii. **NOTED** challenges with identifying and developing suitable land for burial ground development;
- iii. **AGREED** that the Burial Grounds Team would liaise with the Clachan Church community group regarding the proposed accessibility improvements.

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

There had been circulated Report No WRSL/17/25 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Place.

During discussion, the following main points were raised:-

- it was acknowledged that Balmacara was to receive a slightly larger installation than Applecross and Members understood that this was based on a complex assessment of play value, site suitability and available space;
- it was recognised that Applecross had a smaller site, which limited the scope of equipment that could be installed;
- Members accepted that equal distribution of funding was not always feasible and welcomed the opportunity for communities to seek additional funding to enhance their local provision;
- the relocation of the play park in Contin was warmly welcomed, with Members highlighting the improved accessibility and suitability of the new site, as well as the potential for future expansion;
- it was confirmed that a contingency had been retained to allow for the purchase of additional equipment, such as a rope swing, subject to installation by Council staff;
- Members expressed enthusiasm for the project and suggested that a springtime tour of the refurbished play parks be arranged to view and test the new equipment;
- the importance of securing contractor availability was emphasised and it was anticipated that installation would be completed by the turn of the year, subject to supply chain constraints.

Thereafter, the Committee **AGREED** £150,182.70 to be allocated to the agreed projects as outlined in section 6.4 of the report.

## 9. **Winter Service Plan for 2025/26** **Plana Seirbheis a' Gheamhraidh airson 2025/26**

There had been circulated Report No WRSL/18/25 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Place.

During discussion, the following main points were raised:-

- the 2025/26 Winter Service Plan remained unchanged from the previous year;



- reference was made to issues experienced in Wester Ross during the previous winter and it was hoped that these had now been resolved;
- Members emphasised the importance of ensuring the plan was widely shared with communities, particularly to clarify priority routes and manage expectations during periods of winter pressure;
- it was suggested that Community Councils be supported to disseminate the plan locally and that residents be encouraged to consult the Highland Council website for details of road classifications and priorities;
- Members referred to the visibility of funded and unfunded projects within the Capital Work spreadsheet and expressed interest in revisiting the capital plan in more detail at a future meeting with relevant officers; and
- concern was expressed regarding delays in reviewing speed limits in areas such as Poolewe and Shieldaig and it was acknowledged that this fell under technical functions rather than road maintenance, with resource constraints contributing to the backlog.

The Committee **APPROVED** the Winter Service Plan for 2025/26.

**10. Housing Repairs and Capital Report - 1 April 2025 to 30 June 2025**  
**Aithisg Coileanaidh Càraidhean Taigheadais– 1 Giblean 2025 gu 30 Ògmhios 2025**

There had been circulated Report No WRSL/19/25 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Place.

Members welcomed the summary of the report. Positive feedback was expressed regarding the department's communication and engagement, with reference made to previous interactions which had been constructive and well received. It was further observed that the work being undertaken in collaboration with climate change initiatives was becoming increasingly visible within local communities, particularly in relation to housing improvements and this was considered encouraging.

The Committee **NOTED** the information provided on housing performance in the period 1 April 2025 – 30 June 2025.

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

The Committee **NOTED** that the following Wester Ross, Strathpeffer and Lochalsh Ward Discretionary Fund applications had been approved since 28 April 2025:-

- An Talla Solais - Dolphin Arts Project - £972
- Wester Loch Ewe Community Council - Football/Playing field & purchase equipment - £615.78

**12. Minutes**  
**Geàrr-chunntas**

The Committee **NOTED** the Minutes of the Meeting of the Wester Ross, Strathpeffer and Lochalsh Committee held on 28 April 2025, which were approved by the Council on 15 May 2025.

The meeting concluded at 1pm.

**The Highland Council**

Minutes of Meeting of the **Black Isle and Easter Ross Area Committee** held remotely on Monday 11 August 2025, at 10.00 am.

**Present:**

Sinclair Coghill  
Tamala Collier  
Richard Cross  
Laura Dundas

John Edmondson  
Lyndsey Johnston  
Morven-May MacCallum  
Maureen Ross

**Participating Officials:**

Mr P Tomalin, Senior Community Development Manager  
Ms L Bauermeister, Community Development Manager  
Mr I Moncrieff, Roads Operations Manager  
Mr J MacKay, Amenity Services Manager  
Mr E Marsh, Housing Repairs Manager (North)  
Ms S Blazquez, Principal Repairs Officer (North)  
Mr B Cumming, Senior Environmental Health Officer  
Mr S Hunter, Road Safety Officer  
Ms F MacBain, Senior Committee Officer

**Also in Attendance:**

Chief Inspector Calum Smith - Area Commander (North Highland Area Command)

**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**

**Preliminaries**

The Chair welcomed Mr Richard Cross to his first meeting since being elected and led several tributes to Mr Derek Loudon for his patience, kindness and hard work during his time on the Committee.

**1. Apologies for Absence  
Leisgeulan**

Apologies were intimated on behalf of Ms Sarah Atkin.

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

There were none.

**3. Recess Powers  
Cumhachdan Fosaìdh**

The Committee **NOTED** that the Recess Powers granted by the Council at its meeting on 26 June 2025 had not been exercised in relation to the business of the Committee.

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

There was circulated Report No BIER/16/25 by the Area Commander (North Highland Area Command).

During discussion, information was sought and provided on the following issues:

- the protocols used for recording and investigating missing persons, including vulnerable adults and children. Information was also provided on joint working in this regard with other organisations, such as the Council and third sector, and the resourcing challenges around repeat missing people;
- clarification on the increases in reported sexual assaults, the extent to which they were historical, and on improved support being provided to victims. In response to a question on how the Council could assist the Police with this type of crime, the protection of funding for third sector organisations which supported victims was suggested;
- increased police attention for detecting vehicles without insurance or a valid MOT, noting that a police presence in local neighborhoods would be beneficial in this regard. Members were urged to contact the police with any specific concerns;
- joint working with the Council and DVLA with regard to abandoned vehicles;
- the use of YTD (Year to Date) in the financial figures;
- the reporting of detection rates where the crime and recorded detection took place in different accounting periods;
- County Lines activity in Scotland;
- the policing of 20mph and 30mph zones; and
- the cost to the Council of repairing damaged infrastructure following road traffic accidents and the suggestion that the driver's insurance should cover this. Attention was drawn to the crime of leaving the scene of an accident.

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 2024 – 31 March 2025.

#### 5. **Housing Repairs Performance Report – 1 April 2025 to 30 June 2025** **Aithisg Choileanaidh Càraidhean Taigheadais – 1 Giblean 2025 gu 30 Ògmhios 2025**

There was circulated Report No. BIER/17/25 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Place.

During discussion, the following issues were considered:

- some of the reported increases in performance, including for emergency repairs and void re-lets, were the result of administrative errors made previously (for example an emergency repair being undertaken out of hours,

but recorded the following day), but which could not be amended retrospectively;

- in relation to work being undertaken to expedite void re-lets, and to reduce reliance on sub-contractors, Mr Edmondson requested that information on the cost-benefits of this be provided to him outwith the meeting;
- it was disappointing that a number of homes had been returned in a state that required extensive work to bring them back to an acceptable standard. Regular inspections of rented homes to minimise this in future were suggested, and a summary was provided of joint working between the Housing officers and Housing maintenance and repairs to share information on properties; and
- the benefits of loft insulation were summarised, and assurance provided that properties were up to date, and that this was checked prior to any re-let.

Members **NOTED** the information provided on housing repairs performance in the period 1 April 2025 – 30 June 2025 and **AGREED** to provide Mr Edmondson with information on the cost versus benefits of reducing the Council's reliance on sub-contractors, and undertaking more in-house housing repairs work.

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

There was circulated Report No. BIER/18/25 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Place.

A brief presentation was provided covering environmental health duties, operational areas, activities 2024-25, reactive work, pro-active / programmed work, local matters, and Highland wide matters.

During discussion, the following issues were raised:

- the reported pressures on the environmental health profession and challenges in workforce planning were noted;
- concern was expressed in relation to possible noise and salt spray issues caused by Port of Cromarty jack-up rigs, and this would be followed up outwith the meeting;
- information was sought and provided on the process for tackling out of control dogs, noting that if a person was bitten, it became a police matter;
- in relation to abandoned boats, establishing ownership could be a challenge, and waste disposal legislation could be applicable depending on the extent of dilapidation. Specific cases could be raised directly with Environmental Health outwith the meeting;
- concern was expressed about reports of black fungus in some Council-owned properties and it was clarified that this would be dealt with in the first instance by Housing Services. The Senior Environmental Health Officer offered to follow this up with Ms T Collier outwith the meeting;
- in relation to Members' concerns about the prevalence rats in certain areas, Environmental Health did not have a pest control function but could offer advice to affected and at risk property owners; and
- issues around domestic and commercial private water supplied were highlighted, and it was explained that commercial properties were inspected but not private properties. Recent changes to short term let licensing were

highlighting new commercial private water supplies, and the geographic size of the area was highlighted.

The Committee **NOTED** the:

- i. **NOTED** the range and volume of work being undertaken locally by the environmental health team;
- ii. **NOTED** the Highland wide issues;
- iii. **NOTED** the report format and content;
- iv. **AGREED** to contact Mr R Cross about reported noise and salt spray from Port of Cromarty jack-up rigs; and
- v. **AGREED** to contact Ms T Collier about reported black mould in some Council-owned properties.

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

There was circulated Report No. BIER/19/25 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Place.

During discussion, it was clarified that play park development was undertaken on a case by case basis, given the many variables to be considered. Further issues relating to the Ward 6 budget would be considered in the first instance at the Ward Business Meeting.

The Committee **AGREED** £182,294 be allocated to the agreed projects as outlined in sections 6.5 and 6.6.

**8. Winter Service Plan 2025/26  
Plana Seirbheis a' Gheamhraidh 2025/26**

There is circulated Report No. BIER/20/25 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Place.

During discussion, it was requested that detail about the Struie Road (B9176) being the responsibility of Sutherland Area Committee be included in future reports, noting that the road crossed Area boundaries, and that the route map, once it was completed, be circulated to Members. In relation to resources to aid with community resilience, a single point of contact for a community would be helpful and should be communicated to the Roads Operations Manager.

The Committee:

- i. **APPROVED** the Winter Service Plan for 2025/26;
- ii. **AGREED** the winter maintenance route map be circulated to Members upon its finalisation; and
- iii. **AGREED** the winter service plan 2026/27 contain reference to responsibility for the B9176 / Struie Road.

**9. B817 Saltburn 30mph Speed Limit Order Report  
Aithisg air Òrdugh Teorainn Luas 30msu B817 Saltburn**

There was circulated Report No. BIER/21/25 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Place.

During discussion, the 30mph speed limit was welcomed and information was sought and provided on the next steps to be implemented, which included 30mph roundels and speed count surveys. It was pointed out that the cars parked on the road should not be there but did serve to slow traffic. Members requested detail on further speed restrictions, as detailed below.

The Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the background to the proposed 30mph speed limit order for Saltburn, in particular the collision history, speed data and the representations received;
- ii. **APPROVED** the making of the Traffic Regulation Order (TRO) within Appendix 2,
- iii. **NOTED** the intention to carry out after speed counts to determine the effectiveness of the reduced speed limit;
- iv. **AGREED** to provide Members with information on progress to seek a 40mph speed restriction through Barbaraville; and
- v. **AGREED** to provide Members with a timeline for implementation of 30mph signage and road markings on the road to Arabella

#### 10. Tain Common Good Asset Register Review Ath-sgrùdadh Clàr So-mhaoin Math Coitcheann Bhaile Dhubhthaich

There was circulated Report No. BIER/22/25 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Corporate and the Assistant Chief Executive - Place.

During discussion, clarification was sought on whether work being undertaken on properties due to be transferred to the Common Good Fund would remain in the Council budget. This was being discussed between Services prior to transfer and Members would be updated at their Ward Business Meetings.

The Committee:

- i. **NOTED** the investigations undertaken to review the Tain Common Good Asset Register;
- ii. **AGREED to CONFIRM** the reclassification of the assets noted in 7.2 – 7.5;
- iii. **NOTED** the consequent impact on the financial position for the General Fund and Tain Common Good Fund; and
- iv. **AGREED** to update Members at a future Ward Business Meeting on discussion taking place between Services on work the Council was undertaking to properties due to be transferred.

#### 11. Common Good Funds Maoin Maith Choitchinn

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

There was circulated Report No BIER/23/25 by the Assistant Chief Executive - Place.

The Committee **NOTED** the position of Cromarty Common Good Fund as shown in the end of year statement for 2024/25 Quarter 4 and 2025/26 Quarter 1 Monitoring Statements.

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

There was circulated Report No BIER/24/25 by the Chief Officer Housing & Communities and the Chief Officer Corporate Finance.

The Committee **NOTED** the position of Fortrose and Rosemarkie Common Good Fund as shown in the 2024/25 Quarter 4 and 2025/26 Quarter 1 Monitoring Statements.

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

There is circulated Report No BIER/25/25 by the Chief Officer Community and Housing, and the Chief Officer Corporate Finance.

In relation to the efforts being made to ensure the Bouchardon Bust remained in the UK after its sale, a ministerial decision on this was imminent. The process that would ensue should the Bust be found to be of national significance was explained.

Members **NOTED** the Quarter 4 2024/25 and Quarter 1 2025/26 monitoring statements for the Invergordon Common Good Fund.

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

There was circulated Report No BIER/26/25 by the Chief Officer Community and Housing, and the Chief Officer Corporate Finance.

It was queried whether the area planned for solar arrays at Blarliath would remain with the Common Good Fund, and this would be investigated outwith the meeting.

Members **NOTED** the Quarter 4 2024/25 and Quarter 1 2025/26 monitoring statements for the Tain Common Good Fund and **AGREED** to confirm whether the area identified for possible solar arrays at Blarliath would remain in the Common Good fund following the assert review..

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

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



**Cromarty Firth Ward Discretionary Budget applications approved 1<sup>st</sup> April 2025 – 31<sup>st</sup> July 2025**

|  |           |
|--|-----------|
| Alness Gala & Events – The Alness Gala                           | £2,000.00 |
| Saltburn & Westwood Community Council – Annual Community Flowers | £700.00   |
| Invergordon Lunch Club – Invergordon Lunch Club                  | £400.00   |
| Highland Action for Little Ones – Bright Futures                 | £1,000.00 |

**Tain and Easter Ross Ward Discretionary Budget applications approved 1<sup>st</sup> April 2025 – 31<sup>st</sup> July 2025**

|  |           |
|--|-----------|
| Tain YMCA – Assistance for Running Costs                 | £1,500.00 |
| Tain Task Force – Tain Environmental Improvements Worker | £3,000.00 |
| Seaboard Memorial Hall – Village Care Assistance Scheme  | £3,500.00 |
| Tain Gala Association – Talk Car Rally & Gala            | £2,000.00 |

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**Black Isle Ward Discretionary Budget applications approved 1<sup>st</sup> April 2025 – 31<sup>st</sup> July 2025**

|   |         |
|---|---------|
| Cromarty & District Community Council - Reed Loop Path Maintenance      | £700.00 |
| Go Flourish - Community Open Days                                       | £773.00 |
| Fortrose Academy - Young Enterprise Team Scottish Finals                | £823.00 |
| Black Isle Cares - Fortrose Community Larder                            | £400.00 |
| Black Isle Cares - Meals at Home service                                | £300.00 |
| Cromarty & District Community Council - Tidy up Townland                | £580.00 |
| Knockbain Community Council - North Kessock Community Youth Art Project | £950.00 |

**13. Minutes  
Geàrr-chunntas**

There was circulated and **NOTED** minutes of the meeting of the Black Isle and Easter Ross Area Committee held on 12 May 2025, which had been approved by the Council on 26 June 2025.

In response to a question, the process for providing information and actions requested by Members during meetings was explained.

The meeting ended at 12.40pm.

**The Highland Council**

Minutes of Meeting of the **Lochaber Committee** held in the Charles Kennedy Building, Fort William, and remotely on **Monday, 11 August 2025 at 10.30 a.m.**

**Present:**

Mr A Baxter  
Mr J C Grafton  
Ms S Fanet

Mr T MacLennan  
Ms L Saggars  
Ms K Willis

**Officials in Attendance:**

Ms K MacLeod, Roads Operations Manager – Lochaber, Place Service  
Mr R Porteous, Operations Manager, Corran Ferry, Place Service  
Mr M Bain, Project Manager (Corran Ferry), Place Service  
Mr A Maciver, Principal Engineer, Place Service  
Mr A Lawrie, Principal Repairs Officer, Place Service  
Ms D Ferguson, Senior Community Development Manager  
Ms A Martin, FW2040 Project Manager  
Mr M Culbertson, Project Officer, Community Regeneration Fund  
Mr D Lamont, Amenity Services Manager, Place Service  
Mr W MacKinnon, Community Development Manager  
Mr A MacInnes, Senior Committee Officer, Democratic Services

**Also in attendance:-**

Mr C Scott, Station Commander, Lochaber District, Scottish Fire & Rescue Service  
(Item 4 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**

**1. Apologies for Absence  
Leisgeulan**

There were none.

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

Item 8 – Ms S Fanet (Declaration of Interest)  
Item 8 – Mr J C Grafton (Transparency Statement)

**3. Recess Powers  
Cumhachdan Fosaidh**

The Committee **NOTED** that the Recess Powers granted by the Council at its meeting on 26 June 2025 had not been exercised in relation to the business of the Lochaber Committee.

**Councillor Andrew Baldrey** –The Chair on behalf of the Committee extended their best wishes to Andrew who had left the Council, on health grounds, at the end of July. Andrew was thanked for his contributions to the

Council and Ward business over his time as a Councillor and wished him well for the future.

*In terms of Standing Order 9, with the consent of the meeting, the following item was taken after item 9 on the agenda.*

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

There was circulated Report No LA/19/25 by the Local Senior Officer for Highland.

During discussion, the following issues were raised by Members and responded to by the Station Commander:

- There had some instances of anti social behaviour within the deliberate fires statistics. As to preventative work by the Service, there was the media communication in dealing with deliberate fires and joint working with Police Scotland in dealing with anti social behaviour. The Service had community fire safety teams and strategies to educate and work with the local community to highlight areas of anti social behaviour and promoting fire safety in schools. Dealing with anti social behaviour was an ongoing process and involved partner agencies such as Highland Council, NHS, voluntary groups and members of the public. New ideas were also being looked at to support the community to try and reduce anti social behaviour.
- Wildfires were becoming much more frequent and the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service had a wildfire strategy to address this. The Service had redefined their response to wildfires into a three tier response. This meant that depending of the severity of the fire extra equipment/vehicles could be brought in to support tackling wildfires. There was good partnership working in addressing wildfires with public agencies, landowners and deer management groups and anything councillors and community groups could do to support knowledge and awareness of wildfires would be welcome. Educating the public on preventing wildfires was also highlighted. The Service was also looking to innovation to predict where wildfires might occur, such as looking at weather patterns, the use of drones and CCTV cameras on the mountains.
- A point was made that in the Dava moor wildfire, muir burning did very little to restrict the wildfire and the environmental restoration community should be involved in partnership working. Strategic meetings on wildfires would help with lessons learned from other areas, for example, the Cairngorms National Park Authority were sourcing additional resources to support tackling wildfires, which was something other areas might wish to consider.
- It was incumbent on everyone to ensure that there was a plan and strategy to ensure that visitors and communities enjoy the area and try and prevent wildfires. It was highlighted that there were seasonal Rangers who would engage and educate visitors on responsible practices in the countryside.
- The Service undertook home safety fire inspections in homes and provided fire safety advice to residents who met the criteria for such a visit. There would be verified traders that residents could contact to carry out essential maintenance in houses, such as electrical equipment.
- Signage for wildfire risk was a good idea and was in use in other countries. It would be checked if signage was being considered in the wildfire strategy, and if so information on this provided in the next report.

- Battery energy storage system sites in the Highlands would be visited by the Service's fire safety teams to understand the owners fire plans and to determine what the Service's fire plans would be.
- Campervans parking next to each other was an issue as a fire in one could spread to the others. As and when fire personnel saw this, they would address it and the Council should also ensure the campervan parking areas were visited and educate drivers to ensure safe distances when parking.

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

**5. Winter Service Plan 2025/26**  
**Plana Seirbheis Geamhraidh 2025/26**

There was circulated Report No. LA/20/25 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Place.

The Roads Operations Manager highlighted that there was no change in the Winter Service plan to Primary or Secondary routes. The plan also covered other routes and footpath treatment, along with the staff establishment, vehicles, plant, target treatment times and details of the winter resilience scheme that communities could join.

It was queried how much flexibility there was in the plan if a new road or section of path required treatment. It was advised, that roads, footpaths in new developments would require to be adopted, as the winter maintenance team were not insured on a developers road/footpath. However, once they were adopted by the Council these roads/footpaths would be incorporated into the winter service plan.

In response to a query, the Council's website should be used to re-order salt/grit for bins before they were empty. There were around 150 grit bins in the Lochaber area and they were filled at the start of winter and refreshed thereafter.

The logistics of covering all the routes was explained which could be hard to manage at times, but having grit bins and the winter resilience scheme did help.

The Committee **APPROVED** the Winter Service Plan for 2025/26.

**6. Partial Deletion of U1015 Glenroy Road (465m end of road)**  
**Pàirt Dhubhadh Às de U1015 Rathad Ghleann Ruaidh**

There was circulated Report No. LA/21/25 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Place.

It was advised that the Braeroy Estate approached the Council to take over 465 metres at the end of the U1015 Glenroy road. This part of the road also included a bridge that would need replaced in the next five years. The Estate had confirmed that public access through the Estate would continue as it currently is and would not be compromised. The Council would not be liable for any costs associated with the future upkeep and maintenance of the road, bridge and cattle grid.

The Committee **APPROVED** the proposed partial deletion of the U1015 Glenroy Road from the List of Adopted Roads.

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

There was circulated Report No. LA/22/25 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Place in relation to Scottish Government Play Park funding for Ward 11.

Following consideration, the Committee **AGREED** in Ward 11, £20,000 be allocated to the agreed project as outlined in Section 6.4 of the report.

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

**Declaration of Interest: Ms S Fanet declared an interest in the Glencoe Folk Museum application as a volunteer at the Museum and her music recordings were for sale at the museum. Ms Fanet left the meeting when this application was being considered.**

**Transparency Statement – Mr J C Grafton declared a transparency statement in relation to the An Comunn Gàidhealach application as he was a Council representative on the Group organising the Royal National Mod 2025. However, having applied the objective test he did not consider that he had an interest to declare.**

There was circulated Report No LA/23/25 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Place.

The report detailed 3 community regeneration fund applications received for consideration. There was a total request of funding of £192,367.55 with an available budget of £793,564.63. All 3 applications were eligible for support.

During discussion, the following issues were raised:

- In terms of the Glencoe Folk Museum application, the projection was for a significant increase in visitor numbers at the museum. The museum wanted to install all new exhibition space.
- In terms of An Comunn Gàidhealach application this was for support for the hire and provision of a high quality marquee at the Royal National Mod 2025 to be held in Fort William. In response to a query regarding how resilient the marquee if there was bad weather, it was assumed that this had been taken account of in the technical specifications for the marquee.
- The application from Highland Council was for support towards a new Corran Ferry Flit Boat for crew transfers. There would be a significant reduction in the annual maintenance cost of the flit boat as a result of the provision of a new vessel.

A comment was made that it was a good application and should be supported as the new boat would enhance crew safety and future resilience in the event the Corran Ferry service being out of action. However, it was disappointing that the Council was using this Fund for funding that should instead be put to a strategic committee of the Council to fund. The Council should have made provision for a replacement Flit boat which was a core service and community regeneration funding was meant to be for projects that provide additionality. It was advised that match funding for the boat was to come from the Council's operation budget for this ferry service.

It was queried if more match funding may be possible, if the boat could be used for a rescue boat service as well, which would provide some additionality. It was advised that the current vessel did serve this function and the new boat would provide additional capacity to undertake a rescue service.

Following consideration, the Committee **AGREED** all the applications for Community Regeneration Fund grant award and the grants requested.

**9. Appointment to Isle of Rum Community Trust**  
**Cur an Dreuchd gu Urras Coimhearsnachd Eilean Rùm**

The Committee **AGREED** that Councillor L Saggars replaces Councillor J C Grafton on the Isle of Rum Community Trust.

**10. Fort William 2040 Annual Update**  
**Fios às Ùr mu An Gearasdan 2040**

There was circulated Report No. LA/24/25 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Place.

Following a summary of the report by the FW2040 Project Manager, the following issues were raised:

- The issue of integrated transport in accessing Fort William without using the road was often raised in community engagement. Feedback on comments made on this issue were given to the consultants on the Fort William integrated transport plan. They would be looking at all the possibilities for alternative and active travel in Fort William, so there wasn't as much car or lorry dependence in the town. Information on this would be provided in the next report.
- Caol was being included in the FW2040 plan and it was queried if the Caol link road would now go ahead. It was hoped that the integrated transport plan would look at proposed link roads and establish the viability of these. It was understood the outcome of this would be fed into the next Highland Local Development Plan.
- An update was provided in relation to the STEM centre. In relation to the new road junction at Lochaber High, this worked well, but there were now no gaps in the traffic at the roundabout leading to the road to the Isles. This resulted in queues of traffic on the A82, the main route through Fort William. It was felt the FW2040 should take this issue onboard and highlight this issue to the trunk roads authority. It was advised that this issue had been raised with Transport Scotland and with the consultants to the Fort William integrated transport plan. A road survey would be undertaken over the next few weeks and this would also take account of the operation of the swing bridge in this area.
- Given the valuable information contained in the report, it was suggested that a FW2040 update report be provided to the Committee every six months.

The Committee **NOTED**:-

- i. the progress that had been made with the individual projects within the FW2040 Masterplan as summarised at Appendix 1: FW2040 Annual Masterplan Project Update July 2025.

ii. the wider developments that had been implemented in 2025 to enhance the delivery of the programme, specifically:

- a) a review of the FW2040 governance arrangements which is ongoing.
- b) preparation of a community engagement event in November in collaboration with Lochaber Community Planning Partnership and the Area Place Planning team.
- c) continued engagement on specific issues and with particular interest groups through the FW2040 Community Stakeholder Group and FW2040 Transport Sub-Group.

These wider developments were expanded on in section 5 of the report;

iii. **AGREED** to support identified priority FW2040 work areas for the coming year as summarised in section 6 of the report; and

iv **AGREED** that a Fort William 2040 update report be submitted to the Committee every 6 months.

#### 11. **Corran Ferry Update** **Cunntas air Aiseag a' Chorrain**

There was circulated Report No. LA/25/25 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Place.

Following commentary on the report by Officers, the following issues were raised and responded to:-

- Given the MV Corran was out of service last week, the importance of clarity with the contingency plan was emphasised. There should be engagement with the local community regarding the role the new Corran Ferry Flit boat would provide in transporting passengers and goods, in the event both the MV Corran and Maid of Glencoul were out of action. It was advised that now funding had been approved for the Flit boat, it would take around 6 months to build the boat.
- The Corran Ferry ticketing project was about to commence and an undertaking was given to keep local members and the local community involved in this.
- It was disappointing that there had been no apology from the Council that the Corran Ferry service was out of action last week, as the Council were failing to respond to the needs of the local community. The Operations Manager, Corran Ferry apologised on behalf of the Service to last weeks outage of the ferry service.
- It was queried why the contingency plan last week had not been put in place immediately. There was a need to respond to ferry service outages much more quickly and it be clear when the plan be triggered immediately. Going forward the contingency plan should be shared with local Members for comment.
- An open letter by Loch Shiel garage on Facebook illustrated the impact the loss of service had on its business and others in the area. It was queried what officers response to this was. It was understood this contained some older ideas on the ferry service that had been addressed over the years. It did highlight the need to keep the public informed of progress in addressing issues with the Corran Ferry service.

- It was queried why the ferry service budget information in the report had not been included in budget papers to the Council budget meeting in March, 2025, when it was proposed to increase ferry fares and introduce a foot passenger fare. Information on this would be provided to the Committee.
- It was queried why communities and stakeholders or Lochaber Members were not consulted when new ferry fares and the introduction of a foot passenger fare were proposed. It was understood that this had been answered by officers at Committee and steering group meetings.
- In terms of the introduction of the foot passenger fares, clarification was sought as to the operation and location of the ticket machine. It was advised the ticketing machine would be located in the passenger lounge as only one machine would be required, rather than two if located on the slipways. Also if the machine was located on the slipways there was potential for the ferry boat to be delayed.
- Significant work had gone into taking the ticketing project forward and required funding to do so.
- Consideration be given to introducing a road traffic order on the Corran side of the Corran ferry, as vehicles were being parked and left within the marshalling lanes, thus taking up space and leading to problems with queuing traffic going onto the A82. There should be adequate signage and prosecutions, as vehicles parked in marshalling areas were illegally parked.
- There was now money available for a new Corran Ferry and associated infrastructure, so it should be recognised that matters had moved on since a few years ago, when there was no money available for a new ferry.
- The small vessels replacement programme phase 1 had already been awarded. There would be significant lessons learned from those boats before construction of the new Corran ferry started. The Corran ferry crew would also have the opportunity to try out one of the new vessels.
- It was queried if there was to be a review of the tendering and repair process for Council ferries, as the repairs to the Corran ferries were taking longer to complete. It was advised that the current yard that undertook refit services were successful having gone through a tendering process which was positive as they would have to evidence they could undertake the work successfully. This contract assured there would be a slot for each Corran ferry to be maintained annually. The tender refit review would be shared with Members.

The Committee **NOTED**:-

- i. the update on Corran Ferry Operations;
- ii. the update on the Corran Ferry Infrastructure Improvement Scheme and New Electric Vessel as detailed in Appendix 2 to the report; and
- iii that local Members would be involved in the development of the Corran Ferry service contingency plan and that the plan needed to be clearly communicated with local communities.

## 12. **Housing Performance Report** **Aithisg Choileanaidh Càraidhean Thaighean**

There was circulated Report No. LA/26/25 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Place which provided information on how the Housing Service performed in relation to the Scottish Social Housing Charter and other performance indicators up to 30 June, 2025.



Following commentary on the report by the Principal Repairs Officer, the capital funding investment in housing was welcomed which including heating system upgrades, energy efficiency improvements, and the replacement of major components reaching the end of their lifecycle. There had been significant investment in the Caol area through the Whole House Retrofit Programme.

The work with colleagues from the Climate Change and Energy Team to identify and secure funding opportunities across the Highlands in the delivery of energy efficiency projects was noted.

The Committee **NOTED** the information provided on housing performance in the period 1 April 2025 – 30 June 2025.

**13. Ward Discretionary Fund  
Buidseat Fo Ùghdarras Uàird**

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

**Ward 11**

Lochaber Coastal Rowing - Each Dubh Mobilisation - £100  
National Trust for Scotland - Glenfinnan Sunday Bus Service Pilot - £2,463  
Visit Small Isles (VSI) - Welcome to the Small Isles - £2,000

**Ward 21**

Lochaber Coastal Rowing - Each Dubh Mobilisation - £100  
National Trust for Scotland - Glenfinnan Sunday Bus Service - £750  
Lochaber Pride - First Pride Parade - £500  
Linnhe Leisure - Manual Mobile Wheelchair lift - £1,000

**Lochaber Trusts and Bequests:**

Elizabeth George Bequest – Lochaber Lunch Club - £179.10  
M Campbell Gift Fund – Lochaber Lunch Club - £25.93  
Ben Nevis Pathway Fund - Nevis Landscape Partnership – £1,273.25  
Fort William Poor Fund - Plantation Community Larder, Voluntary Action Lochaber - £512.89

**14. Minutes  
Geàrr-chunntas**

There was circulated and **NOTED**, Minutes of Meeting of the Lochaber Committee held on 12 May, 2025 which had been approved by the Council on 26 June, 2025.

Arising from the minutes, it was **NOTED** that:-

i an invitation had been sent to Mr Ken Gowans, in his capacity as Chair of the Economy and Infrastructure Committee, to attend the August or November meeting of the Lochaber Committee to address concerns about the area roads capital programme allocation. A response to this invitation was awaited.

ii the following information was still to be received by Members:- Corran Ferry Update Report:-

a. the number of times in recent years the Council had requested that Transport Scotland increase the level of ringfenced grant funding for a project, and the number of times this had been agreed.

iii there was now an action tracker of decisions made by the Committee to ensure agreed actions were carried out in a timely manner.

The meeting ended at 1.07pm

**The Highland Council**

Minutes of Meeting of the **Housing and Property Committee** held in the Council Chamber, Council Headquarters, Glenurquhart Road, Inverness on **Wednesday 13 August 2025** at **9.30am**.

**Present:**

|                         |                      |
|-------------------------|----------------------|
| Ms S Atkin              | Mrs I MacKenzie      |
| Mr B Boyd (remote)      | Mr R MacKintosh      |
| Mr R Bremner (remote)   | Ms A MacLean         |
| Mr I Brown              | Mr D Macpherson      |
| Mrs G Campbell-Sinclair | Mr D McDonald        |
| Mr L Fraser             | Ms J McEwan (remote) |
| Mr R Gale ((substitute) | Ms L Niven (remote)  |
| Dr M Gregson            | Ms M Ross (remote)   |
| Mr R Jones (remote)     | Mr R Stewart         |

**Non-Members also present:**

|                         |                           |
|-------------------------|---------------------------|
| Dr C Birt (Remote)      | Mr G Mackenzie (Remote)   |
| Mr J Finlayson (Remote) | Mr T MacLennan (Remote)   |
| Mr D Fraser (Remote)    | Mr J McGillivray (Remote) |
| Ms M Hutchison (Remote) | Mrs T Robertson           |

**Tenant Representatives in Attendance:**

Ms L Richardson, Tenant Representative  
Mr A Dick, 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 & Customer Services  
Mr R Campbell, Service Lead – Capital Planning & Estate Strategy  
Mr R MacLeod, Service Lead Housing Investment/Building Maintenance  
Ms C Pieraccini, Strategic Lead Finance (Place)  
Ms H Cameron, Housing Development Manager  
Ms S Stuart, Portfolio Manager  
Mr K Forbes, Property Manager (Estates Management)  
Ms L Bauermeister, Community Development Manager  
Mr E McIntosh, Community Support Officer  
Ms C Fisher, 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.**

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

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

There was an apology for absence from Mr A Graham.

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

The Committee **NOTED** there were no Declarations of Interest or Transparency Statements.

**3. Recess Powers  
Cumhachdan Fosaìdh**

The Committee **NOTED** that the recess powers granted by the Council at its meeting on 26 June 2025 did not require to be exercised in relation to the business of the Housing and Property Committee.

**4. Good News  
Naidheachdan Matha**

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

**5. Property & Facilities Management Services Revenue Budget: Final Outturn for 2024/25 and Monitoring Statement to 30 June 2025  
Buidseat Teachd-a-steach Seirbheisean Seilbhe is Stiùireadh Ghoireasan: Fìor Shuidheachadh Deireannach airson 2024/25 agus Aithris Sgrùdaidh gu 30 Ògmhios 2025**

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

During discussion, an explanation was sought and provided on the underspend on staff costs, mainly in the Catering Cleaning and Facilities Management (CCFM) Team, and related gradings. In this regard, concern was expressed at the impact of staff vacancies on the standard of cleanliness of buildings and additional pressure this may place on existing staff. A further point was raised as to whether there had been consultation with trade unions around staff welfare and to ensure terms and conditions were not effectively being changed as a result of staff vacancies.

An assurance was provided that the filling of vacancies was actively being pursued and there was ongoing engagement with trade unions. A range of actions were being taken and options considered to ensure a full range of services was covered by the CCFM Team and more detailed information on progress would be provided to the next Committee in this regard.

Thereafter, the following items were raised:-

- in response to a query, further clarity was provided on the health and safety measures that might be reprioritised or deferred as part of cost control measures;
- an update was sought and provided on progress with achieving asset management savings and income generation; area reviews were being undertaken as a priority and officers would be attending area business meetings to have discussions with local Members on this issue;
- concern as to how realistic the annual savings target for 2025/26 was given the shortfall detailed at Appendix 5 of the report;

- an explanation was sought and provided on the rationale for the savings listed as ‘savings from time to fill vacant posts’;
- concern as to whether the budget for revenue maintenance was realistic given rising costs. It was confirmed that information would be provided in the next report to the Committee on the work being carried out by the Service across the estate to provide a better overview of where the available budget was being invested;
- In response to a query, it was confirmed that details would be provided to Mr D MacPherson on the arrangements in place for Police Scotland’s occupancy of the Town House, Inverness;
- confirmation was sought and provided that the Landbank Fund included monies generated by Council tax from second homes and was therefore contributing to house building across the Highlands; and
- an overview was sought and provided on the improvements delivered in the performance of biomass heating installations across the Council.

During further discussion, an assurance was provided that the Committee would continue to be updated on progress in relation to the Council’s estate being safe and operational and on the savings being achieved.

Thereafter, the Committee:-

- APPROVED** the final budget position for the 2024/25 financial year;
- APPROVED** the budget position for the first quarter of the 2025/26 financial year, and the estimated year-end position; and
- NOTED** the update provided regarding budget savings delivery.

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

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

During discussion, the following main points were raised:-

- an assurance was sought and provided that Members would be provided with further updates on the Highland Investment Plan projects going forward;
- it would be helpful for officers to meet with local Members for Ward 8: Dingwall and Seaforth, to discuss progress with the Highland Investment Plan locally and progress with a new St Clement’s School in Dingwall;
- it would be helpful for a briefing note to be circulated on the Gypsy Traveller Member briefing to be held on 14 August 2025; and
- in response to a query, it was confirmed that asbestos removal was being undertaken at the Council depot at Tulloch Street, Dingwall prior to demolition and clearing of the site.

Thereafter, the Committee:-

- APPROVED** the final capital budget position for the 2024/25 financial year;
- APPROVED** the capital budget position, including project progress at the end of the first quarter of the 2025/26 financial year, the estimated year-end position and the main financial variances outlined in the report; and
- AGREED** that a briefing note be circulated to Members on the Gypsy Traveller Member Briefing being held on 14 August 2025.

**7. Housing Revenue Account (HRA) and Non-HRA Budget: Final Outturn 2024/25 and Quarter 1 Reporting for 2025/26**  
**Buidseat Cunntas Teachd-a-steach Taigheadais is Cunntas Teachd-a-steach Neo-Taigheadais: Fìor Shuidheachadh Deireannach 2024/25**

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

During discussion, it was queried on what basis the recommendation was being made to transfer the year-end surplus of £0.395m to Housing Revenue Account reserves rather than this sum being allocated towards repairs and maintenance, improving Council estates, energy efficiency or upgrading and improving tenant properties. In response, Members were advised the recommendation was being made on the basis of the Council's Section 95 Officer's advice in relation to the importance of bolstering the reserves. Thereafter, further clarification was provided on the reasons for the underspend on the HRA revenue budget, this being due to lower loan charges, albeit they remained a long-term pressure, and higher than anticipated income as detailed in the report.

In response to a query, it was explained that work was underway to develop a financial strategy, including a long-term rent strategy, to ensure a sustainable approach to the HRA moving forwards. A workshop would be held for Members in early Autumn to support this work, along with engagement with the Tenant Forum and tenant representatives and a report brought to the Committee on 5 November 2025. A long-term rent strategy would provide tenants with more stability and certainty going forward.

Further items raised by Members included the following:-

- the process for setting up tenant groups in new Council build estates, the potential to be more proactive in this regard and for this to be an item for discussion at a future Tenant Forum;
- in response to a query, it was confirmed that a list of all tenant groups in Highland and other forms of tenant engagement would be included in the update on tenant engagement to the next Committee in November 2025. Members input into tenant engagement was also welcomed;
- further clarification was sought and provided on the fact supervision and management costs were lower than budgeted as a result of reduced bad debt provision. It was confirmed the potential to separate bad debt provision from the supervision and management budget line would be considered for future Committee reports; and
- in response to a query, it was confirmed the impact of the increase in national insurance costs on the Housing Revenue Account had been factored into the budget for 2025/26.

Thereafter, the Tenant Representative advised that from a national perspective, tenants would appreciate being more involved at the rent setting point, rather than later in the consultation. She recognised tenant organisations could be off-putting for tenants and nationally it was considered that other options such as landlord recognised groups might encourage more groups to be formed, noting they had the same rights to be consulted.

Thereafter, the Committee:-

- i. **APPROVED** the final outturn figures for the Housing Revenue Account and Non-Housing Revenue Account 2024/25;
- ii. **AGREED** the transfer of the year-end surplus of £0.395m to the Housing Revenue Account reserves;
- iii. **APPROVED** the forecast financial position for 2025/26 as set out in the report and appendices to the report; and
- iv. **NOTED** the explanations provided for any material variances and actions taken or proposed.

**8. Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Capital Monitoring to 31 March 2025 and to 30 June 2025**  
**Sgrùdadh Calpa Cunntas Teachd-a-steach Taigheadais gu 31 Màrt 2025 agus gu 30 Ògmhios 2025**

There had been circulated Report No HP/26/25 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Place.

During discussion, the following items were raised:-

- the houses delivered through the New Council House Build Programme was a good news story which was welcomed and the staff involved were thanked for their hard work in this regard;
- the additional external funding secured to improve the energy efficiency of Council properties was a good news story and staff be commended in this regard; the importance of these works in alleviating poverty was also highlighted;
- the potential for the underspend on the HRA Capital Programme to be invested in improving the standard of sheltered housing accommodation and in energy efficiency works to properties in rural areas;
- the need to consider the procurement model in terms of whether the Council built new or as an alternative purchased affordable housing from a private developer to ensure best value was being achieved; and
- the potential to consider as part of the budget setting process a significant uplift of Council tax for second homes to further support the Landbank Fund for new housing development.

Thereafter, the Committee **APPROVED** the:-

- i. final outturn figures for the Housing Revenue Account Capital Programme 2024/25; and
- ii. Quarter 1 figures and projected outturn for the Housing Revenue Account Capital Programme 2025/25.

**9. Highland Housing Register Allocations Monitoring Report 2024/25**  
**Aithisg Riarachaidhean Bliadhnail Clàr Taigheadais na Gàidhealtachd 2024/25**

There had been circulated Report No HP/27/25 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Place.

Members were advised that the report highlighted the continued demand for social rented housing in Highland and the importance of continuing the efforts of the Highland Housing Challenge in building more houses where they were most needed across the area. It also reflected the importance of prioritising the allocation of houses to applicants most in housing need and that this might cover a number of different requirements depending on individual circumstances. Members were reminded that they were being asked to scrutinise performance against the current Allocations Policy agreed by the Committee in April 2023. In addition, and as agreed by the Council, a review of the Allocations Policy was to take place, the proposed scope of which was set out in the report.

During discussion, it was proposed that the feasibility of introducing time-limited Local Lettings Plans be examined for areas with the highest percentage of lets to homeless households, as identified in the annual Allocations Monitoring report — currently Inverness, Mid Ross, Nairn, and Skye/Lochalsh & Wester Ross. These Local Lettings Plans would be modelled with a capped priority for verified key workers in essential services — such as health, education, care, and emergency response. Statutory reasonable-preference requirements would be fully met in each area. The modelling and integrated impact assessment would consider the effects on both statutory priority groups and the long-term viability and sustainability of the affected communities.

In response, an assurance was provided that the opportunity for local lettings initiatives would be considered as part of the Allocations Policy review. The work being undertaken as part of the Highland Housing Challenge and Allocations Policy review was multi-faceted and all-encompassing and would comprehensively consider all aspects of the challenges in each of the local areas in Highland. Members would have a full opportunity to debate and discuss ideas and proposals on how to improve the Policy, including addressing the challenges in attracting and housing key workers and others to local areas to help sustain communities.

Further comments from Members included:-

- an assurance was sought and provided that a broad definition of key workers had been agreed as part of the Strategic Housing Investment Plan and this would be re-circulated to Members. Key workers were also being considered as part of the Housing Needs and Demand Assessment;
- confirmation that as part of the Allocations Policy and Armed Forces Covenant, need to reside points were applied to armed forces veterans across Highland;
- the challenges faced by tenants who wished to downsize and families being able to relocate in their local area under the current Policy and the need to factor in the need for age friendly and intergenerational communities in new build developments;
- it was important also to recognise those who had lived in their communities for many years with no prospect of being allocated a house due to the current points system which was based on prioritising those in greatest housing need;
- the need for local Member engagement at the earliest opportunity so there was a full understanding of the expectations and limitations of the Allocations Policy and the elements governed by national legislation;



- in addition to the above, it was important there was community engagement in relation to the review;
- the need to remove some of the bureaucracy from the current system so that new house building could be expedited more quickly;
- the need to follow up more proactively on tenancy agreements given the number of properties that were left badly damaged resulting in high repair and void costs;
- in response to a query, it was confirmed that following Members approval of the scope of the Allocations Policy review, consideration would be given to setting timescales and milestones for the review;
- the challenges in achieving fairness through the Allocations Policy and reference to the extremely difficult decisions officers and Council partners had to make in allocating properties; and
- the potential for the method of mutual exchange to be better promoted and to make tenants aware of the process.

Thereafter, the Tenant Representative advised that Members' core obligation as duty bearers was to the most vulnerable in communities and that should be borne in mind in reviewing the Policy. This included elderly and disabled tenants in properties which were not accessible, victims of domestic abuse and the homeless all of which were a priority and who should not be held accountable for the lack of social housing and creativity in the use of the existing stock. As an example, the potential to house key workers in under occupied homes be considered, noting this type of co-housing was being taken forward elsewhere.

Thereafter, the Committee:-

- NOTED** the information contained in the Annual Monitoring Report on housing allocations which demonstrated that the policy was achieving its objectives and that the Highland Housing Register Partnership continued to provide affordable and secure social housing in Highland Communities; and
- APPROVED** the scope of the review of the Allocations Policy, as agreed at Council on 15 May 2025.

## 10. Annual Assurance Statement Aithris Barantais Bhliadhnail

There had been circulated Report No HP/28/25 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Place.

During discussion, the following items were raised:-

- an assurance was sought and provided that a commitment had been given to the Scottish Housing Regulator and Health and Safety Executive that there would be annual inspections of the flatted blocks with presumed or suspected asbestos, and that no works had been required to be carried out to these blocks;
- an explanation was sought and provided on the challenges with compliance with the updated legislation around electrical inspections due to tenant non-access, discussions held with the Regulator and Tenant Forum on this issue and the action being taken to encourage access; and

- the potential for the tenant access for the above to be included in secure tenancy agreements for their own safety. It was explained that while the Council could legally gain access to properties, the preference was to work with tenants on this issue.

Thereafter, the Committee **APPROVED** the Annual Assurance Statement for 2025 detailed in Appendix 1 of the report which would be subsequently submitted to the Scottish Housing Regulator.

## **11. Community Asset Transfer Gluasad So-mhaoin Coimhearsnachd**

### **a. Annual Community Asset Transfer Report 2024/25 Aithisg Bhliadhnail Gluasad So-mhaoin Coimhearsnachd 2024/25**

There had been circulated Report No HP/29/25 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Place.

During discussion, the following items were raised:-

- concern at the length of time it was taking to legally complete some community asset transfers and the potential for the Council to set a priority timescale for these transfers. It was explained there was a range of factors that might cause delays with the community asset transfer process, details of which were provided;
- confirmation the Terra Tracker project had been hugely beneficial in helping to identify Council assets at an early stage and in supporting community groups with aspirations to develop projects;
- in response to a query, further clarity was provided that economic burdens placed on some community asset transfers would apply if a community group transferred an asset out of community use; Members were urged to bring any specific concerns on this issue to officers;
- confirmation that officers would arrange to meet with Mrs M Ross to discuss a specific community asset transfer within her Ward; and
- in view of the discussion, it would be helpful for a Members briefing on community asset transfers to be arranged.

Thereafter, the Committee **AGREED**:-

- i. the annual report on Community Asset Transfer, as detailed in the report and at Appendix 1 of the report, for submission to the Scottish Government; and
- ii. that a Members briefing on Community Asset Transfers be arranged.

### **b. Community Asset Transfer Request – Former Roy Bridge Primary School Iarrtas Gluasad So-mhaoin Coimhearsnachd – seann Bhun-Sgoil Dhrochaid Ruaidh**

There had been circulated Report No HP/30/25 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Place.

During discussion, the following items were raised:-

- whether it would be prudent for the Council to use mothballed or closed school sites for its own developments using a similar model. It was confirmed the Council's Housing Development Team was consulted in regard to any potential community transfers at the outset to establish if there were opportunities for development on a site;
- an explanation was sought and provided on the rationale and assessment process around the recommendation to agree the discount on the market value of the property requested by the applicants; and
- this was an excellent project and should be supported on the basis outlined in the report.

Thereafter, the Committee **AGREED** to the sale of the land and property comprising the former Roy Bridge Primary School to the Spean Bridge, Roy Bridge and Achnacarry Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation for £100,000 (with vacant possession) or £75,000 (with sitting tenant) based upon the terms of transfer as set out in section 6 of the report.

## **12. Housing Performance Report – 1 April 2025 to 30 June 2025 Aithisg Choileanaidh Taigheadais – 1 Giblean 2025 gu 30 Ògmhios 2025**

There had been circulated Report No HP/31/25 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Place.

During discussion, it was highlighted that rent arrears for Quarter 1 had decreased to a 3-year low and that this was an impressive effort. The decrease had been achieved without recourse to evictions due to rent arrears. Members commended the staff involved on this achievement and for their early intervention work with tenants. Members also thanked the majority of tenants in Highland for continuing to manage their rent accounts and recognising the importance of rental income in delivering services to their homes.

In response to a query, reference was made to the challenges in quantifying the current level of rent arrears due to late payment of benefits. In addition, confirmation was sought and provided that the format of reporting on total rent arrears would be reviewed to consider how more perspective and context in terms of the figures presented could be provided.

Thereafter, it was highlighted that while homeless demand remained high in Highland, there had been another decrease in the number of households in temporary accommodation. This reflected the work of the Council and its partner agencies in delivering services to households experiencing homelessness and as they continued to prioritise moving families into permanent accommodation as quickly as possible.

Further items raised by Members included:-

- in response to a query, it was explained there was a range of factors why landlords may be leaving the private rented sector, including the opportunity to convert their property into a short term let;

- the opportunity for the Council to improve engagement with private landlords, and consider any support that could be provided and for Members to make representations to ensure the legislation was fit for purpose;
- performance in respect of the average time to complete emergency and non-emergency repairs was excellent and Service teams be commended on this achievement;
- confirmation was sought and provided that a list of what was classed as emergency and high priority repairs would be circulated to Members;
- an update was sought and provided on the action being taken to address ongoing issues with contractor capacity and shortage of skills and trades to conduct work for the Council and its partners; and
- the opportunity to promote and encourage contractors onto the Council's trades framework and in response an update was provided on the work being undertaken as part of the renewal of the Inner Moray Firth trades framework to make it more attractive to contractors whilst maintaining high standards of work.

Thereafter, the Committee **NOTED** the information provided on Housing performance in the period 1 April 2025 to 30 June 2025.

### **13. Delivery Plan and Performance Monitoring Update Quarter 1 2025/26** **Cunntas às Ùr mu Phlana Lìbhrigidh agus Sgrùdadh Coileanaidh Cairteil 1 2025/26**

There had been circulated Report No HP/32/25 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Place.

The Committee **NOTED** the:-

- Service's performance information; and
- progress of the Delivery Plan Programmes and Projects as per the updates provided in the report.

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

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

### **15. Housing Development Initiatives** **Iomairtean Leasachaidh Taigheadais**

There had been circulated to Members only Report No HP/33/25 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Place.

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

**16. Property Transactions Monitoring**  
**Aithisg Sgrùdaidh Ghnothachasan Seilbhe**

There had been circulated to Members only Report No HP/34/25 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Place.

In discussion, it was confirmed that officers would investigate and report back on a specific issue raised in respect of a Council owned car park in Inverness.

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

The meeting was closed at 1.10pm.

## The Highland Council

Minutes of Meeting of the **Climate Change Committee** held in the Council Chamber, Council Headquarters, Glenurquhart Road, Inverness on Wednesday 13 August 2025 at 2.00 pm.

### **Present:**

|                         |                       |
|-------------------------|-----------------------|
| Ms S Atkin              | Mr R Gale             |
| Mr J Bruce              | Dr M Gregson (remote) |
| Mrs I Campbell (remote) | Mr P Logue            |
| Mr S Coghill (remote)   | Ms M Ross (remote)    |
| Ms S Fanet (Vice Chair) | Ms K Willis (Chair)   |
| Mr J Grafton            |                       |

### **Non-Members also present:**

|                         |                 |
|-------------------------|-----------------|
| Dr C Birt               | Mr R MacKintosh |
| Mr R Cross              | Mrs T Robertson |
| Ms M Hutchison (remote) | Mr R Stewart    |

### **In attendance:**

Mr N Osborne, Climate Change and Energy Team Manager  
Ms F Daschofsky, Net Zero Programme Manager  
Mr R Macdonald, Energy Manager  
Mr A McKinnie, Strategic Lead – Waste Strategy and Operations  
Ms I Percy-Bell, Principal Waste Management Officer  
Ms N Wallace, Service Lead – Environment and Sustainable Transport  
Ms J Bromham, Project Manager  
Mr A Puls, Environment Manager  
Ms S Veitch, Senior Engineer  
Ms C Weaver, Climate Change Co-ordinator  
Ms T Ratnam, Project Manager (Energy)  
Mr J Bennett, Climate Change Co-ordinator (remote)  
Ms S James-Gaukroger, Climate Change Co-ordinator (remote)  
Ms L Laing, Climate Change Co-ordinator (remote)  
Ms M Maguire, Principal Planner (remote)  
Mr A Morgan, Climate Change Co-ordinator (remote)  
Ms D Morris, Climate Change Co-ordinator (remote)  
Ms M Murray, Principal Committee Officer  
Ms K Arnott, Committee Officer

### **Also in attendance:**

Ms R Andersen, UHI Professor of Peatland Science and Trustee of the Flow Country Partnership (remote)

**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 K Willis in the Chair**

Prior to the commencement of formal business, the Chair expressed thanks to her predecessor, Ms S Fanet, who she looked forward to continuing to work with.

## Business

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

An apology for absence was intimated on behalf of Mr A Graham.

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

There were no Declarations of Interest or Transparency Statements.

### 3. **Recess Powers** **Cumhachdan Fosaidh**

The Committee **NOTED** that the recess powers granted by the Council at its meeting on 26 June 2025 had not been exercised in relation to the business of the Climate Change Committee.

### 4. **Good News** **Naidheachdan Matha**

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

#### **Scottish Energy Efficiency Awards**

The Council had received notable recognition at the Scottish Energy Efficiency Awards held in June. It had been named Regional Council or Local Authority Body of the Year and had also received a “highly commended” award in the category of Regional Housing Association or Landlord of the Year. The awards reflected the Climate Change and Energy Team’s commitment to delivering energy efficiency improvements across Highland and the strategic approach adopted by the team, which had resulted in securing over £15m in external funding for 2024/25.

#### **D-C Project**

Since securing £9.2m in private sector funding in January 2025, the Council had delivered approximately £5m worth of energy efficiency improvements across its housing stock. A total of 266 properties had been upgraded to date, demonstrating the swift and large-scale roll-out of the programme. These improvements would reduce carbon emissions, improve thermal comfort and lower energy bills for tenants.

#### **School Heating Systems**

An assessment of the status of school heating systems had been undertaken at the start of the summer holidays. It had been determined that a number of heating systems remained in operation despite the presence of the Council’s Heating Policy. The Climate Change and Energy Team, in conjunction with the Property Service, had undertaken an exercise to switch these heating systems off, which had been conservatively calculated to achieve an annual saving of £48k.

### **Workforce for the Future – paid placement pilot**

As part of a pilot initiative under the Council's Workforce for the Future Portfolio, the Climate Change and Energy Team had hosted a four-week paid placement for a school pupil aged 16 or over. The placement participant had engaged with various teams across the Council to gain insight into the work being progressed towards achieving Net Zero. Their involvement had built on earlier work when they had volunteered to support the Waste Team in conducting a waste audit at their school, Inverness Royal Academy. Their early involvement in the audit had led to them contributing to discussions around the implementation of a pilot project aimed at reducing waste and increasing recycling rates in schools. Further information on the waste audit and pilot project had been detailed in the report in respect of item 6ii on today's agenda. The pilot project had been picked up in the national press and as far afield as Australia.

### **Graduate interns**

The Climate Change and Energy Team was currently hosting two interns as part of a two-month placement running to the end of August 2025. The interns were contributing to key areas of work including site identification for future renewable energy projects; development of a business case for the Highland Hydrogen Strategy; and exploration of opportunities to embed circular economy practices across Council operations.

The Committee **NOTED** the good news.

## **5. World Heritage Site Presentation Taisbeanadh Làrach Dualchas na Cruinne**

Roxane Andersen, UHI Professor of Peatland Science and Trustee of the Flow Country Partnership, delivered a presentation about the Flow Country, the value and importance of peatlands in addressing the climate and ecological emergencies, inscription of the Flow Country as a World Heritage site and the Partnership's ambitions for the future. The Flow Country was the first peatland World Heritage Site, and Scotland's first World Heritage Site inscribed purely for natural criteria.

During discussion, the following main points were raised:-

- thanks were expressed for the presentation, and congratulations were extended to all those involved in achieving World Heritage status for the Flow Country;
- it was welcomed that the presentation had highlighted that the protection afforded by World Heritage status brought with it potential opportunities;
- information was sought, and provided, on a number of points including whether World Heritage status was something that could be considered for other parts of Highland where there was land with high potential for carbon sequestration, or were there other ways of protecting such land; the potential to extend the World Heritage site in the future as more land was restored through the Peatland Restoration Programme; the impact of wind farms, or proposed wind farm sites, in close proximity to the Flow Country; a typical Flow Country project; the implications of World Heritage status in terms of the economic and social development of the area, particularly the potential for "slow tourism" allied to restoration work; whether there was anything that could be done, such as a moratorium on development near



the site boundary, to preserve the opportunity to extend the World Heritage site in the future; and the role of peatland restoration and land management practices such as muirburn in mitigating the extent and intensity of the increasing number of wildfires in Scotland. In relation to the latter, the need for education and communication was emphasised as most wildfires in Scotland were caused, accidentally or otherwise, by human activity; and

- it was questioned whether the protection World Heritage status afforded might impact on the enthusiasm of neighbouring landowners to join and extend the World Heritage site if it precluded them from the potentially lucrative opportunities associated with renewable energy.

The Committee otherwise **NOTED** the presentation.

## 6. Net Zero Programme Prògram Neoni Luim

### i. Net Zero Programme Update Cunntas às Ùr mu Phrògram Neoni Luim

There had been circulated Report No CCC/18/25 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Place.

In introducing the report, it was highlighted that, since the report had been written, progress had been made in respect of the key milestones set out in section 5.3. In respect of the milestone “Shared Procurement Service to evaluate and propose alternative carbon budgeting tools”, as indicated in the report, the Shared Procurement Service had requested further information from Oxygen to assess the robustness of the data provided. That information had now been received enabling the next stages of work to proceed. During August and September, the data would be mapped against service budgets using analysis and data skills with a view to producing a high-level carbon view by service. In Quarter 4 the analysis would be presented to services, and in Quarter 1 2026/27 the first version of a multi-stage multi-year programme would be developed to support collaboration with suppliers and services. This would prioritise actions based on analysis to support emissions reduction.

In respect of the milestone “Net zero embedded in Capital Programme”, delays in identifying projects for inclusion in the pilot, which had been scheduled to commence in July, had resulted in slippage. Three projects had now been identified, and the Climate Change and Energy Team was working closely with the Property Service to define timelines for the availability of key information required to run the pilot.

During discussion, the following main points were raised:-

- information was sought, and provided, on the work and shared learning taking place in terms of developing a methodology for calculating Scope 3 emissions; whether any Kingussie Flood Protection works were scheduled to take place in 2025/26; the impact on the Net Zero Programme of the slippage in respect of the milestone “Shared Procurement Service to evaluate and propose alternative carbon budgeting tools”, and whether the matter was still considered to be a potential risk; and whether a mapping exercise had been carried out to identify areas along the River Ness that were at risk of flooding;

- in relation to communications, it was necessary to make the Net Zero agenda more real to people in their day-to-day life – for example, by emphasising the potential savings and income associated with Solar PV;
- officers were commended for their efforts, particularly in securing significant sums of external funding;
- in response to a question, it was explained that the Scottish Government was not considering nuclear energy as an option, and it was therefore not something the Council was in a position to explore; and
- with reference to the Minutes of the previous meeting of the Committee, the Chair confirmed she and officers would seek to ensure an update on the Food in Schools project could be provided at the next meeting. Steps would also be taken to progress the proposed workshop on Members' travel.

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 the Council the approval of the project brief templates in Appendix 2 of the report for inclusion in the Council's Net Zero Programme.

## ii. Net Zero Thematic Group Update – Waste Cunntas às Ùr mu Bhuidheann Chuspaireil Neoni Luim – Sgudal

There had been circulated Report No CCC/19/25 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Place.

During discussion, the following main points were raised:-

- the work being undertaken to reduce waste and increase recycling rates in schools was welcomed. However, many children left school at lunchtime to visit local shops where they bought items such as takeaway food, packets of crisps and cans or bottles of sugary drinks, thereby still producing waste that the Council would have to deal with. In addition to the waste aspect, the detrimental impacts of such a diet on health and learning were emphasised, and it was commented that a change in food culture was needed. It was suggested that a strategy was required to keep children in school at lunchtime, and it was queried whether any discussions in that regard were taking place with relevant services such as Education and Health and Social Care. Officers undertook to feed Members' comments back to the Food in Schools project team;
- information was sought, and provided, on what the 16% of waste that was classed as "Unusual" in the Council Headquarters Waste Audit results consisted of; how much of the recyclable waste collected was of sufficient cleanliness/quality to actually be recycled; and how improved waste management practices would be rolled out to other secondary schools;
- a request was made that recyclable and non-recyclable waste bins in Council buildings be clearly labelled so people knew which type of waste each bin was for. It was added that it would be helpful to provide bins that corresponded with the colours of the waste and recycling bins people used at home, as well as education on food waste;

- the proposed trial of reusable lunch containers at Kingussie High School was welcomed, and it was hoped it would be successful and could be rolled out more widely;
- the initiative to offer surplus Council assets to external organisations and charities was commended, and further information was sought, and provided, on the process in that regard;
- the need for food waste collections in rural areas was highlighted. However, the associated challenges and costs were recognised;
- whilst support was expressed for the earlier suggestion that children should remain in school at lunchtime, it was emphasised that many schools, Culloden Academy being cited as an example, did not have enough space, and it was necessary to consider how to create social spaces in schools to encourage children to stay there. The Climate Change and Energy Team Manager confirmed this would be fed back to colleagues in Education and Property;
- improving recycling rates at Council Headquarters should be able to be achieved quickly by way of education/communication for staff and Members;
- the Chair commented that the discussion had highlighted the need for collaboration across various service areas including education, health, waste, property, catering and cleaning, and the cross-service aspect might be an opportunity to secure funding to support the rollout of the pilot projects. She looked forward to further updates at future meetings of the Committee.

The Committee **NOTED** the progress of actions by the Waste Thematic Group.

### **iii. Net Zero Thematic Group Update – Planning, Land Use and Environment Cunntas às Ùr mu Bhuidheann Chuspaireil Neoni Luim – Planadh, Cleachdadh Fearainn agus Àrainneachd**

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

During discussion, the following main points were raised:-

- Members welcomed the report, with particular reference to the partnership work taking place, the appointment of a new Senior Arboricultural Officer, the preparation of a revised Forest and Woodland Strategy, the greening of the Council Estate, urban tree planting, and the identification of local nature conservation sites. In relation to the latter, mention was made of Merkinch, Aultnaskiach, Culduthel and Inverness City Centre, which could see a lot more woodland of varying size and diversity;
- information was sought, and provided, on the Nature Restoration Fund 2025/26, including why this was being led by the Council rather than NatureScot; the current position regarding the recruitment of a new Biodiversity Officer; and, in relation to biodiversity, how much account was taken of the changing climate and its impact in terms of the spread of invasive species and the decline of native species;
- in relation to coastal adaptation/flood management in the Golspie area, a significant amount of money had been spent on plans and designs but, to date, nothing had been done. The need to expedite matters was emphasised, and information was provided on the current position. It was queried whether it would be possible to have a paper from the Flood Risk Management Team highlighting all the action taking place in terms of coastal adaptation, and officers confirmed that could be taken forward;

- Herriott-Watt University had published a paper about how natural marine habitats such as kelp forests and seagrass beds could play a vital role in preventing flooding and coastal erosion, and it was suggested it was necessary to follow the research, and the potential associated opportunities, very closely; and
- the Seaboard Villages were impacted by storm surges and waves, and the community were keen to know when the rock armour would be addressed. It was recognised that hard engineering was expensive, and it was suggested there might be alternative soft engineering solutions. Officers confirmed that the Seaboard Villages appeared in some of the flood studies undertaken and would be looked at in due course.

The Committee **NOTED** the progress of actions by the Planning, Land Use and Environment Thematic Group.

## 7. Climate Change Adaptation Strategy

### Ro-innleachd Freagarrachaidh Chomhairle na Gàidhealtachd

There had been circulated Report No CCC/21/25 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Place.

During discussion, the following main points were raised:-

- information was sought, and provided, on how planning laws could be changed to take climate change into account; and the predicted increase in sea levels by 2050;
- a local plan for addressing coastal erosion in Saltburn and Linear Park, Invergordon, would be welcomed;
- reference was made to flooding caused by heavy rain and flash floods, and the need for integration between the relevant Council teams to ensure roads and pavements were free of silt and drains were adequately clean to cope with such events was emphasised;
- concern was expressed regarding the increase in extreme weather events. Particular reference was made to increased wind speeds, which had a significant impact on how people lived their lives, and the opportunity to mitigate the impact by additional tree planting which, in addition to providing shelter, would capture carbon;
- tidal energy was predictable, and a plea was made that it be investigated with more commitment as the technology had evolved. Officers confirmed it could be looked at, possibly in partnership with the European Marine Energy Centre, Marine Scotland and Crown Estate Scotland. However, financial viability was a concern. It was added that wave energy was another possibility in Scotland;
- it was queried whether specific examples were available that Members could use to demonstrate to communities the importance of adaptation;
- the statement in the report that “for every £1 spent on protecting communities from flooding, around £9 in property damages and wider impacts can be avoided” demonstrated the importance of coastal defences and well-maintained land drains; and
- it was necessary to accept that, if the UK was Net Zero and the rest of the world was not, climate change would continue, and the need for a holistic approach to how to mitigate the various impacts was emphasised;

The Committee:-

- \* i. **AGREED TO RECOMMEND** to the Council the approval of the Climate Change Adaptation Strategy set out at Appendix 2 of the report; and
- ii. **NOTED** that the Climate Change Adaptation Action Plan would be brought to the Climate Change Committee for consideration prior to full Council approval and publication.

## 8. **Electric Vehicle (EV) Infrastructure Project Update** **Lorgair-slighe Bun-structair Charbadan-dealain – Ath Cheumannan**

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

During discussion, the following main points were raised:-

- the expansion of the EV network as electric vehicles increased in popularity was welcomed. However, it was suggested there was a need to review the charging tariff structure to bring it in line with other local authorities in Scotland, costs in Highland being approximately double those in some other areas. It was added that many charities used electric vehicles, and it was costly for them to do so in Highland. In response, Members were advised there was a procedure for setting tariffs which was carried out through the project's Steering Committee. An agreement had been reached on a standard tariff across the four participating local authorities, which was a commercial rate to ensure the sustainability of the network without government subsidies;
- concern was expressed regarding the reliability of charging units and the associated extensive repair times, as well as the reliability of the network as a whole. Assurances having been sought regarding the migration of the charging network, it was confirmed that the model of charger in Highland was compatible with the EasyGo platform. A pilot test was scheduled to take place in September, prior to rolling out migration to the rest of the network. In addition, strict Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) had been put in place which included a 99% reliability rate. Members added that it would be helpful to review performance against the KPIs in the future;
- information was sought, and provided, as to what EasyGo's commitment to the promotion of affordable EV access in rural and island communities meant in practice; and
- in response to a question, it was confirmed that ChargePlace Scotland (CPS) cards would not be valid after 2025. Work was underway in terms of distributing EasyGo tariff ID cards to drivers. However, it could not yet be confirmed whether the card would work throughout Scotland.

The Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the current status of the EV Infrastructure project; and
- ii. scrutinised and **NOTED** the outcome of the Integrated Impact Assessment.

## 9. **Performance Monitoring Report - Q1 2025-26** **Aithisg Sgrùdadh Coileanaidh – R1 2025–26**

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

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

**10. Delivery Plan Budget Monitoring and Progress Update Q1 2025-26 – Net Zero, Energy Investment and Innovation Portfolio – Net Zero Programme  
Aithris Plana Lìbhrigidh – Cunntas às Ùr mu Adhartas R1 2025–26**

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

The Committee scrutinised and **NOTED** progress to date as outlined in the report.

The meeting concluded at 4.35 pm.

**The Highland Council**

Minutes of Meeting of the **Communities and Place Committee** held in the Council Chamber, Council Headquarters, Glenurquhart Road, Inverness on Thursday 14 August 2025 at 9.30 am.

**Present:**

|                         |                            |
|-------------------------|----------------------------|
| Mr C Ballance           | Ms M MacCallum (remote)    |
| Mr S Coghill (remote)   | Mr W MacKay (remote)       |
| Mr R Cross (substitute) | Mr G MacKenzie (Chair)     |
| Mr L Fraser             | Mr S Mackie (remote)       |
| Mr R Gale (substitute)  | Ms K MacLean               |
| Mr R Gunn               | Mr D Millar (remote)       |
| Mrs J Hendry            | Mr H Morrison (Vice Chair) |
| Mrs B Jarvie (remote)   |                            |

**Non-Members also present:**

|                         |                           |
|-------------------------|---------------------------|
| Dr C Birt (remote)      | Ms M Hutchison (remote)   |
| Mr J Finlayson (remote) | Ms J McEwan (remote)      |
| Ms C Gillies (remote)   | Mr J McGillivray (remote) |
| Dr M Gregson (remote)   | Ms M Ross (remote)        |

**In attendance:**

Mr M MacLeod, Assistant Chief Executive – Place  
Ms A Clark, Chief Officer – Housing and Communities  
Mr P Reid, Chief Officer – Facilities and Fleet Management (remote)  
Ms D Sutton, Chief Officer – Operations and Maintenance  
Mr A McKinnie, Strategic Lead - Waste Strategy and Operations  
Ms C Pieraccini, Strategic Lead - Finance  
Mr A Yates, Strategic Lead - Environmental Health and Bereavement Services  
Mr B Cameron, Strategic Lead – Housing and Customer Services  
Mr P Tomalin, Senior Community Development Manager  
Ms F Richardson, Community Development Manager  
Ms J Ross, Customer Service Delivery Manager  
Mr J MacLean, Bereavement Services Manager  
Ms M Murray, Principal Committee Officer  
Ms R Ross, Committee Officer

**Also in attendance:**

Chief Superintendent R Shepherd, Divisional Commander, Police Scotland

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

**Mr G MacKenzie in the Chair**

**Business**

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

Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of Mr J Bruce, Ms T Collier, Mr A Graham, Mr M Green and Mr M Reiss.

## 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 5: Mr D Millar

Item 6: Mr D Millar

Item 7: Mr D Millar

## 3. **Recess Powers** **Cumhachdan Fosaìdh**

The Committee **NOTED** that the recess powers granted by the Council at its meeting on 26 June 2025 had not been exercised in relation to the business of the Communities and Place Committee.

## 4. **Good News** **Naidheachdan Matha**

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

## 5. **Police Performance Report** **Aithisg Coileanaidh Poileis**

**Transparency Statement: Mr D Millar declared a connection to this item on the basis that a close family member was a serving Police Officer outwith Highland but, having applied the objective test, he did not consider that he had an interest to declare.**

There had been circulated Report No CP/13/25 by the Divisional Commander, Police Scotland.

The Divisional Commander highlighted several key areas of the report including the rollout of body worn video in Highland; the two large exercises undertaken with partners on counter terrorism and disaster recovery; the nomination of eight police officers from Highland for the Chief Constable's Excellence Award; the decrease in violent offences, missing people and shop-lifting; and the continued activity around County Lines and drug-related crimes.

During discussion, the following main points were raised:-

- in response to a request, the Divisional Commander undertook to liaise with Roads Policing to see if it was possible to obtain figures on the number of road traffic accidents involving cyclists or pedestrians;
- information was sought, and provided, on the use of body worn video footage in court; whether the redeployment of a large number of Police Officers during the visits of the American President and Vice President had resulted in any increase in crime or reduction of service; the robust approach being taken to the enforcement of shoplifting offences; and what was being done to address the increase in sexual crimes and build confidence in victims to report such crimes;



- a number of complaints had been received about young people using off-road bikes in areas where they were disturbing members of the public, and it was queried how a solution could be found to this problem;
- the presentation on County Lines given to the Association of Caithness Community Councils was commended; and
- on the point being raised, it was clarified that, due to the significant number of Community Councils in Highland, officers would no longer be routinely attending Community Council meetings. However, they would attend if there was a specific policing issue to be discussed. Attention was drawn to the new strategy of providing area-wide reports to Community Councils, and the Black Isle-wide Community Council report was commended.

The Committee scrutinised and **NOTED** progress made against the objectives set within the Highland Local Policing Plan 2023–2026 Year 1, attached as Annex A to the report, for the period covering 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025.

**6. Revenue Budget Monitoring Report for the period Q4 2024/25 and Q1 2025/26  
Aithisg Sgrùdaidh Buidseit Teachd-a-steach airson R4 2024/25**

**Transparency Statement: Mr D Millar declared a connection to this item on the basis that a close family member worked for the Communities and Place Service but, having applied the objective test, he did not consider that he had an interest to declare.**

There had been circulated Report No CP/14/25 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Place.

The Chief Officer – Facilities and Fleet Management provided a brief overview of the measures being taken to mitigate the overspend on fleet, including a holistic fleet review; a cessation of fleet procurement; cross-department working to reduce the mileage of light fleet; the recruitment of six agency mechanics; the further utilisation of the Car Club; and opportunities for outsourcing workshop space to key stakeholders.

During discussion, the following main points were raised:-

- the use of grey fleet appeared to be the default option for many members of staff and was causing a significant cost to the council. This behaviour could be difficult to change, and it was suggested that Council leadership needed to lead the way by being seen to use pool vehicles for the majority of journeys; and
- having spare vehicles, such as bin lorries, could be beneficial as it could prevent disruption to services in the case of vehicles breaking down. However, it was explained that, given the financial challenges, best use of resources was essential, and it was not always possible to do this.

The Committee:-

- i. scrutinised and **APPROVED** the final budget position for 2024/25 as set out in the report and Appendices 1 and 2 of the report;
- ii. scrutinised and **APPROVED** the forecast financial position for 2025/26 as set out in the report and Appendices 3 and 4 of the report;
- iii. **NOTED** the explanations provided for any material variances and actions taken or proposed; and

iv. **NOTED** the update provided regarding savings delivery.

**7. Capital Budget Monitoring Report for the periods Q4 2024/25 and Q1 2025/26  
Aithisg Sgrùdaidh Buidseit Calpa airson R4 2024/25 agus R1 2025/26**

**Transparency Statement:** Mr D Millar declared a connection to this item on the basis that a close family member worked for the Communities and Place Service but, having applied the objective test, he did not consider that he had an interest to declare.

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

The Committee:-

- i. scrutinised and **APPROVED** the outturn for the year 2024/25 as set out in the report and Appendix 1 of the report;
- ii. scrutinised and **APPROVED** the forecast financial position for the year 2025/26 as set out in the report and Appendix 2 of the report; and
- iii. **NOTED** the explanations provided for any material variances and actions taken or proposed.

**8. Highland Local Child Poverty Action Report – 2024/25  
Aithisg Gnìomh Bochdainn Chloinne Ionadail na Gàidhealtachd – 2024/25**

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

During discussion, the following main points were raised:-

- the reduction in childcare options, particularly after-school and school holiday childcare, was a significant issue in areas such as Sutherland, and information was sought, and provided, on what was being done to improve childcare provision in rural areas; and
- the majority of children involved in Children's Hearings came from deprived backgrounds and many of them were on the autistic spectrum. The importance of early diagnosis of Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) was highlighted, and it was queried what could be done to support parents of children with ASD or other additional needs. The Chair clarified that this issue would be more appropriately discussed at the Education Committee, and it was confirmed that the Chair of the Education Committee would be made aware of the points raised.

The Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the actions carried out in 2024/25 as set out in Section 2 of Highland's Child Poverty Action Report in Appendix 2 of the report;
- ii. **AGREED** the actions for delivery in 2025/26 as set out in Section 3 of the Action Report in Appendix 2 of the report; and
- iii. **NOTED** the activity to be undertaken during 2025/26 to review the priorities in line with the refresh of the Integrated Children's Services Plan.

## 9. Customer Services Update Cunntas às Ùr mu Sheirbheisean Luchd-cleachdaidh

There had been circulated Report No CP/17/25 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Place.

During discussion, the following main points were raised:-

- on the point being raised, the Customer Service Delivery Manager undertook to look at better ways of advertising Thurso Service Point opening hours for those who did not have access to the internet. In addition, it was confirmed that, although there was continuous review of services, there were no current plans to change the opening hours or location of the Service Point;
- the reduction in calls answering times was welcomed, and it was queried how many calls were abandoned daily. The Customer Service Delivery Manager undertook to provide Mr R Gale with information on the number of abandoned calls. However, it was clarified that the way figures on such calls were reported had changed significantly due to the new system of adding informative recorded messages to particular phone lines, leading to a level of informed abandonment;
- customer service was hugely important to the reputation of the Council, with Service Points being particularly important to vulnerable residents. The closure of Invergordon Service Point had had a negative impact, causing customers to have to get a bus to Alness to access the services they needed, and a plea was made to retain the remaining Service Points;
- the improvement over time of the customer experience and the ambition to improve further were commended, and it was suggested that the exercise that had been undertaken in respect of the Housing repairs process be applied to all services as it continued to take members of the public a long time to access some services;
- profound dissatisfaction was expressed regarding the closure of Dornoch Service Point, which it was suggested was at odds with the Council's localism agenda and stated priorities of People, Place and Prosperity. The Customer Service Delivery Manager explained that, whilst service delivery had changed in Dornoch, the Service Point had not closed. Services could still be accessed by a dedicated freephone facility within the Service Point building, or face-to-face by appointment. In response to a follow-up question, it was confirmed that one call had been made from the freephone line since its implementation, and it had been answered within 20 seconds. Monitoring would continue, and statistics on call answering times would form part of the review of the service delivery model; and
- clarification was sought, and provided, regarding the opening hours of Nairn Service Point.

The Committee **NOTED**:-

- i. the work and performance of the customer service network; and
- ii. the improvement work completed and planned.

## 10. Waste Management Update Cunntas às Ùr mu Stiùireadh Sgudail

There had been circulated Report No CP/18/25 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Place.

During discussion, the following main points were raised:-

- the Waste Management team was commended for its success in rationalising the waste management process;
- there would be far greater buy-in to the recycling process if people understood what happened to the recyclate following collection, and Members reiterated previous requests for information/education in that regard. The Strategic Lead – Waste Strategy and Operations confirmed that, following implementation of the service changes, the Waste Management Team would focus on enhanced waste awareness in conjunction with key contractor partners. The Chair suggested that, at an appropriate time, a briefing paper on what happened to recyclate and food waste following collection be provided to all Members;
- on the point being raised, if it was confirmed that the re-routing of refuse collections in Inverness would be an opportunity to provide households with updated or reminder information on how to use their recycling bins;
- an update was sought, and provided, on the Repair the Highlands Fund; and
- to reduce instances of fly-tipping, more education was needed on the appropriate disposal of garden waste and large items such as domestic appliances.

The Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the national work being undertaken to introduce a new Household Recycling Code of Practice;
- ii. **NOTED** updated information on the introduction of Waste Service change in Lochaber, including collection route optimisation;
- iii. **NOTED** the progress being made on the new Waste Transfer Station infrastructure in Portree and Fort William;
- iv. **NOTED** the position on the introduction of Industrial Waste Shredders; and
- v. **AGREED** that a briefing paper on what happened to recyclate and food waste following collection be provided to all Members.

## 11. Bereavement Services Update Cunntas às Ùr mu Sheirbheisean Caoidh

There had been circulated Report No CP/19/25 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Place.

During discussion, the following main points were raised:-

- information was sought, and provided, on the large number of headstones which had been cordoned off in Thurso cemetery; responsibility for repairing older headstones where it was difficult to find family members; the costs of the Inverness Crematorium refurbishment and why the budget continued into 2028/29; and the required maintenance works at Clynekirkton burial ground;
- the work on the cemetery extension in Portree was commended, and thanks were expressed to officers for their swift response to concerns regarding campervans parking in the new car park. In addition, an update was requested on any snagging works, and it was queried when the new lairs would be available for purchase;

- in response to a request, the Strategic Lead – Environmental Health and Bereavement Services undertook to provide an update at a Ward Business Meeting on the burial grounds at Broadford, Strath, Dunvegan and Skeabost;
- on the point being raised, it was confirmed that people were advised to consider taking out insurance when they purchased headstones, and while the Council did not currently provide insurance this was something that could be explored; and
- it was queried whether the operational date for Dores Cemetery could be brought forward given the reasons for the delay had now been addressed.

The Committee **NOTED**:-

- i. the progress of current projects in the burial ground extension programme;
- ii. the progress of the current memorial safety programme; and
- iii. the progress of the Inverness Crematorium refurbishment project.

**12. Service Performance Reporting for Q1 April 2025 to June 2025**  
**Aithris Coileanadh Seirbheis airson R1 Giblean 2025 gu Ògmhios 2025**

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

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

The meeting concluded at 11.20 am.

## 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 18 August 2025 at 10.00 am.

### **Present:**

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

### **In attendance:**

Mr D Haas, Senior Community Development Manager  
 Mr G Ralph, Housing Repairs Manager  
 Ms S Lamb, Project Officer, Community Regeneration  
 Mr D Lamont, Amenity Services Manager  
 Mr M Gemmell, Principal Repairs Officer  
 Mr A MacDonald, Bus Operations Manager  
 Mr D Summers, Principal Transport Officer  
 Mr S Grant, Roads Operation Manager  
 Mrs L Dunn, Joint Democratic Services Manager  
 Ms K Arnott, Committee Officer

### **Also in attendance:**

Inspector P Sutherland, 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 C Ballance 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 K Gowans and Mr A Graham.

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

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

Item 4 – Mr A Christie, Mr D MacPherson, Ms H Crawford, Mr D Gregg

Item 5 – Mr A Christie

Item 6 – Mr A Christie, Mr D Gregg

Item 7 – Mr A Christie, Mr D Gregg

Item 10.a, b and c – Mr A Christie

Item 13.i – Mr A Christie, Mr D Gregg

### **3. Recess Powers Cumhachdan Fosaiddh**

The Committee **NOTED** that the Recess Powers granted by the Council at its meeting on 26 June 2025 had not been exercised in relation to the business of this Committee.

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

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

**Mr A Christie as a Non-Executive Director of Inverness Bid Ltd and as a Non-executive Director of NHS Highland**

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

**Mr D Macpherson as a family member was employed by Police Scotland**

**Mrs H Crawford as a retailer**

There had been circulated Report No. CIA/27/2025 by the Chief Inspector Area Commander.

During discussion, the following issues were raised:

- in relation to shoplifting, it would be helpful to understand the different reasons people stole, and it was acknowledged that this might differ in different types of shops. Members suggested the police could monitor shoplifting offenders for a period of around two weeks to obtain further data. It was clarified the crime was theft, not ‘shoplifting’. Particular concern was expressed in relation to organised theft from shops;
- in relation to hate crime, the reported increases were concerning, although it was acknowledged that the reporting method had changed and this might have influenced the statistics. Members emphasised the importance of working together to ensure the Highlands remained free of hate crime, and the work outlined by the police, including joint initiatives with partners, to tackle it was welcomed;
- in response to concern about how traffic incidents on the A96, and other trunk roads, were managed, with particular reference to the problems of diversion through rural settlements, information was provided, including on the dynamic and unique nature of each incident;
- in relation to speeding in 50mph zones, and elsewhere, Members and the public were urged to report incidences to the police to ensure situations could be monitored and resources provided appropriately;

- concern was expressed about anti-social behaviour in the city centre, and its impact on residents and businesses. Joint work being undertaken between the Police and the Council with communities was welcomed, as were the QR codes for reporting issues. Additional signage and regular monitoring of problem areas was urged, as well as community initiatives to promote positive behaviour;
- attention was drawn to the shoplifting and other challenges being experienced outwith Inverness city centre, and the unique challenges facing rural retailers. It was hoped they might participate in the deployment plan to seek additional funding, and the importance of empowering retailers to gather and share information and evidence was emphasised;
- an explanation was sought and provided for the detection rate statistics in the report;
- the useful role of CCTV in crime prevention and detection was summarised, and consideration given to the methods of examining CCTV footage, as well as the resources required. Movement trigger cameras were useful, and it would be beneficial to source funding streams for additional CCTV coverage. Gaps in CCTV coverage would be further considered outwith the meeting;
- feedback on an incident involving an attack on a police vehicle could be provided to Mr Macpherson outwith the meeting;
- information on the reporting method for domestic crime, and possible double reporting thereof, could be provided outwith the meeting. It was clarified that crime was labelled domestic if it took place between current or ex- relationship-partners;
- the police were thanked for their attendance at recent community meetings in Raigmore, and for their ongoing work with communities. While it was disappointing that officers were no longer able to commit to attending all community council meetings, attention was drawn to their presence going forward at the community council forum;
- information was sought and provided on the national and international efforts to tackle online fraud; and
- on behalf of local residents, speed monitoring was requested on various roads in Inverness, and these were noted. Further requests could be made outwith the meeting.

The Committee **NOTED** the progress made against the objectives set within the Highland Local Policing Plan 2023–2026 Year 1 attached as Annex A to the report, for the period covering 1 April 2023 – 31 March 2025.

## **5. City Strategy – City Centre Review**

### **Ro-innleachd Cathair-bhaile – Ath-sgrùdadh Meadhan a’ Bhaile**

**Transparency Statements: Mr A Christie declared a connection to this item in his capacity as a Non-executive Director of Inverness Bid Ltd. However, having applied the objective test, he did not consider that he had an interest to declare.**

There had been circulated Report No. CIA/28/25 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Place.

During discussion, the following issues were raised:

- the review was welcomed, and many aesthetic and safety concerns with the city centre were highlighted;



- concern was expressed by many Members that the proposed workshop was for Members, which could give a false impression of decisions being made without full engagement, despite the intention to engage with stakeholders after the workshop. The importance of seeking the views of business owners, local communities, and disability, youth and other groups who would be affected by any changes, at the earliest stage, was emphasised. Some caution was expressed in relation to managing the input from a large group of people with potentially conflicting opinions, but it was pointed out that a similar stakeholder participation group had been undertaken, successfully, in relation to the refurbishment of the Victorian market;
- the map of the city centre used for the BID district was not as wide as the Council-defined centre;
- prior to asking private property owners to remove foliage growing on their buildings, it was advisable for the Council to ensure Council-owned properties were appropriately maintained;
- reference was made to the significance of the city centre to outlying settlements and rural areas, with specific reference to the inclusion of Visit Inverness Loch Ness in the review; and
- it was re-iterated that the Committee would have the final decision on the review programme, and much of it would be dependent on funding. The Senior Community Development Manager would draw up terms of reference for the participation group.

Thereafter, the Committee:-

- NOTED** the background to the opportunities to improve the built environment within the City Centre;
- AGREED** to support the principle of supporting efforts to improve the built environment; and
- AGREED** to establish a cross-party stakeholder participation group, including representatives from community organisations, local businesses, heritage bodies, and faith groups, alongside Members, to co-develop City Vision options and bring forward deliverable outcomes for this committee in the context of available resources.

## 6. **Bus services in Inverness City** **Seirbheisean Bhus Baile Inbhir Nis**

**Transparency Statements:** the undernoted Members declared connections to this item but, having applied the objective test, they 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. CIA/29/25 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Place.

During discussion, the following issues were considered:

- a similar report on rural bus services in the area was requested for a future meeting;
- the loss of routes operated by private bus companies was a concern and, in this respect, the reduction in the amount of the concessionary fare that was paid to the bus operator was disappointing, especially given that only people aged 23 to 59, and without a disability, were required to pay a fare;
- the reliability and regularity of bus services was highlighted as key factors in encouraging bus use and it was pointed out that the Highland Council in-house bus service was performing well in this regard;
- for the future, key issues included improving routes to key facilities, creating hubs for people to easily change buses, co-ordination of bus timetables with train times, considering express routes for commuters, and securing vital routes, with particular mention of routes that provided services to vulnerable people, for example care homes;
- information was sought and provided on possible bus routes to and from various places including Kilvean cemetery, Culloden battlefield, Fort George, and Milton of Leys;
- it was clarified that private bus operators were required to give 28 days notice of the withdrawal of a bus route;
- when consulting with the public, or providing information on bus routes, it was important to consider those without online access. In a similar vein, the provision of printed timetables by bus drivers was beneficial;
- Dial-a-Bus / On Demand bus services, especially for rural areas, was being reviewed;
- the transport team was thanked for their prompt action in sourcing an alternative service through Kingsmills and it was hoped that this would be maintained after the 6 month trial period;
- a summary was sought and provided of the history of the Council's in-house bus service, and how the vehicles had been obtained, as well as the intention to obtain at least one electric bus in 2026;
- the return of the provision of bus services to the public rather than the private sector was welcomed; and
- clarification was sought and provided on why some of Stagecoach's zero carbon vehicles were not being used in Inverness.

Thereafter, the Committee:-

- NOTED** the recent changes to the Inverness bus service network and commented on the priority needs for bus services in the City;
- AGREED** to passenger needs being researched, in collaboration with Stagecoach, to support the developing Bus Service Improvement Partnership; and
- AGREED** to bring a similar report for rural bus services to a future Committee meeting.

## 7. Winter Service Plan 2025/26 Plana Seirbheis a' Gheamhraidh 2025/26

**Transparency Statements:** the undernoted Members declared connections to this item but, having applied the objective test, they 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. CIA/30/25 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Place.

During discussion, Members raised the following main points which were responded to:-

- tribute was made to Mr Alan Johnston, Roads Officer who was retiring at the end of September. Mr Johnston had over 45 years experience and his service to his work with the Council was commended and the Committee wished him well in his retirement;
- the work of the Roads Operations team, who dealt with many challenges in a professional and efficient manner, was commended;
- there may be changes required in winter maintenance routes given some bus routes had changed;
- with the change in the climate, winter maintenance was becoming more than just dealing with ice and snow, but more often dealing with storms and flash flooding. Also, if there was more water and it froze this would make roads and footpaths treacherous. It was noted that a new gully emptier machine was on order, which would bring additional capacity to gully maintenance in order to prevent flooding. The gully emptying routes would be reviewed to take account of this additional capacity, which included the hiring of a drain Jetter. The ambition was for an annual clean out of each gully;
- MacDiarmid road was not on the winter maintenance route, but it was a school bus route. An undertaking was given to add this to the winter maintenance list;
- the availability of grit bins and the importance of keeping pavements well maintained to provide safe walking routes all year round was highlighted. The Roads team did work with other teams within the Council to maintain pavements and capital funding was being invested in this;
- it was requested that guidance be issued to Community Councils on the Community Self Help Scheme. This would encourage and inform them that it was possible to get help from the Council to support communities being more resilient in winter conditions. It was advised that information on the Community Self Help Scheme was available on the Council's website. The Roads Operations Manager would work with the Communications team to make the public aware of the scheme. Information on the scheme would also be provided at the next Community Council Forum;
- routes between Milton housing and Harris road and Drumossie Avenue and Sir Walter Scott drive were not on the pavement map for gritting. It was advised that these pavements were not adopted, but the Council did work with other agencies to support them with winter maintenance;
- the Raigmore bus gate was not on the winter maintenance route map as NHS Highland dealt with this;
- it was queried if there was capacity to evaluate whether McEwan Court supported accommodation should be added to the list for footpath maintenance. An undertaking was given to look at this;
- it was advised that contractors taking significant amounts of salt/grit from grit bins was theft as it was for the public's use and not commercial operations;
- it was requested when roads in a new housing development were adopted by the Council, Ward Members be informed so that they could advise residents. An undertaking was given to provide information to local Members on new developments that were nearing completion. The liability for an unadopted road was with the developer until the road was adopted; and

- information on the maintenance programme for the storm drains was requested. It was advised that the hired drain Jetter was being brought in to clean out storm drains and some of the storm drains were combined systems with Scottish Water.

Thereafter, the Committee **APPROVED** the Winter Service Plan for 2025/26, subject to MacDiarmid road being added to the winter maintenance list.

## **8. Ardersier Public Conveniences Goireasan Poblach Àird nan Saor**

There had been circulated Report No. CIA/31/25 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Place.

It was queried that if a private individual came forward with an offer to buy or lease the Ardersier public convenience and at the same time a community group came forward with a proposal for a community asset transfer, how would it be determined which takes priority. It was advised that advice would be taken from the Estates team on this. However, in the past the Council had favoured the community application.

Thereafter, the Committee **AGREED**:-

- i. the closure of the Ardersier public convenience from 31 August 2025; and
- ii. to formal disposal of the asset, to allow the Ardersier public convenience be marketed for sale or made available for asset transfer.

## **9. Housing Performance Report – 1 April 2025 to 30 June 2025 Aithisg Coileanaidh Taigheadais – 1 Giblean 2025 gu 30 Ògmhios 2025**

There had been circulated Report No. CIA/32/25 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Place.

During discussion, Members raised the following main points, which were responded to:-

- Culloden and Ardersier had a long relet time for houses and an improvement on this was sought given the high demand for houses in these areas;
- progress was sought on retrofitting houses for energy efficiency across the Highlands. It was advised that the Service was actively seeking properties in order to retrofit them for energy efficiency. This could mean properties having new technologies such as air source heat pumps, solar panels and cavity/external wall insulation being installed. Information on how many of the 83 properties that had been relet had been retrofitted would be shared with the Committee;
- while the statistics showed that the target for emergency repairs was being met, response times to carry out these repairs showed there had been a slip in performance this year. It was queried how response times could be improved. It was advised that part of the reason for this was trying to recruit trades to the Inverness area, which was ongoing, and had improved recently. It was hoped that the additional recruitment to fill vacant positions would have a positive impact in future quarters performance statistics. In instances when emergency repairs had been contracted out, there may be some discrepancies if contractors did not close the repair job off until they issued an invoice for the job, which did affect the performance statistics;

- further detail was provided in relation to the delivery output of the housing capital investment programme;
- a point was made that while some relet times for void properties had improved, they were still outwith the target, but the report did not explain why this was happening. It was advised that there were multiple reasons why voids could take longer, e.g. due to the complexity of them, travel time to rural houses and waiting on materials. An undertaking was given to look at what further information could be provided on this for future reports; and
- in terms of empty homes and voids, information had been provided by a member of the public that a Council flat in Fraser Street, Beauly had been empty for four years. An undertaking was given to look into this.

Thereafter, the Committee **NOTED** the information provided on housing performance in the period 1 April 2025 – 30 June 2025.

#### **10. Inverness Common Good Fund Maoin Math Coitcheann Inbhir Nis**

**Transparency Statements:** Mr A Christie declared a connection to items 10.a, b and c as a non-executive Director of Inverness Bid Ltd but, having applied the objective test, he did not consider that he had an interest to declare.

##### **a) Financial Monitoring – Q4 2024/25 and Q1 Financial Monitoring for 2025/26 Sgrùdadh Ionmhasail - Cairteal 4 2024/25 agus Sgrùdadh Ionmhasail Cairteal 1 2025/26**

There had been circulated Report No. CIA/33/25 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Place.

In response to a query, further clarity was provided on the element of the overspend on the Victorian Market Operations that would be recovered through rental income payable by the tenants. The element that related to an exceptional charge for electricity was being investigated.

The Committee **NOTED** the final financial monitoring report as detailed in Appendix 1 of the report for the Inverness Common Good Fund for the year ended 31 March 2025 and also the financial monitoring report to 30 June 2025 as detailed in Appendix 2 of the report.

##### **b) Inverness Common Good Fund Sub-Committee Annual Report [2024/25] Aithisg Bhliadhnail Fo-Chomataidh Maoin Math Coitcheann Inbhir Nis [2024/25]**

There had been circulated Report No. CIA/34/25 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Place.

During discussion, the work of the Inverness Common Good Fund Sub-Committee was commended and reference made to the excellent presentation by Visit Inverness Loch Ness and ongoing excellent relations with Inverness BID Ltd.

Thereafter, concern was expressed at VisitScotland's decision to close its tourist information centre on High Street, Inverness, reference being made to the fact the valuable service the facility provided to visitors in this location could not be replaced by a focus on digital information and online resources.

The Committee **NOTED** the work of the Inverness Common Good Fund Sub-Committee as described within the report.

**c) Grants Over £10,000 Report**  
**Aithisg Thabhartasan Thar £10,000**

There had been circulated Report No. CIA/35/25 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Place.

During discussion, Members raised the following main points:-

- an explanation was sought and provided on the rationale for the Sub-Committee's recommendation that the application by Inverness BID Ltd be drawn down from the Community Regeneration Fund (CRF) allocation to Inverness and Area;
- in response to a query, confirmation that the above application could be approved without referral to the CRF Strategic Sub-Group as these were funds that had been allocated to the City Area for distribution; and
- it be emphasised to Visit Inverness Loch Ness that approval of the application was a one off and future applications would be considered on their merits and include justification for the grant being sought; feedback should also be provided on how the grant awards had been used.

During further discussion, it was suggested that a report be brought forward to Members providing further information on town twinning activities and a more concrete breakdown of the benefits derived to the City of Inverness from the twinning arrangements/visits. It was confirmed a report on this item would be brought to the Inverness Common Good Sub-Committee in the first instance.

Thereafter, reference was made to the value of the historic town twinning links and opportunities to review and derive further benefits from the existing arrangements. It was highlighted that the model for town twinning had changed since its inception and the Inverness Town Twinning Committee was actively focused on developing business and sporting alliance links which was invaluable. It was also seeking to recruit new members, particularly younger people, and any Member with an interest was invited to contact the Committee directly.

Thereafter, the Committee:-

- i. **APPROVED** the following grant applications for funding:-
  - a. Inverness BID Ltd - **£17,950** to be drawn from the Community Regeneration Fund allocation to Inverness and Area;
  - b. Visit Inverness Loch Ness - **£20,000** to be drawn from the City Destination Projects Budget;
  - c. Inverness: Augsburg Celebration of 70th Anniversary Reciprocal Exchange - **£12,000** to be drawn down from reserve balances;
  - d. Inverness: Augsburg Sporting Alliance Exchange - **£14,350** to be drawn from reserve balances;
- ii. **AGREED** that a report on town twinning be brought to the Inverness Common Good Sub-Committee in the first instance; and
- iii. **AGREED** £0.030m be transferred from Other Grants to Poverty and Inequality.

**11. Repurposing Place Based Investment Funds – Ward 19.****Ag Ath-adhbharachadh Mhaoinean Tasgaidh Stèidhichte air Àite – Uàrd 19**

The Committee **APPROVED** the repurposing of £50k from the Place Based Investment Fund (PBIF), previously approved by the City of Inverness Area Committee in 2022, following support shown by Ward 19 Members for the use of their PBIF allocation.

The funds were originally intended to support the creation of an outdoor community facility on the UHI campus. However, UHI had since revised its proposals and had requested that the £50k PBIF allocation be repurposed for an indoor community project on campus instead.

The revised proposal was being brought forward for the following reasons:

- i. an increase in costs associated with the groundworks required for the original project; and
- ii. the revised project would provide a more accessible indoor space, enabling a wider range of activities to be delivered on campus. It would also support a more diverse group of users throughout the year.

**12. 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 19 May 2025:-

**Ward 12**

N/A

**Ward 13**

Central Primary School: Polycrub Project £3,904

**Ward 14**

Merkinch Football Academy: Merkinch Football League £1,500

**Ward 15**

Inverness Royal Academy: Belgium Battlefield Trip £747.67

Inverness Royal Academy: Iceland Field Study Trip Travel Costs £845

**Ward 16**

Walker Park Bins £348

**Ward 17**

Balloch Community Association SCIO: Radiator Replacement £3,144

**Ward 19**

N/A

**13. Minutes****Geàrr-chunntas**

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

**Mr A Christie as a non-executive Director of NHS Highland and as a non-executive Director of Inverness BID Ltd**

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

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

- i. City of Inverness Area Committee held on 19 May 2025 - **NOTED**;
- ii. Inverness Common Good Fund Grants Sub-Committee held on 6 August 2025 - **APPROVED**; and
- iii. Inverness Events and Festivals Working Group held on 7 August 2025 - **APPROVED**.

The meeting concluded at 2.30pm.



## 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, 20 August 2025 at 9.30am.

### **Present:**

Dr C Birt  
Mrs M Cockburn  
Mr S Coghill  
Mr D Fraser  
Mr R Gale  
Mr J Grafton  
Mr R Gunn  
Mrs J Hendry (substitute)  
Mrs B Jarvie

Ms L Johnston  
Ms E Knox  
Ms L Kraft  
Mrs I Mackenzie  
Mr A MacKintosh  
Mrs A MacLean  
Mrs M Reid  
Ms M Ross

### **Non-Members present:**

Dr M Gregson  
Mr J Finlayson  
Ms M Hutchison  
Mr T MacLennan  
Mr R MacKintosh

Mr S Mackie  
Mr J McGillivray  
Mr P Oldham  
Mrs T Robertson

### **NHS Highland representatives:**

Ms J Davies, Director of Public Health  
Ms L Bussell, Director of Nursing  
Mr S Steer, Director of Adult Social Care  
Ms A Johnstone, Interim Chief Officer

### **Third sector representatives in attendance:**

Dr G Rodger, Inspiring Young Voices

### **Also in attendance:**

Ms L McKittrick, Outgoing Youth Convener  
Ms L McBain, Incoming Youth Convener

### **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  
Mr I Kyle, Lead Officer Strategy, Performance and Quality Assurance  
Ms J Park, Strategic Lead Child Health  
Mr J Libby, Transition Head of Children & Justice  
Ms V Gunn, Human Resources Business Partner  
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 introduced and welcomed the new Director of Public Health, Ms Jennifer Davies, to the meeting. She hoped in future to present the 2024 Director of Public Health report on Health Inequalities to the Committee, and explained that work had commenced on the 2025 report, which would build on the same themes.

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

Apologies were intimated on behalf of Mrs K MacLean and Mrs M Paterson.

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

Declaration of Interest – Item 8, Mr A MacKintosh

Transparency Statement – Item 5, Mrs M Reid

### **3. Recess Powers Cumhachdan Fosaidh**

The Committee **NOTED** that the recess powers granted by the Council at its meeting on 26 June 2025 did not require to be exercised in relation to the business of the Health, Social Care and Wellbeing Committee.

### **4. Service Achievements Coileanaidhean Seirbheis**

Updates were provided, and had been circulated, on the following:

- June Voice in Action Award Winners - Scottish Highlands;
- The Highland Council Commendation to Dr. Tina Barrows on Doctoral Achievement;
- Care Experience and Corporate Parenting e-learning module;
- Vision 26;
- SQA exam results day for young people across Highland 2025;
- Joint Inspection of Adult Services in Highland: Integration and Outcomes – focus on people living with mental illness;
- Student Summer Placements (6th Year);
- Congratulations to our Graduating Trainee Social Workers; and
- Gordon Wyness was congratulated and thanked for 45 years' service as a Children's Hearings Volunteer Panel Member.

During discussion, the following issues were raised:

- the Chair congratulated all those who had received a mention in the Service Achievements, and also thanked the many others who were doing excellent work for the Council, and for the NHS and third sector;
- Members highlighted the positive feedback received following the summer placements and it was hoped this would continue in future years; and

- a desire was voiced for Members to consider the Scottish Government's Population Health Framework, which would provide an opportunity to learn from the past and facilitate joint working with the NHS and third sector.

The Committee **NOTED** the updates and **AGREED** a Members' workshop on public health issues be arranged.

**5. Health and Care (Staffing) (Scotland) Act 2019 – Annual Report  
Achd Slàinte agus Cùraim (Luchd-obrach) (Alba) 2019 – Aithisg  
Bhliadhna**

**Transparency Statement - Mrs M Reid declared a connection to this item as a registered childminder but, having applied the objective test, did not consider that she had an interest to declare.**

There had been circulated Report No CW/13/25 by the Assistant Chief Executive – People.

Attention was drawn to a typo in section 6.1 of the report where reference to 1 April 2025 should read 1 April 2024.

During discussion, the following issues were raised:

- concern was expressed at the lengthy list of requirements for childminders and that this might put some people off becoming a childminder. While it was acknowledged as challenging, the benefits in terms of quality service provision were outlined; and
- information was sought on concerns that social work assistants could be asked to undertake work that they were not qualified or trained for, and assurance in relation to this would be provided as part of Item 6.

The Committee **NOTED** the annually mandated report by The Highland Council on the implementation of the Health and Care (Staffing) (Scotland) Act 2019.

**6. Annual Workforce Plan  
Plana Bliadhna Luchd-obrach**

There had been circulated Report No HCW/14/25 by the Assistant Chief Executive – People.

During discussion, the following issues were raised:-

- in relation to social work assistants, as raised at Item 5, assurance was provided that they would not be expected to undertake work for which they were not qualified or trained. The post might incentivise some to train as social workers and it was hoped that permanent contracts would soon be offered for these posts, noting that short term contracts made recruitment and retention more challenging. Assurance was provided that this would be considered in due course;
- social work succession planning and career progression, for those that wanted it, was vital and aimed to make social work a more popular career choice. In this regard, more work with schools would be helpful;

- the 'grow our own' talent approach was welcomed, the use of bank staff to improve flexibility was explained, and the importance of reaching potential care sector workforce early, through school and college engagement, was emphasised;
- although still high, the reduction in the vacancy rate was welcomed, and the benefits of having a spread of age groups was pointed out;
- in relation to the higher rate of sickness absence, it was hoped that health related training was being delivered regularly, including, for example, on infection prevention and control. Attention was drawn to the priority access to some vaccines provided to key staff;
- the need for affordable housing provision for key workers, especially in rural areas, was emphasised, and this was being tackled through the portfolio boards;
- it was hoped staff were offered flexibility in later years to reduce their hours and / or responsibilities, which might aid retention. Information from exit interviews would be helpful to understand why they were leaving, for example lifestyle choice or the pressure of work. It was also pointed out that not all staff wished to climb the career ladder, and they should be appreciated in the same way;
- it was welcomed that staff were being given time to complete training during working hours;
- it was hoped the Investors In People ambition would be beneficial and worth the expenditure; and
- the development of apprenticeships was welcomed.

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

- i. Health and Social Care workforce planning progress report and updated action plan;
- ii. positive outcomes from the report, including:
  - a. continued success of trainee programmes for Social Workers (both undergraduate and postgraduate), Health Visitors, and School Nurses, supporting workforce development and succession planning;
  - b. the turnover rate of staff had reduced from 14.7% in 2023 to 10.5% in 2024;
  - c. in mitigation of the high level of social work vacancies and subsequent risk, the role of Social Work Assistants (HC8) had been successfully introduced to alleviate some of the delivery pressures from Social Workers (currently on a fixed term basis). This alternative method of service delivery reduced the number of qualified Social Workers required whilst allowing the service time to evaluate the effectiveness of this role;
  - d. the implementation of the Person-Centred Solutions portfolio; and
- iii. continuing risk highlighted in this report and reflected in the Corporate Risk Register. This related to the high vacancy rate that continued with Children's Services and the impact this was having on service delivery and the wellbeing of the workforce.

## 7. **Care Reform Bill** **Bile Ath-leasachaidh a' Chùrainm**

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

During discussion, the following issues were raised:-

- the legislation to strengthen support for unpaid carers was welcomed, and the impact of long term caring on the carer's health was highlighted. It was vital they were supported to take appropriate breaks. Attention was drawn to the number of people providing unpaid care, estimated at approximately 17% of the Scottish population, and the financial value of the care they provided. Suggestions were made on the ways this legislation could improve lives, which included supporting the third sector's community-based work, and providing carers with respite, funded through Self Directed Support (SDS) if possible;
- the unique needs of the Highlands and Islands should be taken into consideration and implementation of national policies, and it was queried what influence the Council could have in this;
- support was voiced for the future implementation of Anne's Law, which was planned legislation aimed at strengthening the rights of care home residents to see and spend time with their loved ones, even during infectious disease outbreaks;
- care for the carer should be front and centre of the implementation of new legislation; and
- the questions and issues raised would be useful during further discussions at COSLA in relation to this legislation.

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

- i. passing of the Care Reform (Scotland) Bill by Scottish Parliament; and
- ii. opportunities and challenges as currently set out in the report.

## **8. Registered Services Annual Report Aithisg Bhliadhnail Sheirbheisean Clàraichte**

**Declaration of Interest – Mr A MacKintosh declared an interest as a close relative was a member of staff at the Orchard, and he left the chamber for this item.**

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

During discussion, the following issues were raised:-

- the Chair thanked everyone involved in foster and kinship caring for their valuable services;
- the low intake of new foster carers was concerning, and attention was drawn to possible flaws in the marketing strategy, with specific reference to internet search results for fostering in the Highlands. It was queried what could be done to improve foster carer recruitment and it was explained that local publicity and recruitment, using lived testimony, tended to be the most effective. Clarification was provided that foster carer recruitment was proving a challenge internationally;

- it was highlighted that a Care Inspectorate headline grade of ‘adequate’ could be demoralising for a care provider when the grade did not reflect the overall quality of care being provided but was impacted by the inability to recruit adequate foster carers. In the examples provided at section 6.5 of the report many of the personal care issues were graded good or very good. Engagement with the Care Inspectorate on this was proposed, and thanks were extended to all staff and care experienced young people who had contributed to the inspection;
- the shifting language of care to minimise causing trauma to people who wished to read their case files was welcomed, and a summary was provided of the provision of staff to accompany and explain case files if required;
- as corporate parents to Looked After Children, information was sought on the timelines for the repairs required to the Orchard Care Home, as highlighted by the Care Inspectorate and, while this was not yet known, a summary of engagement that had been undertaken on the issues was provided;
- in response to a query about the achievement of the recommendations in the Care Inspectorate report, attention was drawn to the improvement plan and its timeframes;
- information was sought and provided on processes for transition from children’s to adult services, and clarity was provided on the audits that had been undertaken in the areas of transitions and continuing care, with reports on this by the Council and by NHS Highland to inform the processes going forward; and
- the Chair urged anyone interested in becoming a foster parent to come forward.

Thereafter, the Committee:-

- NOTED** the contents of the report;
- NOTED** improvements across services, including those areas where improvement needs to accelerate to enable sustained progress across all areas of service delivery; and
- AGREED** an annual Registered Services report comes back to Committee covering future inspections outcomes.

**9. Revenue Budget Monitoring Report Quarter 1 2025/26 and Final Out-turn 2024/25**  
**Aithisg Sgrùdaidh Buidseat Teachd-a-steach Ràith 1 2025/26 agus Fìor Shuidheachadh Deireannach 2024/25**

There had been circulated Report No HCW/17/25 by the Assistant Chief Executive – People.

During discussion, the following issues were raised:-

- an explanation was sought and provided for the unallocated savings in the family team, detailed at section 7.3 in the report, along with how this was being addressed across the budgets, in tandem with the action plan for the delivery of savings in children’s services;
- in response to a query about the three year delivery plan for savings in children’s services, it was intended the action plan would be shared at the

next meeting of the Committee, and a brief summary of what might be included was provided;

- information was sought and provided on reported overspends in relation to Self Directed Support, and some of the challenges that had been experienced around payment cards, which were being resolved;
- confirmation was sought and provided that staff vacancies were not being used as a planned savings measure but had previously balanced the budget where there had been overspends;
- in response to queries about delivery plan requirements and the challenges around meeting savings targets for Home in Highland, and Looked After Children, attention was drawn to the information available to Members on the PRMS system, help with which could be provided on request, and to the challenges around managing the costs of some of the children who were being cared for out of authority, which could be further explained outwith the meeting;
- the position in relation to the Adult Social Care budget and partnership working with NHS Highland on this was queried and it was noted that this could have an impact on the Council budget; and
- queries relating to the underspend in criminal justice were explained, and further clarification could be obtained out with the meeting from Strategic Lead for Child Health.

The Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the 2024/2025 final end of year out-turn (Appendix 1 & 1a);
- ii. **AGREED** the forecast financial position for 2025/2026 as set out in the report and appendices (Appendix 2, 2a & 3);
- iii. **NOTED** the explanations provided for material variances and actions taken and proposed; and
- iv. **NOTED** the update provided regarding savings delivery (Appendix 4).

#### 10. **Delivery Plan and Performance Report – Q1 2025/2026** **Plana Lìbhrigidh agus Aithisg Choileanaidh – R1 2025/2026**

There had been circulated Report No HCW/18/25 by the Assistant Chief Executive – People.

During discussion, the following issues were raised:-

- information was sought on whether the intended increase in hybrid working had been achieved, noting that hybrid might improve recruitment and retention. Further information could be provided outwith the meeting, although it was explained that due to the nature of many care sector jobs, hybrid often meant working between an office and the community, rather than from home;
- concerns were raised in relation to the situation with Moss Park Care Home in Fort William and what the future for care in Lochaber might involve. This was under consideration, with community engagement taking place; and
- noting that adult social care complaints were generally passed to NHS Highland to deal with, it was queried whether the Council also monitored performance in this area. The Chief Officer, Integrated People Services, would look into this and inform Members outwith the meeting.

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

- i. Service's performance and risk information; and
- ii. Delivery Plan progress information.

**11. Minutes**  
**Geàrr-chunntas**

The had been circulated and **NOTED** Minutes of the Highland Violence Against Women Partnership Group held on 6 February and 20 May 2025.

The meeting ended at 11.50am.



## The Highland Council

Minutes of Meeting of the **Audit Committee** held in the Council Chamber, Council Headquarters, Glenurquhart Road, Inverness on Wednesday, 20 August 2025 at 2.00pm.

### Present:

|                        |                          |
|------------------------|--------------------------|
| Mr M Baird             | Mrs L Kraft (Substitute) |
| Mr C Ballance (Remote) | Mr D McDonald            |
| Mr B Boyd (Remote)     | Ms J McEwan (Remote)     |
| Mr L Fraser            | Mrs T Robertson          |
| Mr A Jarvie (Remote)   | Ms M Ross                |
| Mr R Jones (Remote)    | Mr R Stewart             |
| Mr G MacKenzie         |                          |

### Non-Members also present:

|                         |                     |
|-------------------------|---------------------|
| Mr J Finlayson (Remote) | Mrs M Reid (Remote) |
| Mr P Logue              |                     |

### Officials in Attendance:

Mr A Gunn, Assistant Chief Executive – Corporate  
 Mr S Fraser, Chief Officer – Legal and Corporate Governance  
 Mr B Porter, Chief Officer – Corporate Finance  
 Mr M Watters, Corporate Information Governance Manager  
 Miss D Sutherland, Strategic Lead (Corporate Audit)  
 Mr J Thurlbeck, Corporate Audit Manager  
 Mr J Campbell, Senior Auditor, Internal Audit  
 Ms A Morrison, Complaints and Information Manager  
 Miss J MacLennan, Joint Democratic Services Manager, Performance and Governance  
 Mrs G MacPherson, Committee Officer, Performance and Governance

### Also in attendance:

Ms E Scoburgh, Audit Scotland  
 Ms C Gardiner, 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.**

**Mrs T Robertson in the Chair**

#### 1. Apologies for Absence Leisgeulan

Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of Mr P Oldham and Mr A Sinclair.

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

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

Item 4 – Mr R Stewart

**3. Recess Powers  
Cumhachdan Fosaìdh**

The Committee **NOTED** that the Recess Powers granted by the Council at its meeting on 26 June 2025 had not been exercised in relation to the business of the Audit Committee.

**4. Internal Audit Reviews and Progress Report  
Ath-sgrùdaidhean In-sgrùdaidh agus Aithisg Adhartais**

**Transparency Statement: Mr R Stewart declared a connection to this item as a General Election candidate but, having applied the objective test, did not consider that he had an interest to declare.**

There had been circulated Report No. AC/16/25 by the Strategic Lead (Corporate Audit).

Prior to discussion, the Strategic Lead (Corporate Audit) provided a verbal update in terms of sections 7 and 8 of the report, which included the following points:-

- an annual internal audit review of the Inverness Green Freeport would be required. Similar to the arrangements with the City Region Deal, a copy of the resulting audit report would be provided to the Scottish Government; and
- interviews for the vacant auditor post were to be held at the end of this month. An update would be provided to the November Committee.

a) Corporate – Financial Sustainability (Full Assurance)

In response to a question regarding salary overpayments, Members were informed that an update would be provided to the November Committee.

b) Corporate – Elections Management (Substantial Assurance)

In response to a question regarding the cost of recent Election recounts, Members were informed that the Council had claimed the maximum recoverable amount from the Scottish Government, and it was understood to have covered the costs.

Assurance was sought, and provided, in terms of staffing an Election adequately. An update would be provided in due course.

The Committee **NOTED**:-

- i. the Final Reports referred to in Section 5.1 of the report; and
- 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.

**5. Internal Audit Action Tracking  
Tracadh Ghnìomhan In-sgrùdaidh**

There had been circulated Report No. AC/17/25 by the Strategic Lead (Corporate Audit).

During discussion, the following items were raised:-

- further information was sought in terms of section 6.2 of the report, and it was asked if the target date for ICT Arrangements in Schools would be met. A response was provided; and
- information was sought regarding the use of imprests in health and social care establishments. The Chief Officer – Corporate Finance provided a response where it was explained that alternative methods of payments were being looked at.

The Committee **NOTED** the action tracking information provided including the revised target dates for the completion of outstanding actions.

## **6. Review of Corporate Risks Ath-Sgrùdadh air Cunnartan Corporra**

There had been circulated Report No. AC/18/25 by the Assistant Chief Executive - Corporate.

In response to a question, Members were informed that the risk in terms of solar panels was currently a delivery plan project risk which would be reviewed as a result of changes to the Delivery Plan.

The Committee **NOTED**:-

- i. the Corporate Risk Register provided at Appendix 1; and
- ii. the risk profile at Appendix 2.

## **7. Annual Report of Scottish Public Services Ombudsman Cases determined in 2024/25 Aithisg Bhliadhnail Chùisean Ombudsman Seirbheisean Poblach na h-Alba air an dearbhadh ann an 2024/25**

There had been circulated Report No. AC/19/25 by the Assistant Chief Executive - Corporate.

The Committee **NOTED**:-

- i. the information provided by Scottish Public Services Ombudsman with regard to the number and types of complaints received about the Council during 2024/25; and
- ii. the low number of complaints that had been made against the Council and that no complaints were upheld or partially upheld during the year.

## **8. Annual Complaints Performance Report 2024/25 Aithisg Choileanaidh Bhliadhnail Ghearanan 2024/25**

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

During discussion, the following items were raised:-

- the Council was in a strong position in terms of complaint handling;
- information was sought in terms of what equated a complaint. A response was provided; and
- in response to a question about Freedom of Information, the Complaints and Information Manager would liaise directly with the Member outside of the meeting.

The Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the performance information outlined in the Annual Complaints Report for 2024/25 at Appendix 1;
- ii. **AGREED** that the appended report would be published on the Council's website and submitted to the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman; and
- iii. **NOTED** the successful implementation of the Child Friendly Complaints Procedure in 2024/25.

**9. Code of Corporate Governance 2025/26**  
**Còd Riaghlachais Chorporra 2025/26**

There had been circulated Report No. AC/21/25 by the Chief Officer - Legal and Corporate Governance.

The Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the progress on delivering the 2024/25 Code of Corporate Governance; and
- ii. **APPROVED** the 2025/26 Code of Corporate Governance.

**10. Audit Scotland Report - Best Value Thematic 3 (BV3) Report on Transformation**  
**Aithisg Sgrùdadh Alba - Aithisg Chuspaireil 3 an Luaich as Fheàrr a thaobh Cruth-atharrachadh**

There had been circulated Report No. AC/22/25 by the Council's External Auditors (Audit Scotland).

During discussion, concern was expressed in terms of the £9.6m savings within the Adult Social Care Service, and it was asked if the saving was realistically achievable.

Audit Scotland confirmed this would be challenging and with significant risk and this was recognised, and being addressed, by the Council. However, this challenge was not unique to Highland. Audit Scotland continuously sought best practice and innovation, and would share any relevant findings from an upcoming national Audit Scotland report.

Highland Council and NHS Highland had a strong working relationship and close partnership working continued. Any further updates would be provided to the Health,

Social Care and Wellbeing Committee, as the appropriate committee to monitor the savings.

Advice was sought in terms of other services within the Council that might be candidates for coming in house, in addition to bus services. National case studies would be shared in an upcoming national Audit Scotland report.

In terms of recommendation 2 on page 13 of the Audit Scotland Report, further information was sought, and provided by the Assistant Chief Executive – Corporate and Strategic Lead (Corporate Audit).

Members congratulated the Strategic Lead (Corporate Audit) and her team for their efforts to secure the report and for the positivity that the report contained.

The Committee **NOTED** the report findings, in particular the key messages on pages 3 - 4 and the improvement action plan at Appendix 1 of the report.

The meeting ended at 2.55 pm.

## The Highland Council

Minutes of Meeting of the **Economy and Infrastructure Committee** held in the Council Chamber, Council Headquarters, Glenurquhart Road, Inverness on Thursday, 21 August 2025 at 9.30am.

### **Present:**

|                                   |  |
|-----------------------------------|--|
| Mrs S Atkin (Substitute) (Remote) | Mr W MacKay (Remote)                   |
| Mr A Baxter                       | Mr D Macpherson (Remote and in-person) |
| Mr M Cameron                      | Mr H Morrison (Remote)                 |
| Mr J Edmondson                    | Ms L Niven (Remote)                    |
| Mr K Gowans                       | Mr P Oldham                            |
| Mrs J Hendry (Substitute)         | Mrs T Robertson                        |
| Mr R Jones                        | Mr R Stewart (Remote)                  |
| Mr P Logue                        | Ms K Willis                            |

### **Non-Members also present:**

|                         |                           |
|-------------------------|---------------------------|
| Ms T Collier (Remote)   | Ms L Kraft (Remote)       |
| Mr J Finlayson (Remote) | Mr R MacKintosh (Remote)  |
| Mr D Fraser (Remote)    | Mr T MacLennan (Remote)   |
| Dr M Gregson            | Mr J McGillivray (Remote) |
|                         | Mr D Millar (Remote)      |

### **Officials in Attendance:**

Mr M MacLeod, Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure, Environment and Economy  
 Ms D Sutton, Chief Officer - Operations & Maintenance  
 Mr A Maguire, Head of Development & Regeneration  
 Ms T Urry, Head of Roads & Infrastructure  
 Ms C Pieraccini, Strategic Lead Finance (Place)  
 Ms N Wallace, Service Lead, Environment, Development & Active Travel  
 Mr D Mudie, Strategic Lead – Planning and Building Standards  
 Mr N Young, Active Travel Manager  
 Mr N Osborne, Climate Change Manager  
 Mr A Webster, Economy & Regeneration Manager  
 Ms L MacKellaich, Road Safety Manager  
 Miss J MacLennan, Joint Democratic Services Manager, Performance & Governance  
 Mrs O Bayon, Committee Officer, Performance & Governance

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

**Mr K Gowans in the Chair**

### **Business**

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

Apologies were intimated on behalf of Mr I Brown, Mr J Bruce, Mr M Green and Mr A Sinclair.

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

There were no declarations of interest/transparency statements.

**3. Recess Powers  
Cumhachdan Fosaìdh**

The Committee **NOTED** that the recess powers granted by the Council at its meeting on 26 June 2025 had not been exercised in relation to the business of the Economy and Infrastructure Committee.

**4. Good News  
Naidheachdan Matha**

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

**Storm Floris Response**

The Roads Team's response to Storm Floris, including the subsequent clean-up operation, had been very well received. Congratulations were extended to all teams involved.

**Scottish Government Funding – Building Standards Profession**

The Building Standards Team had successfully secured an allocation of £30,800 from the Scottish Government to support ancillary costs associated with the introduction of four Graduate Apprentices. The funding would assist the apprentices with their studies.

**Student Placements – In-house Bus Team**

Seven students had undertaken placements within the In-house Bus Team, giving up their time to work at The Highland Council. Each student had been presented with a certificate in recognition of their dedication and commitment across various departments.

**Flow Country World Heritage Site – Royal Town Planning Institute Award**

The Flow Country World Heritage Site had won the 'Best Plan' category at the 2025 Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI) Awards for Planning Excellence, Scotland. The award had been presented to Highland Council representatives Nicole Wallace (Service Lead – Environment and Sustainable Transport) and David Cowie (Principal Planner) at a ceremony held on 16 June at the Grassmarket Community Project in Edinburgh.

### **Nature Restoration Funds – 2025/26 Allocation**

The Council had been awarded £600,000 in Nature Restoration Funds for financial year 2025/26. The funding would be directed towards community grants and internal Council greening projects. The community grant scheme would open on 21 August, with approximately £250,000 available to support nature recovery and biodiversity enhancement initiatives.

### **Transport Scotland – Bus Infrastructure Tier 1 Fund**

The Sustainable Transport Team had secured a direct grant award of £1.15 million from Transport Scotland's Bus Infrastructure Tier 1 Fund. The funding would be used to deliver essential bus infrastructure improvements across the Highlands. In addition, the Team had submitted a bid to the Tier 2 Fund, which for this year was focused on legacy Bus Partnership Fund projects in Inverness and Fort William.

Following the good news update, Members welcomed the positive developments and acknowledged the Communications team's efforts in sharing recent achievements. The importance of ensuring that Elected Members were briefed in a timely manner, ahead of public communications, was emphasised. It was confirmed that current practices followed the Council's agreed communications protocols.

### **5. Revenue Budget Monitoring Report for the period Q4 2024/25 and Q1 2025/26 Aithisg Sgrùdadh Buidseit Teachd-a-steach airson na h-ùine R4 2024/25 agus R1 2025/26**

There had been circulated Report No. ECI/26/25 by the Assistant Chief Executive - Place.

During discussion, Members raised the following main points:-

- clarification was sought on the status of mitigation plans referenced in the report, with Members querying whether these had already been implemented or were still in development. It was confirmed that plans were being prepared and would be brought forward for Member scrutiny in due course;
- concern was expressed regarding the lack of progress with the Visitor Levy proposals. Members had recognised that earlier commitments to bring forward recommendations had not been fulfilled and had requested that a clear timetable be provided for when the matter would return to Committee. Members had expressed concern that ongoing delays were affecting confidence in the process and that the business community required greater certainty;
- Members reiterated ongoing concern regarding the Corran Ferry, particularly in relation to service failures and associated costs. It was recognised that recent outages had again impacted communities and Members called for greater transparency in communications and a full debrief on the most recent incident. The importance of progressing the infrastructure and vessel



replacement projects was emphasised and the efforts of staff in maintaining the service were formally acknowledged;

- a proposal was brought forward to recognise the MV Maid of Glencoul as a vessel of national historic significance, marking her 50th year since launch and continued service. Officers were requested to explore the feasibility of seeking inclusion on the National Register of Historic Vessels (NRHV) as part of this recognition;
- concern was raised regarding the allocation of Directorate savings, with Members requesting greater clarity on how these would be distributed across services. It was confirmed that this would be addressed in the Quarter 2 monitoring report;
- Members highlighted structural issues within the Council's engineering capacity, particularly in relation to bridge design and inspection. It was suggested that outsourcing certain tasks could improve efficiency and reduce delays. Further concern was expressed regarding the Council's ability to recover costs from third parties responsible for damage to infrastructure, and Members requested information on reporting procedures and engagement with insurers;
- the underachievement of parking income was explored, with Members recognising that delays in implementing new pay-and-display sites had contributed to the shortfall. Questions were raised regarding the operational status of proposed sites in Lochaber and Skye, and Members requested updates on implementation timelines and enforcement capacity. It was confirmed that agreed sites would be progressed as soon as possible and that enforcement staffing levels were under review;
- Members also queried the implementation of mandatory charges for campervans and motorhomes, and it was confirmed that these had been introduced;
- concern was expressed regarding the underperformance of building warrant income, with Members questioning the reliability of future income projections. It was acknowledged that wider economic conditions and a shift in development patterns had contributed to the shortfall, although planning income remained strong; and
- Members welcomed the positive performance of Sconser Quarry and commended the local team for their efforts. It was suggested that more positive stories of this nature should be highlighted at future meetings.

The Committee:-

- i. **APPROVED** the final budget position for 2024/25 as set out in the report and Appendices 1 and 2 of the report;
- ii. **APPROVED** the forecast financial position for 2025/26 as set out in the report and Appendices 3 and 4 of the report;
- iii. **NOTED** the explanations provided for any material variances and actions taken or proposed; and
- iv. **NOTED** the update provided regarding savings delivery.

## 6. Capital Monitoring Q4 2024/25 and Q1 2025/26 Sgrùdadh Calpa R4 2024/25 agus R1 2025/26

There had been circulated Report No. ECI/27/25 by the Assistant Chief Executive - Place.

During discussion, Members raised the following main points:-

- disappointment was expressed regarding the absence of funding from the Strategic Timber Transport Scheme in the current year, with reference made to its previous value to the Council;
- concern was raised about Harford Bridge, completed in November 2020, which remained under traffic light control. Members sought clarification on its status within the Capital Programme and requested that updates be shared with relevant Ward Members;
- the anticipated reopening of the Infirmary Bridge in early September was welcomed. Members acknowledged the swift progress made following storm damage and noted that the works were subject to confirmation of no underlying structural issues; and
- in relation to Uig Harbour, Members raised concern about the substantial cost increase following changes made after the contract had been awarded. Questions were raised regarding the governance arrangements for contract amendments and emphasis was placed on the importance of ensuring contracts were robust.. At the same time, the complexity and high-risk nature of the project was acknowledged. Members commended the progress achieved, recognising that the decision to split the outage period had followed representations from stakeholders, including the Western Isles Council. The successful installation of the linkspan, transported from Poland, was highlighted as a significant achievement.

The Committee:-

- i. **APPROVED** the outturn for the year 2024/25 as set out in the report and Appendix 1 of the report;
- ii. **APPROVED** the forecast financial position for the year 2025/26 as set out in this report and Appendices 2 and 3 of the report; and
- iii. **NOTED** the explanations provided for any material variances and actions taken or proposed.

## 7. Sustainable Transport Team Update Còmh dhail Sheasmhach – Cunntas Bliadhna

There had been circulated Report No. ECI/28/25 by the Assistant Chief Executive - Place.

- the comprehensive report was welcomed, with commendation for the scale of investment and delivery across the Highland area;
- appreciation was expressed for the geographic spread of projects, recognising that improvements had been delivered not only in Inverness but also in Wick, Culbokie, Thurso, Fort William and other communities;

- concern was raised regarding the planning process for new housing developments, with specific reference to Upper Achintore, where the lack of accessible active travel infrastructure had necessitated remedial works by the Council. The importance of embedding active travel and bus access requirements at the planning stage of future developments was emphasised;
- in terms of road safety, targeted interventions were called for, particularly in relation to motorcyclists and older road users. Support was expressed for the Safe Systems approach, and concern was raised regarding seasonal risks and collision patterns on rural routes. Reference was made to the A861, where the temporary reduction to 40mph during the Corran Ferry outage in 2023 had improved safety. Part of the A861 formed the National Cycle Network Route 78 cycle route and further consideration of a permanent speed limit reduction was requested to ensure the safety of all users, including cyclists, tourists and residents;
- the introduction of Behaviour Change Officers was positively received, with interest expressed in engaging with officers locally and supporting their work in schools and communities. The importance of parental confidence in enabling children to walk or cycle to school was highlighted and increased provision of school crossing patrollers was advocated. Suggestions were made to explore the use of local influencers to promote active travel and to ensure that behaviour change initiatives were supported by adequate infrastructure and incentives;
- concern was expressed regarding the reduction of bus services in both rural and urban areas. The impact on vulnerable residents, workers and young people was recognised and continued investment and strategic planning were called for to address transport poverty. Support was expressed for community transport and in-house bus services and the allocation of funding to expand these provisions was welcomed;
- small-scale accessibility improvements, such as dropped kerbs and tactile paving, were welcomed with recognition of their significant impact on wheelchair users and others with mobility challenges. Reference was made to specific schemes in Fortrose and Nairn, and continued delivery of such interventions was encouraged;
- further clarity was requested on casualty reduction targets, with a suggestion that future reports include trend lines to better assess performance across both local authority and trunk road networks;
- questions were raised regarding the Inverness bus station and other listed projects. Members sought assurance that meaningful consultation had been carried out with stakeholders, communities and businesses and that feedback had been carefully considered and appropriately addressed;
- Members expressed interest in the development of quiet routes, with requests for updates on progress, particularly in relation to signage and implementation delays; and
- the level of external funding secured was welcomed, and the team's efforts in delivering a wide range of sustainable transport initiatives across the region were praised.

The Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the progress made by the Sustainable Transport Team in delivering active and sustainable transport and road safety initiatives across the Highland area;
- ii. **NOTED** the progress made to the 2020 national road casualty reduction targets;
- iii. **AGREED** the successful securing of external funding to support low-carbon transport infrastructure and associated programme delivery; and
- iv. **AGREED** to endorse the continued delivery of active and sustainable transport and road safety initiatives aligned with the Council's strategies and national priorities.

**8. National Planning Improvement Framework: Improvement Action Plan  
Cùmhnant Baile Roinne Inbhir Nis agus na Gàidhealtachd – Aithisg  
Bhliadhnail 2024/25**

There had been circulated Report No. ECI/29/25 by the Assistant Chief Executive - Place.

During discussion, Members raised the following main points:-

- appreciation was expressed for the comprehensive report and the clarity of the Improvement Action Plan, with recognition of the scale of work undertaken across the service;
- concern was expressed regarding the qualifications gap within the Planning Service, particularly in relation to specialist roles such as tree officers and structural advisors. Clarification was sought in this regard, and it was confirmed that such roles generally fell within the remit of the Environment Team and were supported externally, rather than being part of the Planning Development Unit;
- the importance of feedback mechanisms was highlighted, with reference to staff engagement across Highland and the need for transparency in how planning conditions were discharged following consent. It was suggested that this information be made publicly available to improve accountability and align with obligations under the Aarhus Convention, which promoted public access to environmental information and participation in decision-making;
- reference was made to challenges with the Idox system, which was used by the Council to manage planning applications and related data. There were historical limitations and delays in implementing changes, including issues with email domain compatibility and system responsiveness. A request was made to explore greater flexibility and improved functionality, particularly in relation to public access and document handling;
- questions were raised regarding the breakdown of upheld applications and the engagement process for strategic and local plans. The Council's approach to community engagement was commended, with encouragement to further support communities in developing Local Place Plans;
- positive feedback was provided on the enforcement function, with recognition of improved responsiveness and a more proactive approach. Concern was expressed regarding the sustainability of relying on access officers for enforcement support and clarification was sought on future recruitment plans. Assurance was given that a new enforcement officer had been appointed and

that access officers would continue to play a complementary role rather than replacing dedicated enforcement staff;

- concern was raised regarding delays in processing smaller applications, with reference to workload pressures and the need for improved efficiency;
- the Sumitomo cable factory at Nigg was cited as an example of successful community engagement and condition management, with praise for the positive relationships established between the developer, the community and the Council;
- a correction was highlighted regarding the Black Isle Local Place Plan, with clarification that the board was not yet in place;
- observations were made regarding the statutory consultee status of Community Councils, with a call for improved engagement and parity of treatment with other consultees. The importance of fostering a culture of inclusion and responsiveness was emphasised. A suggestion was made to establish a Community Council forum in Inverness to facilitate direct engagement with planning and licensing officers and improve understanding of Council processes; and
- workplace culture was discussed, with particular reference to hybrid working and the need to maintain team cohesion, support staff wellbeing and ensure effective mentoring for newer staff. Assurance was provided that less experienced staff were being supported through increased office presence and supervision and that technology was being used to maintain connectivity across remote locations.

The Committee **NOTED** the content of the Performance Assessment contained within Appendix 1 of the report and the Improvement Action Plan contained within Appendix 2 of the report.

## 9. Community Wealth Building Strategy Ro-innleachd Togail Beairteas Coimhearsnachd

There had been circulated Report No. ECI/30/25 by the Assistant Chief Executive - Place.

During discussion, Members raised the following main points:-

- the report was welcomed and commended for its clarity, comprehensive coverage and ambition, with recognition of the extensive work undertaken across the five pillars of the Community Wealth Building strategy;
- reference was made to the importance of retaining and reinvesting the Highland pound within the region, with support expressed for the Social Value Charter and its contribution to maximising local benefit from renewable energy developments;
- the potential for communities to move beyond benefit-sharing and towards direct ownership of renewable energy projects was raised. It was confirmed that this was a live area of work, with further updates to be brought to Committee in due course;
- the rural childcare pilot was highlighted as a particularly important initiative, with Members emphasising the need for flexibility in service delivery models to overcome legislative barriers and support population retention in remote

areas. The Pathfinder pilot was welcomed and support was expressed for continued innovation in childcare provision;

- the importance of local employment was emphasised, with Members observing that enabling people to work locally supported wider economic resilience and community sustainability;
- attention was drawn to paragraphs 6.1.3 and 6.1.4 of the report, which were praised for their focus on breaking down procurement into smaller lots to support local supply chains and SMEs (Small and Medium-sized Enterprises). Members emphasised the importance of this approach in ensuring that public spending delivered maximum benefit for Highland communities;
- support was expressed for the continued development of the Highland Project Bank and the Employer Charter, with recognition of their potential to embed fair work practices and strengthen local economic capacity;
- the strategic importance of aligning Council services and partner activity was acknowledged, with Members welcoming the establishment of the Highland Community Wealth Building Partnership and the mapping of existing initiatives to avoid duplication and maximise impact; and
- Members supported the view that monitoring and evaluation of Community Wealth Building outcomes should be embedded across all Strategic Committees and Full Council, rather than reported in isolation to the Economy and Infrastructure Committee.

The Committee:-

- i. **AGREED**, as set out in section 6 of the report, progress against the Community Wealth Building Action Plan; and
- ii. **NOTED** the next steps in terms of embedding Community Wealth Building as an approach and updating the action plan.

**10. Delivery Plan Budget Monitoring and Progress Update Q1 2025-26 – Net Zero, Energy, Investment & Innovation (NZEII)**  
**Sgrùdadh Buidseit agus Cunntas air Adhartas a' Phlana Lìbhrigidh R1 2025-26 – Neoni Lom, Lùth, Tasgadh & Ùr-ghnàthachadh**

There had been circulated Report No. ECI/31/25 by the Assistant Chief Executive - Place.

The Committee:-

- i. **APPROVED** progress to date of projects as outlined in this report;
- ii. **APPROVED** the progression of the Tain North and Tain South solar PV projects to Outline Business Case stage, including the commencement of planning, legal and financial due diligence; and
- iii. **AGREED** that outcomes of this next phase would be reported back to Members ahead of any Final Investment Decision.

**11. Performance Monitoring Report Q1 2025/26**  
**Aithisg Sgrùdadh Coileanaidh R1 2025/26**

There had been circulated Report No. ECI/32/25 by the Assistant Chief Executive - Place.

Reference was made to the age profile of the Council workforce, with specific mention of paragraph 5.2 of the report, which related to Service Attendance Management. An age profile was available and that there was a notable reliance on staff in the later stages of their careers. The existence of a direct correlation was not confirmed, and further information was to be sought from Human Resources.

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

**12. Membership of the Harbours Management Board**  
**Ballrachd Bòrd Stiùiridh nan Calachan**

The Committee **AGREED** to appoint Mr W Mackay and Mr P Oldham as Members of the Harbours Management Board.

**13. Minutes**  
**Geàrr-chunntas**

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

- i. North PAC – 23 April 2025;
- ii. South PAC – 14 May 2025;
- iii. North PAC – 11 June 2025;

and, **APPROVED**:-

- iv. Harbours Management Board held on 23 May 2025; and
- v. Inverness Cromarty Firth Green Freeport Monitoring Group held on 12 June 2025.

The meeting ended at 12:05 pm.

**The Highland Council**

Minutes of Meeting of the **Dingwall and Seaforth Area Committee** held in the Council Chamber, Council Offices, Dingwall on Monday, 25 August 2025 at 10.30am.

**Present:**

Mr S Kennedy  
Mr G MacKenzie

Mrs A MacLean  
Mrs M Paterson

**In attendance:**

Ms L Bauermeister, Community Development Manager  
Mr B Cumming, Senior Environmental Health Officer  
Mr J Mackay, Amenity Services Manager  
Mr J MacLean, Bereavement Services Project Manager  
Mr E Marsh, Housing Repairs Manager  
Mr I Moncrieff, Roads Operations Manager  
Mrs G MacPherson, Committee Officer

**Also in attendance:**

Mr D Jack, Police Scotland

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

**Mr G MacKenzie in the Chair**

**1. Apologies for Absence  
Leisgeulan**

There were no apologies for absence.

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

There were no declarations of interest.

**3. Recess Powers  
Cumhachdan Fosaidh**

The Committee **NOTED** that the recess powers granted by the Council at its meeting on 26 June 2025 did not require to be exercised in relation to the business of the Dingwall and Seaforth Area Committee.

**4. Police – Area Performance Summary  
Poilis – Geàrr-chunntas Dèanadais Sgìreil**

There had been circulated Report No DSA/15/25 by the North Area Commander.



During discussion, the following points were raised:-

- Safer Ross Meetings continued to see some notable results and was a robust approach to tackling anti-social behaviour in dwellings and premises;
- it was difficult to report a neighbour that caused anti-social behaviour;
- examples of anti-social behaviour were shared and there was concern that there remained too few Police Officers on the street;
- there was concern regarding the speed of some drivers between Dochcarty Road and Tulloch Roundabout in Dingwall;
- information was sought, and provided, in terms of the increase in missing persons. The Missing Persons Coordinator continued regular contact with Social Services and care establishments;
- enquiries were ongoing in terms of a notable detection of cannabis on High Street, Dingwall;
- it was asked if there could be a breakdown in future reports between males and females in terms of domestic crime;
- further information was sought regarding unlawful use of motor vehicles;
- it was reported that theft by shoplifting had reduced. Not everyone agreed, however, Police reported there had been an increase in engagement between Intervention Officers and shops/premises;
- face-to-face meetings between Community Council Chairs and the Police had been beneficial; and
- concern was raised regarding drugs, including needles.

The Police Scotland Representative would provide Members a further response to points raised, outside of the meeting.

The Committee **NOTED** the 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 2024 – 31 March 2025.

## 5. **Housing Repairs Performance Report** **Aithisg Choileanaidh Càraidhean Taigheadais**

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

During discussion, the following points were raised:-

- in terms of tables 1, 2 and 3 in the report, the information suggested that Dingwall and Seaforth was not doing as well as the rest of Highland and information was sought regarding this. In response, Members were notified of an administrative error whereby sub-contractors had recorded the invoice date as the date of completion. It was thought that 5 emergency jobs had been recorded incorrectly;
- an update was sought in terms of MacDonald Road in Dingwall and Corrie Gardens in Muir of Ord. This would be provided outside of the meeting;
- information was sought, and provided, regarding residents applying for solar panels;

- there was frustration that properties sat empty for significant periods of time. It was the aim of officers to have void properties made available as soon as possible, however some were left in a poor state of repair; and
- information was sought, and provided, regarding capital works, which included interlink alarms.

The Committee **NOTED** the information provided on housing performance in the period 1 April 2025 – 30 June 2025.

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

There had been circulated Report No DSA/17/25 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Place.

During discussion, it was asked if Scottish Government funding could be used in non-Highland Council play parks. A response was provided. It was clarified that a play park would only be considered public if it was fully open to the public. Play parks such as school play parks, that were only open to school pupils attending that school, would not be considered as a public play park.

There would be a small contingency after the reported works were completed. This would go towards another small project or groundworks requiring extra funding.

Once the equipment was ordered, it was likely to be installed in early 2026. Installing as much of the equipment as possible in-house assured best value and the quickest turnaround.

The Committee **AGREED** that £86,860 be allocated to the agreed projects as outlined in Section 6.4.1 of the report.

## **7. Winter Service Plan 2025/26 Plana Seirbheis a' Gheamhraidh 2025/26**

There had been circulated Report No DSA/18/25 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Place.

During discussion, the following points were raised:-

- it was requested that a grit bin be reinstated on Hill Street, Dingwall;
- in response to comments regarding broken grit bins, Members were informed that grit bins would be checked before winter started;
- grit bins were used to restock pavement gritters. They were restocked as required and where resources permitted;
- it was asked if there was an opportunity for criminal justice workers to fill the grit bins;
- it was asked if the vehicles were road-ready and a response was provided;
- it was asked how the Roads Service were informed of new roads, such as housing schemes, and a response was provided;

- Members expressed concern as there had been changes to the capital works funding allocation without their knowledge, a decrease of approximately £300,000;
- potholes were getting worse. Clarification was sought, and provided, regarding the weather constraints of the thermal pothole repair machine throughout the winter. The Chair asked for a timetable outlining when the machine was to be used in Dingwall and Seaforth; and
- an update was requested in terms of works on the A862 between Arduillie and Dingwall. The Roads Operations Manager was to be meeting with Scottish Water soon and would provide an update in due course.

The Committee **APPROVED** the Winter Service Plan for 2025/26.

## 8. **Bereavement Services Update** **Cunntas às Ùr mu Sheirbheisean Caoidh**

There had been circulated Report No DSA/19/25 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Place.

During discussion, the following points were raised:-

- the gates at Fodderty Cemetery were continually open. One of the gates was difficult to move, and in general, the gates would benefit from a coat of paint;
- the paths at Fodderty Cemetery could be difficult to walk on, particularly on the hill;
- the grass at both Fodderty and Mitchell Hill Cemeteries was under control, but some felt it could be better. Fallen headstones were beginning to be covered with grass; and
- clarity was sought, and provided, in terms of available space and prepared lairs. The capacity of each cemetery was regularly monitored and records were updated weekly.

The Bereavement Services Project Manager would inform the local amenities team and would seek quotes for the path and gate works. Any unstable headstones would be temporarily repaired to ensure safety.

The Committee **NOTED**:-

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

## 9. **Environmental Health – Annual Report and Activity 2024/25** **Slàinte Àrainneachdail – Aithisg Bhliadhnail & Gnìomhachd 2024/25**

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

During discussion, the following points were raised:-

- the number of abandoned vehicles was a concern. The Senior Environmental Health Officer (EHO) would attend the Ward Business Meeting on 15 September to discuss this;
- further information was sought, and provided, in terms of section 6.7 of the report and the pilot scheme in Easter Ross;
- there had been an increase in complaints of people feeding seagulls. Information was sought, and provided, regarding information available locally to discourage this, and further information was provided by the Senior EHO regarding the seagull problem in general; and
- information was sought, and provided, regarding export health certificates.

Members would provide a list of concerns to the Community Development Manager, to be discussed at the upcoming Ward Business Meeting.

The Committee **NOTED**:-

- i. the range and volume of work being undertaken locally by the environmental health team
- ii. the Highland wide issues; and
- iii. the report format and content.

#### **10. Dingwall Common Good Fund Maoin Math Coitcheann Inbhir Pheofharain**

There had been circulated Report No DSA/21/25 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Place.

The Committee **NOTED** the position of Dingwall Common Good Fund as shown in the 2024/25 Quarter 4 and 2025/26 Quarter 1 Monitoring Statements.

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

The Committee **NOTED** that the following Dingwall and Seaforth Ward Discretionary Budget applications had been approved between 1 April and 31 July 2025:-

- i. Dingwall Museum Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation (SCIO)  
- Security Cameras and Equipment: £700.00
- ii. 1st Conon Bridge & Maryburgh Scout Group - Purchase Equipment:  
£650.00
- iii. Maryburgh Community Council - Maryburgh in Bloom: £400.00
- iv. Dingwall Fire Brigade Community Group - Dingwall Gala: £700.00

#### **12. Minutes Geàrr-chunntas**

The Committee **NOTED** the Minutes of Meeting of the Dingwall and Seaforth Area Committee held on 26 May 2025 which were approved by the Council on 26 June 2025.

The meeting ended at 12.45pm.

**The Highland Council**

Minutes of Meeting of the **Nairnshire Committee** held Remotely on Monday 25 August 2025 at 10am.

**Present:**

Mr L Fraser  
Ms B Jarvie  
Mr P Oldham

**In Attendance:**

Mr M Greig, Community Development Manager  
Ms P Sheldon, Senior Environmental Health Officer  
Mr S Grant, Roads Operation Manager  
Ms F Cameron, CRF Programme Manager  
Mr M Gemmell, Principal Repairs Officer  
Mrs L Dunn, Joint Democratic Services Manager  
Ms K Arnott, Committee Officer

**Also in Attendance:**

Station Commander N Nethercott, 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 P Oldham in the Chair**

**Business**

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

An apology for absence was intimated on behalf of Mr M Green.

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

There were no declarations of interest or transparency statements.

**3. Recess Powers**  
**Cumhachdan Fosaìdh**

The Committee **NOTED** the Recess Powers granted by the Council at its meeting on 26 June 2025 had not been exercised in relation to the business of the Committee.

**4. Good News**  
**Naidheachdan Matha**

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

- reference was made to the Nairn Highland Games which had been a very successful event with excellent sportsmanship;
- the “Picnic in the Park” organised by the Queenspark Residents Group at Riverside Park had been an excellent community event. An appeal was made on behalf of the Group for new committee members; and
- basking sharks had been spotted in the Moray Firth over the weekend. A reminder was provided of the penalties for harassing sea creatures and a plea was made to view them from a safe distance.

## **5. Fire Performance Report – Annual Report** **Aithisg Coileanaidh Teine – Aithisg Bhliadhnail**

There had been circulated Report No NC/14/25 by the Local Senior Officer for Highland.

During discussion, the following main issues were raised:-

- Members discussed the recent Wildfires in Dava and surrounding areas and commended the work of the Fire Service as well as local farmers and estate workers during these difficult times. Further information was sought, and provided, as to whether all officers were trained in dealing with wildfires and whether Highland had sufficient resources to deal with these incidents. The use of a helicopter for such incidents had been queried however Members were advised that this was beyond the financial scope;
- reference in the report to Battery Energy Storage Systems was welcomed and it was suggested that it would be helpful if this information was provided to all Area Committees as well as both Planning Application Committees;
- the advice on overnight caravan/motorhome parking was welcomed and it was queried if this should be regulated the in the same way as campsites. It was explained that a car park area was not considered as a relevant premises and was therefore outside the scope of the Fire Scotland Act. However, it was recommended that the owners of such sites should undertake a risk assessment to ensure fire safety and that this should be incorporated into their management of the car park;
- information was sought, and provided, on the current recruitment issues during which it was confirmed there were currently 17 officers in post and three vacant posts. Recruitment was ongoing to increase the establishment whilst ensuring maximum availability/coverage; and
- further information was sought on the recent road accidents on the A96 and whether incidents on the surrounding minor roads had been increasing.

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

**In terms of Standing Order 9, the Committee AGREED at this stage to take Item 7, followed by Item 6.**

## **7. Community Regeneration Assessment of Applications** **Measadh Iarrtasan Ath-nuadhachadh Coimhearsnachd**

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

During discussion, the following issues were raised:-

- Members highlighted concern over the high cost of the Nairn Links Toilets however acknowledged that this was a project which required attention; and
- concern was expressed at the Nairn Riverside Development Plan and the various safety issues on accessing the park as well as the lack of warning signs that children were crossing. It was highlighted that there were three points on Mill Road which were part of an active travel route in the area and there was a lack of zebra crossings available. It was considered that appropriate signage as well as CCTV should be considered.

Thereafter, the Committee **AGREED** the award of the following applications:-

- a) CRF4149, Nairn Links Heritage - £25,054;
- b) CRF4150, Nairn Links Toilets - £45,000; and
- c) CRF4151, Nairn Riverside Development Plan - £30,000.

#### **6. Winter Service Plan 2025/26 Plana Seirbheis a' Gheamhraidh 2025/26**

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

During the discussion, the following issues were raised:-

- discussion took place around areas which were not identified as bus routes, such as Boath Park, Balmakeith Drive onto the A939, Bruar Park and Montgomery Drive which might be problematic during winter due to the steep gradient;
- given this was a time consuming task, it was suggested that grit bins were filled in advance prior to the winter;
- information was sought, and provided, on the number of gritters available to cover inclement weather conditions, stating that currently there were 119 gritters to cover 100 gritting routes within Highland; and
- in response to the suggestion of upskilling staff to provide additional support, it was explained that this was a specialised HGV driving role which required high level training to operate heavy vehicles in adverse weather conditions whilst adhering to Health and Safety regulations. However, other services could provide support in other areas such as gritting the footpath networks.

Thereafter, the Committee **APPROVED** the Winter Service Plan for 2025/26.

#### **8. Housing Repairs Performance and Capital Report - 1 April 2025 to 30 June 2025 Aithisg Coileanaidh agus Calpa Chàraidhean Taigheadais - Gàidhlig airson 1 Giblean 2025 gu 30 Ògmhios 2025**

There had been circulated Report No NC/17/25 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Place.

During discussion, the following issues were raised:-

- the volume of Council houses coming up for let in the Nairn and Cawdor area was very low with only 12 relets over 2023/24 out of a possible 735;
- it was queried how many properties required refurbishment;
- confirmation was provided that further information would be provided to Mrs B Jarvie on the property at Harbour Street, Nairn that had recently caught fire and the feasibility of the Council taking ownership of this with a view to renting it out; and



- the average time for both emergency and non-emergency repairs was welcomed.

Thereafter, the Committee **NOTED** the information provided on housing performance in the period 1 April 2025 – 30 June 2025.

## **9. Environmental Health – Annual Report & Activity 2024/25** **Slàinte Àrainneachdail – Aithisg Bhliadhnail & Gnìomhachd 2024/25**

There had been circulated Report No NC/18/25 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Place.

During the discussion, the following issues were raised:-

- reference was made the very broad range of activities undertaken by Environmental Health. It was highlighted that, if a licensee failed to adhere to their short term let conditions, then concerns in respect of this could be raised with Environmental Health;
- the benefits of licensing for dog walking services were recognised;
- reference was made to the lengthy process and officer time required to deal with abandoned vehicles. Members were informed of a revised process, which included the recovery of costs, currently being trialled in Ross and Cromarty and it was hoped that this would be rolled out in due course. However, it was harder to deal with abandoned caravans due to difficulties in tracing ownership;
- further information was sought, and provided, regarding the ongoing issues with seagulls within Nairn and the requests made to Environmental Health in respect of this;
- confirmation was provided that Scottish Government consultations were ongoing relating to the regulation of licensing beauty enhancing treatments such as tattooing and skin microplanning as well as other work carried out by beauticians. It was anticipated that licensing requirements for such treatments would be introduced within the next year along with appropriate guidance; and
- concern was expressed regarding the high level of pigeon excrement around the railway station and Cawdor Road which was creating a health risk to walkers and cyclists. Responsibility for the cleaning of this queried and it was confirmed that this would be raised with Network Rail for a resolution to be sought to the issue. It was queried whether the Council's Roads Department could clean this meantime while a longer term solution was sought.

Thereafter, the Committee **NOTED**:-

- i. the variety and volume of work that was undertaken locally by the environmental health team;
- ii. the Highland wide issues; and
- iii. the report format and content.

## **10. Nairn Common Good Fund Update – Quarter 4 2024/25 and Quarter 1 2025/26** **Financial Monitoring** **Ùrachadh air Maoin Mhath Choitcheann Inbhir Narann – Sgrùdadh Ionmhais Ràithe 4 2024/25 agus Ràithe 1 2025/26**

There had been circulated Report No NC/19/25 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Place.

Prior to commencing the briefing, Members were informed of discrepancies in the report, highlighting Section 1.1 of the report should read “This report presents a detailed overview of income and expenditure relating to the Nairn Common Good Fund (NCGF), incorporating near-final figures for Quarter 4 of the 2024/25 financial year and financial monitoring for Quarter 1 of 2025/26 as at 30 June 2025”. Therefore, Members were asked to Scrutinise and note the position of the NCGF as shown in the Quarter 4 2024/25 and Quarter 1 2025/26 monitoring statements against the budget for 2025/26. Also an amendment to Section 5.3.7 paper should say Nairn Community and Arts Centre not Nairn Highland Games.

During the discussion, the following issues were raised:-

- attention was drawn to the investment income earned (£14,963) from a portfolio of approximately £800,000 which equated to a very disappointing return of less than 2%. In view of this, the Investment Sub Committee would be looking at moving various funds, which included the Nairn Common Good Fund, that were not receiving a good return on investment to a different Fund Manager;
- care was requested as to how the Nairn Common Fund should be utilised and the need to continue to grow the surplus was emphasised;
- it was suggested that a representative from the investment portfolio be invited to attend a future ward meeting. In addition, benchmarking with other local authorities on common good fund investments and the rates of return being received was requested; and
- regarding the Nairn Common Good Engagement Group, it was queried whether it would be feasible for Members to raise items for discussion at meetings. However, it was highlighted that councillors were not members of the Nairn Common Good Engagement Group but they could be invited along to meetings. On that basis, it was requested that an update on the museum be provided to a future meeting of the Committee.

Thereafter, the Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the position of the Nairn Common Good Fund as shown in the Quarter 1 Revenue Monitoring Statement against the Budget for 25/26;
- ii. **NOTED** the progress of the Nairn Common Good Engagement Group; and
- iii. **AGREED** the terms of reference for the Nairn Common Good Engagement Group for the next 12 months with immediate effect.

## 11. Ward Discretionary Budget Buidseat Fo Ùghdarras Uàird

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

- Queenspark Residents Group – Picnic in the Park £1,500.

## 12. Minutes Geàrr-chunntas

The Committee **NOTED** Minutes of the Meeting of the Nairnshire Committee held on 26 May 2025 which were approved by the Council on 26 June 2025.

The meeting concluded at 11.30am.

## The Highland Council

Minutes of Meeting of the **Education Committee** held in the Council Chamber, Council Headquarters, Glenurquhart Road, Inverness on Wednesday 27 August 2025 at 9.35 am.

### **Present:**

|                        |                             |
|------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Ms S Atkin             | Ms M Hutchison (remote)     |
| Mrs I Campbell         | Ms L Johnston               |
| Mr A Christie          | Ms L Kraft                  |
| Mrs M Cockburn         | Mr D Macpherson             |
| Ms H Crawford          | Mr J McGillivray (remote)   |
| Ms S Fanet             | Mr D Millar (Vice Chair)    |
| Mr J Finlayson (Chair) | Mrs M Paterson (substitute) |
| Mr R Gale              | Mr R Stewart                |
| Mr D Gregg             |                             |

### **Religious Representatives (non-voting):**

Rev Dr C Caley  
Ms S Lamont

### **Youth Convener (non-voting):**

Ms L McBain (remote)

### **Non-Members also present:**

|                       |                          |
|-----------------------|--------------------------|
| Mr M Cameron (remote) | Mr G MacKenzie (remote)  |
| Mr R Cross            | Mrs I MacKenzie (remote) |
| Mr D Fraser (remote)  | Mrs A MacLean            |
| Ms C Gillies          | Mr T MacLennan (remote)  |
| Dr M Gregson (remote) | Mr P Oldham (remote)     |
| Mr R Jones (remote)   |                          |

### **In attendance:**

Ms K Lackie, Assistant Chief Executive – People  
Ms F Grant, Chief Officer – Secondary Education  
Ms B Martin-Scott, Chief Officer – Primary Education and Early Years  
Ms F Malcolm, Chief Officer – Integrated People Services  
Ms A MacPherson, Strategic Lead – Resources  
Ms H Brown, Senior Manager Early Years  
Ms E Rodgers, Policy Officer – Gaelic Development  
Ms J Gair, Employability Team Leader  
Mr D Boag, Employability Officer  
Mr A Hamilton, Employability Officer  
Ms M Chemonges, Highland Parent Council Partnership (remote)  
Ms M Murray, Principal Committee Officer  
Ms R Ross, Committee Officer

### **Also in attendance:**

Ms R Holt, Chief Executive, Eden Court  
Ms L McKittrick, Former Youth Convener

**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 Highland Youth Convener, Leah McBain, to her first meeting of the Education Committee. She would give a presentation on her plan for the year ahead at the November meeting of the Committee.

**Business**

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

Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of Ms L Dundas and Ms M MacCallum.

**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 9: Mr A Christie and Mr D Gregg  
 Item 11: Mr A Christie and Mr D Gregg

The following Members made general Transparency Statements but, having applied the objective test, did not consider that they had an interest to declare:-

Mr J McGillivray, on the basis that he was still registered with the General Teaching Council for Scotland, and as a retired member and former Highland District Secretary of the Scottish Secondary Teachers Association.

Mr D Macpherson, on the basis that a close family member was a Primary School Teacher in Highland and two other family members were also employed by the Council.

**3. Recess Powers**  
**Cumhachdan Fosaìdh**

The Committee **NOTED** that the recess powers granted by the Council at its meeting on 26 June 2025 had not been exercised in relation to the business of the Education Committee.

**4. Good News/Outstanding Achievements**  
**Naidheachdan Matha/Coileanaidhean Air Leth**

A presentation on outstanding achievements by pupils and schools had been circulated.

Congratulations having been extended to all the schools mentioned, the Committee **NOTED** the outstanding achievements.

**5. Revenue Budget Monitoring Report Final Outturn 2024/25 & Quarter 1 2025/26  
Fior Shuidheachadh Deireannach Aithisg Sgrùdaidh Buidseit Teachd-a-steach  
2024/25 & Ràith 1 2025/26**

There had been circulated Report No EDU/19/25 by the Assistant Chief Executive – People.

During discussion, concern was expressed that the final outturn of almost £0.5m in 2024/25 was primarily due to vacant posts not being filled. Particular reference was made to the significant underspends in respect of the Early Learning and Childcare and Schools General budgets, which indicated children were not getting the support they needed. The report stated that no specific actions were being proposed at this time, which it was suggested was not good enough. Attention was also drawn to the significant overspend in respect of the Additional Support – Special Schools budget. A similar overspend was projected in 2025/26, which pointed to a pattern of chronic underfunding, and it was questioned whether it was misleading to present vacancy-driven underspends as a form of good news when pupils and staff were struggling without the resources they needed, and what assurances could be provided to parents of children with Additional Support Needs (ASN) that their children were not being failed by an inadequate ASN budget.

In response, the Chair highlighted that the underspend represented 0.15% of the total Education budget. Officers assured Members that there was no deliberate intention to use vacancies to balance the budget. Given the significant size of the workforce, there would always be times when there were vacancies in the system that were being actively recruited to, and that had a budget impact. Attention was drawn to the workforce planning report at item 10 on the agenda, which detailed what was being done to address vacancies. In relation to ASN, the budget had risen by approximately 20-25% in the last five years and an additional £1m had been approved in the 2025/26 budget, so it was not the case that it was underfunded. It was confirmed the historic saving against Special Schools would be looked at as part of the Devolved School Management review.

Other Members added that it was important to recognise that ASN did not always refer to the very high level of need seen in Special Schools. It was a broad term, children with ASN representing up to 40% of the school population, and there were many different levels of need to be met. Many children with ASN were extremely capable and could achieve a great deal within mainstream education.

The Committee:-

- i. scrutinised and **APPROVED** the 2024/25 final end of year outturn as set out in the report and Appendices 1 & 1a of the report;
- ii. scrutinised and **APPROVED** the forecast financial position for 2025/26 as set out in the report and Appendices 2 & 2a of the report;
- iii. **NOTED** the explanations provided for any material variances and actions taken or proposed; and
- iv. **NOTED** the update provided regarding savings delivery.

**6. High Life Highland Memorandum and Articles of Association**  
**Meòrachan agus Artaigilean Co-cheangailte High Life na Gàidhealtachd**

There had been circulated Report No EDU/20/25 by the Assistant Chief Executive – People.

Reference was made to typographical errors and inconsistencies in articles 12, 12a, 13, 15, 29, 60, 63d, 64 and 124, which it was suggested should be amended prior to submission to the Scottish Charity Regulator. In relation to 63d in particular, the wording was ambiguous and could make Director reappointments unenforceable.

The Committee **AGREED** to amend the Memorandum and Articles of Association as detailed in Appendix 1 of the report, subject to the amendment of any typographical errors.

**7. Raising Attainment Strategy Update**  
**Cunntas às Ùr air an Ro-innleachd airson Buileachadh a Thogail**

There had been circulated Report No EDU/21/25 by the Assistant Chief Executive – People.

In introducing the item, the Chair highlighted that it was intended to hold a Members' Seminar in respect of the Raising Attainment and Achievement Strategy (RAAS) prior to the next meeting of the Committee, which he was sure would be welcomed by all Members.

During discussion, the following main points were raised:-

- the report, the strategic approach being taken to raising attainment, and the steady improvements being made were welcomed;
- whilst welcoming the four proposed themes set out in section 6.2.2 of the report, reference was made to the increasing number of children with identified ASN, each with individualised learning requirements. It was suggested that the lack of support for teaching staff, particularly in large classes, was one of the key things holding back raising attainment, and it was necessary to enshrine that within the RAAS. It was therefore intended to move an amendment proposing that a further theme, "The Lack of Additional Support Needs support for our teaching staff, including the need to have more Pupil Support Assistants", be added to the draft RAAS as a key to raising standards across Highland schools;
- with regard to the Raising Attainment Headteacher Reference Group, the diversity of schools and class sizes in Highland was emphasised, and an assurance was sought, and provided, that there would be representation across the eight Associated School Group (ASG) cluster areas;
- with reference to the suggested Core Plus Stretch Aims in Appendix 3 of the RAAS, the focus on P1 readiness and early intervention was welcomed, and further information was sought, and provided, in that regard. Members also welcomed the measure in respect of care experienced school leavers, and suggested it would be helpful to include an aim in respect of Young Carers, who also faced additional stress and barriers to attainment;
- in relation to the Stretch Aims in respect of attainment, it would be useful to include measures in respect of Maths and English as a Highland baseline even if the Scottish Government did not require them. Other Members supported the

suggestion, commenting that there were many more opportunities available to young people in terms of further and higher education and employment if they had achieved Maths and English to the required standard;

- the four proposed themes in the RAAS were very academic, and it was necessary to consider new themes that went beyond the academic professionalism of teachers, particularly given the Poverty and Equality Commission for Highland was now underway. Children spent more time out of school than they spent in school and, further to the earlier contribution proposing an additional theme, it was suggested that another theme should be “Improving and building the home support and facilities available to children to help them learn outwith the school day”;
- it would be useful, at the proposed Members’ seminar, to consider how changes could be implemented with more pace and urgency so that another cohort of children did not leave school without getting the benefit of the improvements being made;
- with reference to Appendix 3 of the report, it would be helpful to better understand the engagement that had taken place and what the symbols in the bottom right-hand corner of the slides represented, and to see Headteachers’ comments. The Chair confirmed that more detail in that regard could be provided at the Members’ Seminar;
- despite the challenges, progress had been made in raising attainment, and the commitment of staff, pupils and parents was commended. However, the gains were minimal, and Highland was still below the national average;
- the report referred to boards, reference groups and seminars, but parents did not want more meetings. They wanted the Council to set ambitious targets, and to know that their children were getting the support they needed to succeed;
- the report said very little about excellence. Closing the poverty-related attainment gap was vital but it must not come at the cost of stretching the highest achievers, and it was questioned where the plan was for STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) excellence, computing pathways and university partnerships that lifted the brightest pupils to the next level;
- it was questioned how the RAAS could be delivered within the existing Education budget, particularly given teacher shortages, overstretched support staff, increasing demand for ASN support, and rising inflation;
- in terms of subject results, Physics, Biology, Business Management, Admin and IT, Computing, and Accounting, which were the building blocks of a future Highland economy, were all down;
- it was necessary to be more ambitious for the sake of Highland’s young people and, the need for pace having been reiterated, a request was made for a report to the Full Council in September. The Chair confirmed that, as indicated in the report, a further report would be brought to the Education Committee in November. It was added that schools were already engaging with the draft RAAS and work was ongoing on the ground to implement the ambitious plans;
- page 5 of the RAAS included figures on improvements since 2022, and it was suggested it would also be useful to provide a comparison with the pre-pandemic position. The Chair confirmed the data requested could be provided at the Members’ Seminar;
- attention was drawn to a typographical error on page 11 of the RAAS;
- congratulations were expressed to Highland’s young people for their hard work and the results they had achieved;
- when looking at attainment grades A to C, it was important to remember the qualifications that were not graded, and that a D grade was also a pass;

- information was sought, and provided, as to what extent the exam results appeals process changed the statistics as time went on;
- the incoming cohort of P1 pupils had been babies during the Covid pandemic, and it was important to remember that their pre-education experience had been very different to many other children and had impacted on their social development. Similarly, the current attainment results were in respect of young people who had had their education disrupted by the pandemic;
- Members were reminded of the Council's strong Whole Family Approach to health and education;
- it was necessary to understand and capture the work taking place in communities and by Community Partnerships. Reference was made to work taking place whereby school staff could refer young people to third sector hubs where they could access safe quiet space, computers and food. In addition, there were people in the community that had been PVG checked and were volunteering their time to provide extracurricular support and guidance and, for example, to support families with literacy challenges to complete forms for free school meals;
- in relation to membership of the Raising Attainment Board, it was queried whether there was capacity to include the Youth Convener, to represent the voice of young people, and a parent representative. In response, the Assistant Chief Executive – People concurred that it was critical to listen to the views of the young people going through the education system. Consideration would be given to whether the Raising Attainment Board was the appropriate forum, and to how to make engagement with young people meaningful. In terms of engagement with parents and carers, as indicated in section 8.2 of the report the Parental Engagement Strategy was one of the underpinning strategies that would help raise attainment. Consideration would be given to the Parental Engagement Strategy and the pupil voice being a core part of the agenda for the Members' Seminar;
- a request having been made for a briefing on recent senior staff changes in schools, the Chair explained that operational issues and matters relating to individual staff members were not for Elected Members to discuss; and
- in relation to Appendix 4 of the report, clarification was sought, and provided, as to why the Area Quality Improvement Manager in the N4 area was 0.6 Full Time Equivalent.

In responding to the contributions proposing additional themes, the Assistant Chief Executive - People concurred regarding the need to enshrine the supporting strategies around raising attainment and achievement, and attention was drawn to section 8.2 of the report which indicated that the 2025/26 Education and Learning Improvement/National Improvement Framework Plan would include key areas of work that required focused improvement activity to underpin the RAAS, namely, implementation of the Parental Involvement and Engagement Strategy; an updated Health and Wellbeing Strategy; and a focus on Inclusive Practice and ASN.

It was suggested that, when the Improvement Plan was presented to the Committee in November, it should include seven pillars which were key to raising attainment and achievement, specifically, the four themes in the RAAS, Parental Involvement and Engagement, Health and Wellbeing, and Inclusive Practice and ASN.

Ms H Crawford accepted assurances provided by both the Chair and the Assistant Chief Executive – People that her concerns formed part of the ethos of the RAAS and would be included, alongside the four themes, in the suggested seven pillars. She therefore withdrew her amendment.



The Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the content of the report and progress made;
- ii. **NOTED** the draft Raising Attainment and Achievement Strategy (RAAS) 2025-2028 (Appendix 1 of the report);
- iii. **NOTED** that action to implement the RAAS would arise from the annual Education and Learning Improvement/National Improvement Framework (NIF) Plan to be brought forward to Committee in November 2025;
- iv. **NOTED** the summary of senior phase attainment at section 7 of the report, and that an in-depth analysis of the senior phase attainment for 2025 would be brought to Committee in November 2025;
- v. **AGREED** a Members' seminar to be arranged in advance of the November Committee;
- vi. **AGREED** that the Education and Learning Improvement/NIF Plan would include seven pillars which were key to raising attainment and achievement, specifically, the four themes in the RAAS, Parental Involvement and Engagement, Health and Wellbeing, and Inclusive Practice and Additional Support Needs; and
- vii. **AGREED** that more detail on the engagement that had taken place with Headteachers, and pre-pandemic data for the purposes of comparison with the figures on page 5 of the RAAS, be provided at the Members' Seminar.

## 8. Scottish Languages Bill Update Cunntas às Ùr mu Bhile nan Cànan Albannach

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

During discussion, the following main points were raised:-

- Gaelic was central to Highland culture and identity, and the Council had led the way nationally in terms of Gaelic education;
- concern was expressed regarding the Scottish Government's estimate that the total cost of implementing the Scottish Languages Bill (the Bill) for both Gaelic and Scots across the whole of Scotland would be less than £700k over five years, which it was asserted would not cover the cost of recruiting teachers, adapting buildings and developing the resources needed. The Council would only receive a fraction of the total funding and would have to address any shortfall from already overstretched budgets;
- the Bill introduced a new statutory duty to provide Gaelic education where there was demand, but it was unclear what sanctions would apply if the Council could not meet parents' requests for Gaelic provision, and concern was expressed that the Council could be exposed to legal challenge;
- the Council had been delivering Gaelic education successfully for many years. However, the Bill also gave the Scots language official status with no clear delivery plan and no additional funding, which risked diluting the resources available for Gaelic;
- the Bill risked raising expectations that could not be met, particularly given the national teacher shortage and the fact the Council already struggled to recruit Gaelic teachers, and it was hoped the Chair would join calls to the Scottish Government for adequate funding to successfully deliver high quality language

services. The Chair recognised the challenges articulated, and the need to ensure the Council had sufficient resources to implement the provisions of the Bill;

- in primary school, many children got the opportunity to experience languages such as French through, for example, learning songs or numbers, and it was queried whether it would be possible include learning a few Gaelic words in primary education across the board;
- it was queried how it was planned to promote the Scots language, and where British Sign Language (BSL) and the Council's BSL Plan sat in terms of language delivery;
- in response to a question, it was confirmed that the Bilingual Policy referred to was Gaelic-specific;
- bilingualism improved cognitive abilities and helped with literacy and the learning of other languages;
- there was a decline in modern languages learning in the UK, particularly in Scotland, and it was queried whether any data was available on how Gaelic had helped encourage students to opt for modern languages when they made their subject choices. The Policy Officer – Gaelic Development undertook to revert to Ms S Fanet in that regard;
- it was necessary to embrace Gaelic and not make it exclusive to those enrolled in Gaelic Medium Education;
- the Bill was a significant step forward for the Gaelic and Scots languages;
- information was sought, and provided, on the anticipated practical impact of the Bill in Highland given that much of what was set out in it was already taking place; and
- in response to a question, it was confirmed that further guidance was awaited regarding the creation of Areas of Linguistic Significance.

The Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the report; and
- ii. **AGREED** the next steps outlined in section 9 of the report.

## 9. **Employability Service Update** **Cunntas às Ùr mun t-Seirbheis So-fhastachd**

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

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

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

In introducing the item, the Chair commented that the report added another dimension to the matters discussed at the Education Committee and looked at the essential links between employability and supporting parents out of poverty through the development of a unique Highland Employability Service and by progressing the No One Left Behind policy approach.

During discussion, the following main points were raised:-

- information was sought, and provided, on how many of the 1100 unemployed parents that had engaged with the Employability Service had been supported into a job, and how the length of time they stayed in these jobs was monitored, and it was requested that this information be included in future reports;
- helping parents into secure and fair employment was the most effective way of alleviating child poverty, and it was good to see a significant amount of money being allocated to this. It was queried how the Employability Service was ensuring the project delivered lasting, positive outcomes for families;
- it was suggested that knowing the unemployment figures for Highland would help to target services towards some of the most vulnerable members of society, and information was provided on those figures and how they were reached;
- in response to concerns that targets had not been met in 2024/25 and that it looked likely there would be a similar outcome in the first quarter of 2025/26, it was explained that, since the implementation of the No One Left Behind policy, the funding allocation for the employability service had increased significantly leading to capacity challenges, and it was confirmed that the service was continuing to be developed to raise the level of delivery to the level of funding available;
- it was suggested that a more localised approach, with employability opportunities being identified within communities, which would help to sustain rural communities, should be considered, as well as working with bodies such as local Community Planning Partnerships, Community Trusts, nature organisations and large third sector organisations to expand the way in which employability services were delivered. In response, it was explained that the Employability team had already begun to take a localised approach including working with Community Planning Partnerships, and it was confirmed that a report on the different options for delivering employability could be brought to the Committee in the new year;
- it was requested that a breakdown of the work being done in each of the three Local Employability Partnership areas be provided to Area Committees;
- it was queried what could be done through work experience or volunteering to use people's skills to benefit schools and pupils. The Chair confirmed that work experience in schools was still taking place, and PVG checks were required;
- the case studies included in the report were very helpful, and it would be useful to include case studies in other reports;
- the strategy of helping people to get into employment by identifying appropriate vacancies within the Council was welcomed, and it was queried whether the same approach was being taken in other public sector organisations such as NHS Highland and Police Scotland;
- it was expected that as the service bedded in the rate of change would improve but this would need to be monitored; and
- information was sought, and provided, on how the conversion to employment rate of 36% had been calculated, and whether there were any themes in terms of the challenges faced by those who were unsuccessful in securing employment.

The Committee:-

- NOTED** the No One Left Behind policy and financial agenda which was supporting the design and development of a unique Highland employability service. This included the commitment to offer Specialist Employability Support for people with more intensive support needs, alongside an increasing focus on tackling child poverty through supporting parents out of poverty through increasing household income;

- ii. **NOTED** the three-year Highland Employability Partnership Strategic Plan (2025-28) and Annual Operational and Investment Plans for 2025-26; and
- iii. **NOTED** the implementation of a hybrid delivery model to support a mixed economy of provision and enable capacity-building and sustainability within the employability system; and
- iv. **AGREED** that a report outlining the different options for delivering employability services would be brought to the Committee in the new year.

#### 10. Education Workforce Planning Progress Report Aithisg Adhartais Planadh Sgioba-obrach Foghlaim

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

In introducing the item, the Chair welcomed the fact that 20 staff had completed the Into Headship programme which should support the challenges faced in terms of Headteacher and senior leader recruitment in the Council's educational establishments.

During discussion, the following main points were raised:-

- information was sought, and provided, on what was being done to recruit subject teachers, and what interim measures had been put in place to support pupils; the times of year when staff absences were most prevalent; and whether staff had access to information and training on how to prevent the spread of infection in schools, as adults could be severely affected by illnesses that children recovered from quickly, leading to an increase in staff absences;
- it was questioned whether negative headlines might discourage people from wanting to work in Highland, and information was sought, and provided, on what was being done to attract potential probationer teachers to the area;
- it was highlighted that a large percentage of the workforce was approaching retirement, and it was queried whether there was a continuity strategy in place. In response, it was clarified that the large percentage of staff approaching retirement age referred to non-teaching staff, and Modern Apprenticeships were being used to encourage more young people into these roles. The age profile of teaching staff was much more positive;
- the increase in the number of Modern Apprenticeships was welcomed;
- the move from fixed term to permanent contracts was encouraging, and clarification was sought on how many fixed term contracts were currently in place and how the proposed change to labour and employment laws, providing full rights to new employees, would affect the use of fixed term contracts. The Strategic Lead – Resources undertook to provide information to Mr R Gale on the number of fixed term contracts currently in place;
- in response to a question, the Strategic Lead – Resources undertook to provide Mr D Gregg with information on the shortage of Maths and English teachers and how staff turnover in Highland compared nationally; and
- the importance of recruiting staff to work in Highland early in their careers was emphasised, and information was provided on the measures being taken to ensure that the desired number of probationer teacher posts within Highland were filled.

The Committee **NOTED**:-

- i. the Education workforce planning progress report and action plan; and
- ii. the positive outcomes from the report, including:-
  - a. implementation of the My Highland Future Portfolio which would support workforce development and offer more career-focused opportunities;
  - b. 108 Community Learning and Development staff had been transferred from High Life Highland into Education & Learning via TUPE;
  - c. progress in moving staff from fixed-term to permanent contracts in non-teaching roles, 221 had moved in August 2024 and a further 156 were due to move in August 2025;
  - d. the staff turnover rate for both Teaching and Non-Teaching staff had decreased in 2024/25 compared to 2023/24;
  - e. Senior Management restructure and recruitment completed;
  - f. 100 probationer teachers had been employed — an increase of 27 from the 2023/24 academic year; and
  - g. 20 staff had completed Scottish Government's 'Into Headship' programme in the last session - for teachers working in, or aspiring to, leadership roles in Scottish primary or secondary schools.

#### **11. Performance Monitoring and Delivery Plan Update – Q1 2025/26**

**Cunntas às Ùr mu Sgrùdadh Coileanaidh agus mun Phlana Lìbhrigidh – R1 2025/26**

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

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

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

During discussion, the following main points were raised:-

- concern was expressed around the difficulty in accessing information from services leading Members to make Freedom of Information (FOI) requests after all other methods of seeking information had been unsuccessful. It was suggested that Elected Members having to make FOI requests reflected badly on the Council and pointed to a lack of transparency which could lead to reduced public confidence, and it was queried what was being done to resolve this issue;
- information was sought, and provided, regarding Complimentary Tariff Scores, and it was confirmed that annual Complimentary Tariff Scores by year group would be provided at the next meeting of the Committee;
- in response to a request for a review of the types of statistics included in performance monitoring reports and the inclusion of more meaningful data such as further benchmarking against other local authorities and an analysis of school inspection reports, it was clarified that the report follows a standard format prepared by the Corporate Performance team and stemmed from the Service Plan. It was confirmed that it was intended to refresh all Service Plans, and the inclusion of additional performance reporting data could be considered at that time. In the

meantime, consideration would be given to what data could be included in the Improvement Plan which would come to the Committee in November;

- information was sought, and provided, on the reasons for the reduction in performance in respect of payment of invoices within 10 days, whether local businesses were prioritised when paying invoices, and whether, when complaints were closed, the resolution was to the satisfaction of the complainant; and
- it having been queried whether the updates at section 9 of the report had been reported to Area Committees, information was provided on plans to increase reporting at area level and provide opportunities for Members to engage with Area Quality Improvement Teams around performance and improvement in schools in their areas. Performance data on matters such as invoice payments could not be provided at area level. However, the Assistant Chief Executive – People undertook to whether to investigate whether there were any particular areas where performance was lower, and to look at what could be done to improve the position. Members welcomed the proposals for increased reporting at area level.

The Committee **NOTED**:-

- i. the Service's performance and risk information; and
- ii. the Delivery Plan progress information.

## **12. Eden Court Update** **Cunntas às Ùr mu Chùirt an Easbaig**

There had been circulated Report No EDU/26/25 by the Assistant Chief Executive – People.

The Chief Executive of Eden Court gave a presentation on the ways in which Eden Court was opening up engagement and expanding creative opportunities across Highland, including youth theatre, dance and film programmes; the intergenerational studio programme; qualification courses at National 5 and Higher level; the Futures Studio Programme for young people who faced complex challenges in their lives; working with schools; and the In on the Act project in rural communities.

During discussion, the breadth and depth of work done by Eden Court was commended, and information was sought, and provided, on whether there was a way of building capacity so that all secondary schools could offer some drama at an earlier level, thereby building pupils' interest in drama qualifications; whether there were any plans to hold events outwith the Inverness area that would bring money into other parts of the Highlands; and how the 61% cultural penetration rate had been calculated.

The Committee **NOTED** the contents of the report at Appendix 1 of the covering report.

## **13. Education Bill: Update** **Bile an Fhoghlaim: Cunntas às Ùr**

There had been circulated Report No EDU/27/25 by the Assistant Chief Executive – People.

In introducing the item, the Chair highlighted that more comprehensive information on the new qualifications body, Qualifications Scotland, and the new independent HM Inspectorate of Education was expected in the coming months.

The Committee **NOTED** the briefing report.

**14. Minutes of Local Negotiating Committee for Teachers**

**Geàrr-chunntas na Comataidh Barganachaidh Ionadail do Thidsearan**

There had been circulated, and were **NOTED**, draft Minutes of the Local Negotiating Committee for Teachers on 3 June 2025.

The meeting concluded at 12.20 pm.

## The Highland Council

Minutes of Meeting of the **Gaelic Committee** held in the Council Chamber, Council Headquarters, Glenurquhart Road, Inverness on Wednesday, 27 August 2025 at 2pm.

### **Present:**

Mr R Bremner  
Mrs I Campbell  
Ms S Fanet  
Mr J Grafton (Remote)  
Dr M Gregson  
Mr P Logue

Mr A MacKintosh  
Mr W MacKay (Remote)  
Mrs K MacLean (Substitute)(Remote)  
Mr D Millar  
Mrs M Paterson

### **Non-Member also present:**

Ms C Gillies

Mr D Macpherson

### **In attendance:**

Mr D Brown, Chief Executive  
Ms K Lackie, Assistant Chief Executive – People  
Ms B Martin-Scott, Chief Officer – Primary Education and Early Years  
Ms L Walker, Gaelic Development Manager  
Ms E Rodgers, Gaelic Policy Officer  
Miss J MacLennan, Joint Democratic Services Manager  
Mrs G MacPherson, Committee Officer

### **Also in attendance:**

Mr M Vass, Traditional Music Centre Manager, Plockton Music School  
Ms D Graham, Tutor, Plockton Music School  
Anna, Fiona, Leona and Seumas – Plockton Music School pupils  
Mr D Ansdell, Head of Gaelic and Scots for The Scottish Government

**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 Millar in the Chair**

### **Business**

#### **1. Calling of the Roll and Apologies for Absence**

Apologies were intimated on behalf of Mr I Brown and Mr S Coghill.

#### **2. Declarations of Interest/Transparency Statement**

There were no Declarations of Interest or Transparency Statements.

#### **3. Recess Powers**

The Committee **NOTED** that the recess powers granted at the meeting on 26 June 2025 did not require to be used in relation to the Gaelic Committee.



#### 4. Good News

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

- the Scottish Government had approved the capital funding bid submitted by the Highland Council to support the purchase of a recording studio for the National Centre of Excellence in Traditional Music at Plockton High School. This would enhance and support the continued delivery of high-quality traditional music education and, in addition to improving the learning environment, would strengthen the Centre's capacity to preserve and promote Scotland's musical heritage;
- the increase in the number of passes achieved by pupils in both Gàidhlig; and Gaelic Learner exams was encouraging;
- the Blàs festival was again going to provide a wide range of musical and cultural events in various venues across Highland;
- competitors and organisers for the Royal National Mod in Lochaber were wished all the best; and
- six new probationer teachers had been employed to various posts across Highland.

The Committee were also provided with a video highlighting various developments and initiatives.

#### 5. PRMS Update

There had been circulated Report No. G/12/25 by the Assistant Chief Executive – People.

During discussion, the following points were raised:-

- the achievements made to date were commended and Members looked forward to continued success;
- with the positive results achieved in schools it was important this was relayed back to those delivering Gaelic;
- the fact that Highland Council was the leader in the provision of Gaelic Medium Education in Scotland was something to be proud of;
- the breakdown of exam results would be fed back to relevant Committees, whether that be the Education or Gaelic Committees;
- it was important to demonstrate how vast and varied Gaelic was in Highland communities in terms not only in education but also in areas such as sport and leisure; and
- with targets being met it was questioned if the plan was ambitious enough.

The Committee **NOTED**:-

- i. the report; and
- ii. the updates relating to adult Gaelic learning.

#### 6. Gaelic Education Update

There had been circulated Report No. G/13/25 by the Assistant Chief Executive – People.

A presentation was provided by tutors and pupils of the Plockton Music School where Members were provided with the background to how it was set up, one of the first of its kind in Scotland. It was now celebrating its 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary and over that time had nurtured the skills and crafts of young people through some of the best tutors and influential musicians of traditional Scottish music. The Music School had been hugely successful with examples provided of achievements. The pupils in attendance also explained their positive experiences of the Music School and, while recognising the challenges of leaving home, encouraged other young people to accept the opportunity should it arise.

During discussion, the following points were raised:-

- the representatives from Plockton Music School were thanked for attending the Committee. In particular, Councillor Campbell expressed how proud she was to be one of the Local Members and was pleased to see that the much needed improvements to the school, pitch and hostel were now underway;
- attending the Music School opened opportunities for young people to pursue a career in traditional music, should they so wish;
- the commitment required by the young people was acknowledged. However, this usually correlated with a good academic record as well;
- the Music School offered an opportunity to be able to focus on academic studies as well as developing their talent along with others;
- the Music School enabled the talent in Highland to be showcased; and
- this was an excellent example of the holistic and welcoming community that Gaelic provided.

The Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the report;
- ii. **AGREED** to recognise the leadership shown at Sgoil Chiùil to grow interest and foster Gaelic as part of the ethos in the school; and
- iii. **NOTED** the areas of growth in pupil numbers across 3-18.

## 7. Gaelic Conference – Feedback

There had been circulated Report No. G/14/25 by the Assistant Chief Executive – People.

During discussion, the following points were raised:-

- the general feedback from the conference had been positive and it was a good example of the hard work undertaken by the Gaelic team;
- it was questioned how lead Members of the Highland Council could be brought in earlier in the programming of future conferences;
- it was commended that the Highland Council would be continuing with this to encourage Gaelic development given the importance it afforded; and
- information was sought, and provided, as to the co-working in place with fellow agencies that were involved with Gaelic development.

The Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the report;
- ii. **NOTED** the post-event survey; and
- iii. **AGREED** the next steps.

## 8. Gaelic Specific Grant and Capital Funding Update

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

During discussion, the following points were raised:-

- it was questioned if this funding would also be able to support Gaelic Culture Centres. However, it was indicated that this was not an appropriate avenue but trustees of such Centres could apply for Scottish Government funding separately;
- it was disappointing that Highland Council had not received as much funding as had been applied for taking into account the effect that Highland had influenced the advance of Gaelic in Scotland. Shortfalls in funding had a knock-on effect and forward planning meant funding could not be piecemeal;
- it was essential to encourage current and future Scottish Governments to further resource the promotion of indigenous languages; and
- it was important that the public were informed of what the Gaelic Specific Grant in Highland was being used for.

The Committee **NOTED**:-

- i. the three projects and outcomes outlined in the Gaelic Specific Grant bid;
- ii. the programme of work that the grant would help to support and that these were adjusted as the full amount was not secured; and
- iii. the increase in the Gaelic grant offered by Scottish Government.

## 9. Scottish Languages Bill – Census Data

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

During discussion, the following points were raised:-

- guidance was still awaited from the Scottish Government and, until this was made available, it was unclear how to formally take this forward. Meantime, it was important to give officers time to analyse information, recognising that this would involve a significant amount of work;
- clarification was required as to what qualified as a linguistic area;
- Inverness was pivotal to the growth of Gaelic. Whilst the number of Gaelic speakers in Inverness would be encouraging, there were likely to be those who were reluctant to state they had Gaelic language skills;
- Skye too would have a substantial number of Gaelic speakers;
- as the population aged, the value of your own indigenous language grew; and
- learning Gaelic at a young age enabled individuals to learn other languages more quickly.

The Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the report;
- ii. **AGREED** to undertake further assessment of electoral wards which exceed the 20% Gaelic skills threshold and wards which were approaching the 20% threshold;

iii. **AGREED** the next steps set out in section 8 of the report.

The meeting ended at 3.40 pm.

## Comhairle na Gàidhealtachd

Geàrr-chunntas coinneamh **Comataidh na Gàidhlig** a chumadh ann an Seòmar na Comhairle, Prìomh Oifis na Comhairle, Rathad Ghlinn Urchadain, Inbhir Nis, air Diciadain, 27 Lùnastal 2025 aig 2f.

### An làthair:

Mgr R Bremner  
A' Bh-uas I Chaimbeul  
A' Bh-uas S Fanet  
Mgr I Grafton (air astar)  
Dr M Gregson  
Mgr P Logue

Mgr A Mac an Tòisich  
Mgr U MacAoidh (air astar)  
A' Bh-uas C NicIlleathain (ball-ionaid) (air astar)  
Mgr D Mac a' Mhuilleir  
A' Bh-uas M NicPheadrais

### Neo-Bhuill an làthair:

A' Bh-uas C NicGilleÌosa

Mgr D Mac a' Phearsain

### A' frithealadh na coinneimh:

Mgr D MacIlleDhuinn, Àrd-Oifigear  
A' Bh-uas C Lackie, Iar-Àrd-Oifigear – Daoine  
A' Bh-uas B Martin-Scott, Àrd-Oifigear – Foghlam Thràth-bhliadhnaichean is Bun-sgoile  
A' Bh-uas L Walker, Manaidsear Leasachaidh na Gàidhlig  
A' Bh-uas E Rodgers, Oifigear Poileasaidh Gàidhlig  
A' Bh-uas S NicIlleInnein, Manaidsear Cho-Sheirbheisean Deamocratach  
A' Bh-uas G Nic a' Phearsain, Oifigear Comataidh

### Cuideachd a' frithealadh na coinneimh:

Mgr M Vass, Manaidsear Ionad a' Chiùil Thraidiseanta, Sgoil Chiùil na Gàidhealtachd  
A' Bh-uas D Ghreumach, Oide, Sgoil Chiùil na Gàidhealtachd  
Anna, Fiona, Leona agus Seumas – sgoilearan Sgoil Chiùil na Gàidhealtachd  
Mgr D Ansdell, Ceannard Gàidhlig agus Albais airson Riaghaltas na h-Alba

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

**Mgr D Mac a' Mhuilleir anns a' Chathair**

### Gnòthach

#### 1. Gairm a' Chlàir agus Leisgeulan

Thugadh leisgeul seachad às leth Mhgr I MhicIlleDhuinn agus Mhgr S Coghill.

#### 2. Foillseachaidhean Com-pàirt/Aithris Fhollaiseachd

Cha tugadh seachad Foillseachaidhean Com-pàirt no Aithrisean Follaiseachd.

### 3. Cumhachdan Fosaìdh

**THUG** a' Chomataidh **FA-NEAR** nach fheumadh na cumhachdan fosaìdh a bha air am buileachadh aig a' choinneimh air 26 Ògmhios 2025 a bhith air an cleachdadh a thaobh Comataidh na Gàidhlig.

### 4. Naidheachdan Matha

**THUG** a' Chomataidh **FA-NEAR** do na Naidheachdan Matha a leanas:-

- bha Riaghaltas na h-Alba air aonta a thoirt do dh'iarrrtas airson maoinachadh calpa a bha Comhairle na Gàidhealtachd air a chur a-steach gus taic a thoirt do bhith a' ceannach stiùidio clàraidh airson an Ionaid Shàr-mhathais ann an Ceòl Traidiseanta aig Àrd-Sgoil a' Phluic. Bheireadh seo neartachadh is taic do bhith a' leantainn air adhart a' libhrigeadh foghlam de chàileachd àrd ann an ceòl traidiseanta agus, a bharrachd air a bhith a' leasachadh na h-àrainneachd ionnsachaidh, neartaicheadh seo comas an Ionaid gus dualchas ciùil na h-Alba a ghleidheadh is a bhrosnachadh;
- bha an t-àrdachadh san àireimh phasaichean a bha sgoilearan air a choileanadh ann an deuchainnean Gàidhlig agus Luchd-ionnsachaidh na Gàidhlig na adhbhar brosnachaidh;
- bha Fèis Bhlas a-rithist gu bhith a' toirt seachad raon de thachartasan ciùil is cultarach ann an grunn àiteachan air feadh na Gàidhealtachd;
- chaidh gach soirbheachas a ghuidhe do luchd-farpais is do luchd-eagrachaidh a' Mhòid Nàiseanta Rìoghail ann an Loch Abar; agus
- bha sianar thidsearan ùra probhaidh air dreuchdan fhaighinn air feadh na Gàidhealtachd.

Chaidh bhidio a shealltainn dhan Chomataidh cuideachd le fiosrachadh mu dhiofar leasachaidhean is iomairtean.

### 5. Aithisg PRMS

Chuartaicheadh Aithisg Àir. G/12/25 leis an Iar-Àrd-Oifigear – Daoine.

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

- chaidh moladh a dhèanamh air na coileanaidhean gu ruige seo agus bha Buill a' coimhead air adhart ri soirbheachas leantainneach;
- leis na toraidhean matha a bha air an coileanadh ann an sgoiltean, bha e cudromach gun robh seo air innse dhan fheadhainn a bha a' libhrigeadh Gàidhlig;
- bha Comhairle na Gàidhealtachd air thoiseach a thaobh solar Foghlam tron Ghàidhlig ann an Alba agus b' e adhbhar moit a bha sin;
- dheigheadh mion-fhiosrachadh mu thoraidhean nan deuchainnean a thoirt do na comataidhean iomchaidh, co-dhiù is e Comataidh an Fhoghlaim no Comataidh na Gàidhlig;
- bha e cudromach sealltainn cho farsaing is cho diofaraichte 's a bha a' Ghàidhlig ann an coimhearsnachdan na Gàidhealtachd, chan ann a-mhàin a thaobh foghlam ach cuideachd ann an raointean a leithid spòrs is cur-seachad; agus
- seach gun robh targaidean gan coileanadh, chaidh faighneachd co-dhiù a bha am plana àrd-amasach gu leòr.

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

- i. dhan aithisg; agus
- ii. dhan chunntas às ùr a thaobh ionnsachadh Gàidhlig inbheach.

## 6. Cunntas às Ùr mu Fhoghlam Gàidhlig

Chuartaicheadh Aithisg Àir. G/13/25 leis an Iar-Àrd-Oifigear – Daoine.

Thug oidean agus sgoilearan Sgoil Chiùil na Gàidhealtachd seachad taisbeanadh do Bhuill le fiosrachadh mu eachdraidh na sgoile agus mar a chaidh a stèidheachadh an toiseach, mar aon de na ciad eisimpleirean ann an Alba. Bha i a-nis a' comharrachadh a 25<sup>mh</sup> ceann-bliadhna agus thar na h-ùine sin bha i air sgilean is ciùird nan daoine òga a thoirt air adhart tro chuid de na h-oidean is dhen luchd-ciùil as cliùitiche a tha an lùib ceòl traidiseanta na h-Alba. Bha an Sgoil Chiùil air a bhith soirbheachail dha-rìribh agus chaidh eisimpleirean de choileanaidhean a thoirt seachad. Mhìnich na sgoilearan a bha an làthair mar a bha an Sgoil Chiùil a' còrdadh riutha agus, ged a bha iad ag aithneachadh gun robh dùbhlann an lùib a bhith a' fàgail na dachaigh, bhrosnaich iad daoine òga eile an cothrom a ghabhail nan tigeadh e am bàrr.

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

- chaidh taing a thoirt do na riochdairean bho Sgoil Chiùil na Gàidhealtachd airson a bhith an làthair aig a' Chomataidh. Chuir an Comhairliche Caimbeul an cèill gun robh i moiteil a bhith an measg nam Ball Ionadail agus bha i toilichte gun robhar a-nis a' dol air adhart le obair-leasachaidh air an sgoil, an raon-cluiche agus an ostail, agus bha feum mhòr air an leasachadh;
- bha a bhith a' frithealadh na Sgoil Chiùil air cothroman fhosgladh do dhaoine òga gus dreuchd ann an ceòl traidiseanta a leantainn, nam biodh iad airson sin a dhèanamh;
- chaidh aithneachadh gum feumadh na daoine òga a bhith dealasach. Ach, bha seo mar a bu trice a' dol an lùib deagh chlàr acadaimigeach cuideachd;
- bha an Sgoil Chiùil a' tabhann cothrom aire a chumail air obair acadaimigeach a bharrachd air a bhith a' leasachadh an tàlant còmhla ri feadhainn eile;
- bha an Sgoil Chiùil a' toirt cothrom seachad tàlant sa Ghàidhealtachd a thaisbeanadh; agus
- bha seo na shàr eisimpleir dhen choimhearsnachd iomlanach is fhàilteachail a bha a' Ghàidhlig a' toirt seachad.

Às dèidh sin:-

- i. **THUG** a' Chomataidh **FA-NEAR** dhan aithisg;
- ii. **DH'AONTAICH** a' Chomataidh aithne a thoirt dhan cheannardas a chaidh a shealltainn aig Sgoil Chiùil na Gàidhealtachd gus ùidh fhàs agus a' Ghàidhlig àrach mar phàirt de spiorad na sgoile; agus
- iii. **THUG** a' Chomataidh **FA-NEAR** do na raointean fàis ann an àireamhan sgoilearan thar 3–18.

## 7. Co-labhairt Ghàidhlig – Fios air ais

Chuartaicheadh Aithisg Àir. G/14/25 leis an Iar-Àrd-Oifigear – Daoine.

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

- bha am fios air ais coitcheann bhon cho-labhairt air a bhith math agus bha seo na dheagh eisimpleir dhen obair chruaidh a bha Sgioba na Gàidhlig a' gabhail os làimh;
- chaidh ceist a thogail mu na dòighean sam faodadh prìomh Bhuill Chomhairle na Gàidhealtachd a bhith air an toirt an lùib nam prògraman airson co-labhairtean san àm ri teachd aig ìre na bu tràithe;
- chaidh moladh gum bu chòir do Chomhairle na Gàidhealtachd leantainn air adhart leis a seo gus leasachadh na Gàidhlig a bhrosnachadh seach gun robh seo cho cudromach; agus
- chaidh fiosrachadh a shireadh, agus fhaotainn, mun cho-obrachadh a bha air dòigh le buidhnean-gnìomha eile a bha an sàs ann an leasachadh na Gàidhlig.

Às dèidh sin:-

- THUG** a' Chomataidh **FA-NEAR** dhan aithisg;
- THUG** a' Chomataidh **FA-NEAR** dhan t-suirbhidh iar-thachartais; agus
- DH'AONTAICH** a' Chomataidh na h-ath cheumannan.

## 8. Tabhartas Sònraichte na Gàidhlig agus Cunntas às Ùr mu Mhaoineachadh Calpa

Chuartaicheadh Aithisg Àir. G/15/25 leis an Iar-Àrd-Oifigear – Daoine.

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

- chaidh faighneachd co-dhiù a dh'fhaodadh am maoineachadh seo a bhith air a chleachdadh cuideachd gus taic a chur ri ionadan cultarach Gàidhlig. Ach, chaidh innse nach b' e slighe fhreagarrach a bha seo ach gum faodadh urrasairean nan ionadan iarrtas maoineachaidh fa leth a chur a-steach gu Riaghaltas na h-Alba;
- bha e na bhriseadh-dùil nach robh Comhairle na Gàidhealtachd air am maoineachadh air fad a chaidh iarraidh fhaotainn, a' gabhail ealla do bhuidh na Gàidhealtachd ann a bhith a' toirt na Gàidhlig air adhart ann an Alba. Bha geàrr-shuimeannan ann am maoineachadh a' toirt buaidh air nithean eile agus bha ro-phlanadh a' ciallachadh nach b' urrainn do mhaoineachadh a bhith mean air mhean;
- bha e riatanach brosnachadh a thoirt do Riaghaltas na h-Alba an-dràsta agus san àm ri teachd tuilleadh ghoireasan a thoirt seachad gus cànanan dùthchasach a chur air adhart; agus
- bha e cudromach gun robh fios aig a' phoball ciamar a bhathar a' cleachdadh Tabhartas Sònraichte na Gàidhlig sa Ghàidhealtachd.

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

- do na trì pròiseactan agus do na toraidhean a tha air am mìneachadh ann an iarrtas Tabhartas Sònraichte na Gàidhlig;
- dhan phrògram obrach dham bi an tabhartas a' toirt taic agus gu bheil iad seo air an atharrachadh seach nach deach an t-suim iomlan fhaotainn; agus
- dhan mheudachadh san tabhartas Ghàidhlig a tha air a thabhann le Riaghaltas na h-Alba.

## 9. Bile nan Cànan Albannach – Dàta Cunntais-shluaigh

Chuartaicheadh Aithisg Àir. G/16/25 leis an Iar-Àrd-Oifigear – Daoine.



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

- bhathar fhathast a' feitheamh ri stiùireadh bho Riaghaltas na h-Alba agus, gus am biodh seo ri fhaotainn, cha robh e soilleir ciamar a bu chòir seo a thoirt air adhart gu foirmeil. San eadar-àm, bha e cudromach ùine a thoirt do dh'oifigearan gus mion-sgrùdadh a dhèanamh air fiosrachadh, ag aithneachadh gum biodh obair shusbainteach an lùib seo;
- bha feum air soilleireachadh a thaobh na bha a' cunntadh mar sgìre cànan sònraichte;
- bha Inbhir Nis fìor chudromach a thaobh a bhith a' toirt fàs air a' Ghàidhlig. Fiù 's ged a bhiodh àireamh luchd-labhairt na Gàidhlig ann an Inbhir Nis gu math brosnachail, math dh'fhaodte gun robh feadhainn ann nach robh airson a ràdh gun robh sgilean Gàidhlig aca;
- bhiodh àireamh shusbainteach de luchd-labhairt Gàidhlig san Eilean Sgitheanach cuideachd;
- mar a bha an sluagh a' fàs na bu shine, bha luach a' chànain dhùthchasaich aca fhèin a' fàs; agus
- bha a bhith ag ionnsachadh na Gàidhlig aig aois òg a' toirt comas do dhaoine cànanan eile a thogail na bu luaithe.

Às dèidh sin:-

- i. **THUG** a' Chomataidh **FA-NEAR** dhan aithisg;
- ii. **DH'AONTAICH** a' Chomataidh gun tèid tuilleadh measaidh a dhèanamh air uàrdan taghaidh a tha a' dol thairis air stairsneach 20% nan sgilean Gàidhlig agus uàrdan a tha a' tighinn faisg air an stairsnich 20%; agus
- iii. **DH'AONTAICH** a' Chomataidh na h-ath cheumannan a tha air am mìneachadh ann an earrainn 8 dhen aithisg.

Chrìochnaich a' choinneamh aig 3.40f.

## The Highland Council

Minutes of Meeting of the **Corporate Resources Committee** held in the Chamber, Council Headquarters, Inverness on Thursday, 28 August 2025 at 9.30am.

**Present:**

|                         |                                     |
|-------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Mr M Baird              | Mr G Mackenzie                      |
| Mr R Bremner            | Mr S Mackie                         |
| Mr M Cameron            | Mr P Oldham                         |
| Mrs G Campbell-Sinclair | Mrs M Paterson (sub for Mr Lobban)  |
| Mr A Christie           | Ms M Reid                           |
| Mr L Fraser             | Mr M Reiss                          |
| Mr K Gowans             | Mrs T Robertson (sub for Mr Baxter) |
| Mr A Jarvie             | Mr R Stewart                        |
| Mr S Kennedy            |                                     |

**Non-Members also present:**

|                |                  |
|----------------|------------------|
| Mr R Cross     | Ms E Knox        |
| Mr J Finlayson | Mr T MacLennan   |
| Mr D Fraser    | Mr D McDonald    |
| Ms C Gillies   | Mr J McGillivray |
| Ms L Johnston  |                  |

**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  
 Ms R Fry, Chief Officer – HR and Communications  
 Mr B Porter, Chief Officer - Corporate Finance  
 Mr J Shepherd, Chief Officer - Business Solutions  
 Ms E Barrie, Head of People  
 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 P Oldham in the Chair**

**Preliminaries**

**Tribute was paid to Mr Derek Loudon for his hard work and compassionate manner as the previous Chair of the Committee.**

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

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Mr A Baxter, Mr J Bruce and Mr B Lobban.

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

**Transparency Statements:**

Item 10 - Mr M Cameron

Items 7,8,10, 11, 13 and 15 - Mr A Christie

**3. Recess Powers  
Cumhachdan Fosaìdh**

The Committee **NOTED** that the recess powers granted by the Council at its meeting on 26 June 2025 did not require to be exercised in relation to the business of the Corporate Resources Committee.

**4. Good News  
Naidheachdan Matha**

The Chair highlighted the achievements of various members of staff, as detailed in the circulated Good News document, which the Committee **NOTED**.

**5. Late Submission of Expenses Claims  
A' Cur A-steach airson Cosgaisean Anmoch**

It had previously been agreed by the Corporate Resources Committee that late submissions of Elected Members expenses claims would be presented to the Committee for approval.

The Council Leader, and the Leader of the Opposition, voiced their concern at the late submissions and, in response to a suggestion that late expense claims should not be paid, it was explained that this was not legally possible.

Thereafter, the Committee **APPROVED** the following claims:-

- Mr C Ballance £103.42 for mileage in January 2025; and
- Mr J Bruce £165.80 for mileage in February 2025.

**6. Appointments to Sub-Committees, Working Groups, etc  
Cur an Dreuchd gu Fo-Chomataidhean, Buidhnean-obrach is eile**

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

- Appeals and Disputes Committee – Mr G Mackenzie and Mr M Reiss be appointed and Mr A Baxter removed;
- Central Safety Committee – Mr K Gowans be appointed; and
- Employment Release Sub-Committee – Mr R Bremner and Mr M Reiss be appointed and Mr A Baxter removed.

## **7. Corporate Revenue and Capital Monitoring Report Aithisg Teachd-a-steach Corporra agus Sgrùdadh**

**Transparency Statements:** Mr A Christie declared a connection to this item in his capacity as a Non-executive Director of NHS Highland. However, having applied the objective test, he did not consider that he had an interest to declare.

### **a. Corporate Revenue Monitoring - Out-turn for 2024/25 and Quarter 1 for 2025/26**

#### **Sgrùdadh Teachd-a-steach Corporra – Fìor shuidheachadh airson 2024/25 agus Ràith 1 airson 2025/26**

There had been circulated Report No RES/22/25 by the Chief Officer - Corporate Finance.

During discussion, the following issues were raised:-

- it was suggested the report provided reassurance rather than assurance, as further evidence was required to provide appropriate assurance. Of key importance to this report were the Service recovery plans, and these should be provided to Members. On this point the Section 95 Officer advised that plans were still being developed in some cases, but future monitoring reports to Committees would reflect plans and actions. Further to this, the role of the Committee was queried, noting that in the past it had served a more challenging and scrutinising role, with all Service Directors attending to address queries, and it was suggested the remit of the Committee be reviewed. However, the Leader pointed out that many Chairs of the Strategic Committees were members of the Committee and thus attended the meetings;
- concern was expressed at the unexpected £2.5m reduction in funding for the waste extended producer responsibility levy (pEPR scheme), as detailed in the report. Information was sought and provided on engagement being undertaken on this with the UK Government/DEFRA, and via COSLA, to understand the reasons and rationale for the change and escalate matters given the financial impact on the Council;
- the level of budget controls was queried, and recovery plans for specific areas should be appended to the report or links included;
- attention was drawn to the service budgets being projected to over spend by £17m, as detailed in section 5.2, and in Appendix 1 of the report, and as the figures were already falling behind by £1m, it was queried how this could be resolved;
- the level of transparency was welcomed and the officers were thanked for their work;
- concern was expressed at the impact the forecast overspend would have on the Council's reserves and, although assurance was provided that there was currently a healthy level of reserves, it was important to adhere to the Council's policy of maintaining them at 3%;
- the impact of the national budget, and inflation, on the forecast overspend was queried, with reference to key areas, such as schools, fleet and adult social care. Consideration should be given to making efficiencies in non-statutory services, noting the importance of continuing to protect the most vulnerable people in society. It was queried whether a reduction in non-statutory spending was likely;

- the positive outcomes achieved by the Council tax team were praised;
- assurance and information was sought and provided on efforts being made to reduce the expenditure, or improve efficiencies in fleet management, looked after children, integrated transport systems, and adult social care;
- future budget setting should ensure that planned savings were achievable and realistic;
- the importance of protecting the Highland Investment Plan (HIP) for the long-term benefit of the people of the Highland was emphasised, and it was clarified that reference to investment savings did not include the HIP, but referred to investments related to earmarked reserves. Information was sought on the detail of the forecast overspend and how it had arisen, and it was suggested that a group of Members could be identified to scrutinise the budgets on an ongoing basis to identify big impact, high priority areas to make significant savings;
- it was pointed out that a predicted overspend in Quarter 1 was not without precedent and that work was ongoing to identify solutions proactively, with further consideration of the possible use of reserves to be looked at later in the financial year;
- attention was drawn to the work being undertaken to change the model of integration between the Council and NHS Highland, and the improvements and efficiencies that it was intended would result from this;
- it was queried why some of the easier solutions to address the forecast overspend had not yet been actioned. A significant portion of the reserves had been earmarked for specific investment projects and it would be beneficial to see them come to fruition;
- it was important Members supported officers in relation to managing budgets and taking appropriate action. Information was provided on the organisation-wide, cross-Service management meetings and joined-up approach that was being taken;
- in response to specific concerns about overspends in fleet, attention was drawn to the recovery plan which already had up to £1m of actions, with further phases planned; and
- the possibility of sourcing additional funding was queried, but often came with additional spending requirements.

Thereafter, the Committee **NOTED:**

- i. forecast financial position for the year as set out in the report and appendices attached;
- ii. explanations provided for any material variances and actions taken or proposed; and
- iii. update provided regarding savings delivery.

**b. Corporate Capital Monitoring - Out-turn for 2024/25 and Quarter 1 for 2025/26**

**Sgrùdadh Calpa Corporra – Fìor Shuidheachadh airson 2024/25 agus Ràith 1 airson 2025/26**

There had been circulated Report No RES/23/25 by the Chief Officer - Corporate Finance.

During discussion, the following issues were raised:-

- concern was expressed at the delays to the construction of Broadford Primary school, which had originally been intended to be occupied by the end of 2025. Risks to the Learning Estate Investment Programme (LEIP) funding and rising construction industry inflation were highlighted and assurance was sought and provided on current progress. Confirmation was provided that a contractor had been appointed the previous day to undertake the construction of the school;
- explanations were sought and provided for the term reprofiling, as used in the report at sections 6.7 and 6.8, and it was clarified that, in reference to section 6.9, the level of government grant for future years was currently unknown; and
- Mr Reiss asked for further detail on income streams from lighting and communications, and from roads, and this would be provided outwith the meeting.

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

- i. near final outturn for the 2024/25 financial year; and
- ii. net spend for Q1 2025/26, the forecast year end outturn and the funding profile.

#### **8. Corporate Cluster Budget Monitoring reports - out-turn for 2024/25 and Quarter 1 for 2025/26**

**Aithisgean Sgrùdadh Buidseit Buidhne Corporra – fìor shuidheachadh airson 2024/25 agus Ràith 1 airson 2025/26**

**Transparency Statements: Mr A Christie declared a connection to this item in his capacity as a Non-executive Director of NHS Highland. However, having applied the objective test, he did not consider that he had an interest to declare.**

There had been circulated follow Report No RES/24/25 by the Assistant Chief Executive - Corporate.

During discussion, the following issues were raised:

- attention was drawn to the rise in homeless presentations, and to the shortfall in the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) housing benefit funding, requiring the Council to meet the gap from the General Fund. An update was sought and provided on Scottish Government policy and action being taken in this regard, noting that tax-payers money should not be used to fund this gap. The ongoing cross-service working to monitor the cost of homelessness, including on the housing benefit budget, was noted. The subsidy gap amount was requested, and it was clarified that the forecast was currently to be on budget and that actual pressures would be clearer in the quarter two and three monitoring statements;
- information was sought and provided on the different ways that free school meals and school clothing grants were distributed, and the reasons why uptake was often lower for the clothing grants, while noting the recent educational benefit take-up activity that resulted in 4,180 automatic Free School Meal awards and established potential entitlement to School Clothing Grants for 847 families;
- information was requested on the emergency planning budget overspend, and would be provided to Mr Reiss outwith the meeting; and

- clarity was sought and provided on the reasons for the increased budget for Council elections.

Thereafter, the Committee:-

- APPROVED** the final budget position for 2024/25 as set out in the report and Appendix 1 to the report;
- APPROVED** the forecast financial position for 2025/26 as set out in the report and Appendix 2 to the report;
- NOTED** the explanations provided for any material variances and actions taken or proposed; and
- NOTED** the update provided regarding savings delivery.

## 9. Treasury Management Rianachd Ionmhais

### a. Annual Treasury Management Report 2024/25 Aithisg Stiùiridh Bhliadhnail an Ionmhais – 2024/25

There had been circulated Report No RES/25/25 by the Chief Officer - Corporate Finance.

During discussion, the Chair made reference to a recent newspaper headline that suggested the Highland Council was in the top ten most indebted local authorities, however the methodology used to calculate this was flawed, and a summary was provided of the correct method, analysing the borrowing to income ratio, which showed the Council with a healthy ratio. The Chair offered to provide a copy of the correct methodology to Members on request.

The Committee **NOTED** the Annual Treasury Management Report for 2024/25.

### b. Summary of Transactions Geàrr-chunntas Ghnothaichean

There had been circulated Report No RES/26/25 by the Chief Officer - Corporate Finance.

The Committee **NOTED** the Treasury Management - Summary of Transactions report for the period 1 April 2025 to 30 June 2025.

## 10. Workplace Drug and Alcohol Support Policy and Guidance Poileasaidh agus Stiùireadh Taic Dhrogaichean is Deoch Làidir san Àite-obrach

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

**Mr A Christie as a non-executive Director of NHS Highland**  
**Mr M Cameron as a close family member was employed by the Council**

There had been circulated Report No RES/27/25 by the Assistant Chief Executive - Corporate.

During discussion, the following issues were raised:-

- an explanation was sought and provided on the reasons for not implementing mandatory drug testing for all employees;
- information was sought and provided on various issues included in the policy, such as:
  - some medical and other conditions could resemble the symptoms of being under the influence of drugs or alcohol;
  - the need for fair application of the policy, including taking disability issues into consideration (an assurance was provided that this would be looked into further);
  - the focus on providing early intervention and support to those who needed it, and the risks to the Council if this was not provided;
  - the provision of a 'referring officer' for line managers to have a second opinion; and
  - a process for ensuring false or malicious reports were identified;
- attention was drawn to the problem of false positive results as a result of legitimate medication;
- it was queried whether employees had to declare if they were a recreational drug user outwith working hours, which was not the case, but they could not work while under the influence of drugs or alcohol;
- it was hoped the new policy would act as a deterrent, and encourage anyone with dependency issues to seek support; and
- the policy might have a positive impact on the Council's insurance and information on this would be included in the insurance review report planned for later in the year.

Thereafter, the Committee:-

- i. **APPROVED** the Workplace Drug and Alcohol Support Policy including the use of **"With Cause"** testing procedures;
- ii. **APPROVED** the Workplace Drug and Alcohol Support Guidance for Managers; and
- iii. **NOTED** the Assistant Chief Executive (Corporate) would include information on the updated Drug and Alcohol Support Policy in the insurance review report planned for later in the year.

## 11. Annual Report on Citizens Advice Bureau Contract

**Aithisg Bhliadhnail mu Chùmhnant Biùro Comhairleachadh a' Phobail**

**Transparency Statements: Mr A Christie declared a connection to 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, he did not consider that he had an interest to declare.**

There had been circulated Report No RES/28/25 by the Assistant Chief Executive - Corporate.



During discussion, Members welcomed the quoted statistic that every £1 invested by the Council in welfare services resulted in a £17.48 return, and suggested this would be a useful measure for other services to demonstrate best value. The ongoing trust and partnership working between CAB and the Council's welfare team was praised.

The Committee **NOTED**:-

- i. over 23,000 residents were supported by the Council's Welfare Support Team and Citizens Advice during 2024/25 with welfare, debt and housing advice services, resulting in more than 121,200 contacts (on average, 5 contacts per client). Assessing the volume of contacts offered valuable insights into workload and service throughout, providing essential context for evaluating the overall effectiveness and quality of the welfare services delivered;
- ii. financial gains for clients exceeded £27.7 million. This represented a £17.48 return for every £1 invested by the Council in these welfare services;
- iii. a total of £12.184m of debt (including £1.7m relating to mortgage/other secured loans) was presented by households seeking support to prioritise their bills, reduce and manage their debts, and wherever possible to lower the interest charges they were due to pay; and
- iv. support was provided for 2,256 clients (including social rented, private rented and homeowners) seeking housing-related advice, thus highlighting the demand for consistent accessible support on these critical issues.

## 12. ICT User Satisfaction Survey 2024/25

### Suirbhidh Sàsachd Luchd-cleachdaidh ICT 2024/25

There had been circulated Report No RES/29/25 by the Assistant Chief Executive - Corporate.

During discussion, the following issues were raised:-

- with regard to the roll out of SWAN 2, a summary was sought and provided of the implications of missing the deadline for the decommissioning of SWAN 1. Assurance was provided that the Council was on track to meeting the implementation timescales, and that discussions were underway with the SWAN Management Board, with the intention of mitigating any risk to the Council of other partners not meeting their obligations;
- concerns were expressed at the lost staff time due to printer issues;
- it was suggested that some Members were printing fewer sets of papers, which was welcomed, but that some officers still printed bulky sets of papers for meetings; and
- it was suggested a group of Members could be chosen to beta test the new website and that this would be discussed further in the meeting of the Redesign Board taking place following this meeting of Corporate Resources Committee.

Thereafter, the Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the level of service improvement and increase in user satisfaction levels; and

- ii. **AGREED** that the approach of carrying out an internal annual ICT survey was an appropriate way to benchmark the service provided.

**13. Corporate Service – Performance Monitoring Quarter 1 2025/26**  
**Seirbheis Chorporra - Sgrùdadh Coileanaidh Ràithe 1 2025/26**

**Transparency Statements:** Mr A Christie declared a connection to this item in his capacity as a non-executive Director of NHS Highland, as a Non-executive Director of Inverness Bid Ltd, and as General Manager of Inverness Badenoch and Strathspey Citizens Advice Bureau. However, having applied the objective test, he did not consider that he had an interest to declare.

There had been circulated Report No RES/30/25 by the Assistant Chief Executive - Corporate.

The Chair asked that in future not only the mean but the median absence time be included, and the Committee **NOTED** the performance of the Corporate Cluster.

**14. Corporate Systems Update – HR Payroll and Pensions Programme**  
**Ùrachadh air Siostaman Corporra - Prògram Pàighidh is Pheinnseanan HR**

There had been circulated Report No RES/31/25 by the Assistant Chief Executive - Corporate.

The Assistant Chief Executive, Corporate, thanked staff for their hard work over the previous year, and the Committee **NOTED** the:-

- i. updates regarding the HR/Payroll and Pensions Programme; and
- ii. update regarding the Human Resources and Payroll, including the delivery of the HR Data & Process Enablement Project products and next steps resulting from this work.

**15. Delivery Plan – Corporate Solutions and Income Generation Portfolio Update**  
**Plana Lìbhrigidh – Ùrachadh air Pasgan Fuasglaidhean Corporra agus Gineadh Teachd-a-steach**

**Transparency Statements:** Mr A Christie declared a connection to this item in his capacity as a Non-executive Director of NHS Highland. However, having applied the objective test, he did not consider that he had an interest to declare.

**a. Delivery Plan Budget Monitoring & Progress Update – Corporate Solutions**  
**Sgrùdadh Buidseit & Cunntas air Adhartas a' Phlana Lìbhrigidh – Freagairtean Corporra**

There had been circulated Report No RES/32/25 by the Assistant Chief Executive - Corporate.

The Committee **NOTED** progress on the projects covered in this report.

**b. Delivery Plan Budget Monitoring & Progress Update – Income Generation**

**Sgrùdadh Buidseit & Cunntas air Adhartas a’ Phlana Lìbhrigidh – Togail Teachd-a-steach**

There had been circulated Report No RES/33/25 by the Assistant Chief Executive - Corporate.

The Committee **NOTED** the progress of each of the Income Generation projects.

**16. Minutes of Meetings**

**Geàrr-chunntasan Choinneamhan**

The following Minutes of Meetings were:

- i. **NOTED** – Appeals and Disputes Committee held on 23 May and 16 June 2025;
- ii. **APPROVED** - Central Safety Committee held on 9 June 2025;
- iii. **NOTED** – Employment Release Sub Committee – 4 August 2025; and
- iv. **APPROVED** - Staff Partnership Forum held on 21 August 2025.

The meeting closed at 11.55am.

**The Highland Council**

Minutes of Meeting of the **Sutherland County Committee** held in the Chamber, Council Offices, Drumbuie, Golspie on Monday 1 September 2025 at 10.00am.

**Present:**

Mr M Baird  
Mr R Gale  
Ms M Hutchison

Mr J McGillivray  
Mr H Morrison  
Ms LA Niven

**In attendance:**

Mr P Tomalin, Senior Community Development Manager  
Ms F Richardson, Community Development Manager  
Ms M Hardie, Economic Advisor  
Ms J Sutherland, Roads Operations Manager  
Ms F Cameron, Programme Manager  
Mr R Macleod, Service Lead Housing Investment/Building Maintenance

**Also in attendance:**

Inspector K Macrae, Police Scotland  
Ms S Harkins, NW2045

**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/Transparency Statement  
Foillseachaidhean Com-pàirt/ Aithris Fhollaiseachd**

There were no declarations of interest/transparency statements.

**3. Recess Powers  
Cumhachdan Fosaidh**

The Committee **NOTED** that the recess powers granted by the Council at its meeting on 26 June 2025 had not been exercised in relation to the business of the Sutherland County Committee.

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

There had been circulated Report No SCC/19/25 by the North Area Commander.

During discussion, the following main points were raised:-

- a query on the crime statistics figures in relation to Group 6 – Anti-Social Offences. It was confirmed further clarity on the figures would be provided to Members following the meeting;

- the general reduction in the figures detailed in the report be welcomed and Police Scotland thanked for their hard work in keeping people in the area safe;
- an assurance was sought and provided that there was close collaboration between Police Scotland and partners in relation to offences in communities involving indecent photos of children;
- concern in relation to speeding on the A949: Evelix to Dornoch and A9: Helmsdale to Navidale roads. It was confirmed the potential to direct patrols and undertake enforcement in those areas would be taken forward;
- an assurance was sought and provided that concerns around speeding during the night in 20mph zones, particularly by HGV vehicles, would be taken forward;
- an assurance was sought and provided that the unkempt appearance of the Tongue Police Station would be addressed and it was hoped to have a Police officer in post in that area soon;
- an update was sought and provided that the vacancy at Lochinver Police Station had been filled and the officer would be in post soon; and
- it would be helpful for information to be provided on whether there had been a general increase in the number of road traffic collisions over the past few months. It was confirmed that figures would be provided to Members following the meeting.

Thereafter, 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 2024 – 31 March 2025.

## **5. NorthWest 2045 – Call to Action Report IarThuath 2045 – Aithisg Gairm gu Gnìomh**

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

During discussion, Members welcomed the presentation and Call for Action report and expressed support for the excellent work being undertaken by NorthWest 2045.

Thereafter, the following main points were raised:-

- there were significant challenges in the area, however these were being well tackled through the opportunities and potential detailed in the Call for Action report and reference to the large amount of work already undertaken to date;
- welcoming the fact the initiative had reached Scottish Government level and the recent visit of its Population Team to help inform the next phase of the Addressing Depopulation Action Plan. The Team had also discussed with the Minister responsible for child care and young people, the potential to have more flexibility in the legislation to fit rural communities;
- the need to reinforce the point that public policy and spending was driving rather than combating depopulation and for this message to be taken forward in terms of NPF4 and to NatureScot, SEPA and other agencies;
- all Highland MSPs and prospective MSPs should be provided with a copy of and asked to comment on the report, given the forthcoming elections and in terms of informing election manifestos;
- concern as to how to address the challenges around new house building in North West Sutherland due to extremely high tender costs or lack of tenders; and

- a query as to how the high societal value associated with carbon sequestration could be turned into positive investment for the area. It was confirmed a response on this matter would be provided to Members outwith the meeting.

Thereafter, the Committee **AGREED** to note and endorse the NW2045 Call to Action report including next steps as outlined in Appendix 1.

**6. Area Roads Capital Footpath Programme - 2025/26**  
**Cunntas mu Phrògram Calpa nan Rathaidean Sgìreil – 2025-26**

There had been circulated Report No SCC/21/25 by the Assistant Chief Executive - Place.

In discussion, it was explained that delivery of the prioritised Programme for 2025/26 within the available budget would take place over the period until the end of March 2026. The Programme could be reviewed at an area business meeting if Members considered there were any schemes that should be included or afforded a higher priority. In response to a query, it was confirmed the project for replacement of slabbed footways at Dornoch Cathedral would be considered further in terms of heritage, setting and safety issues, and view of the local community council sought.

Thereafter, the Committee:-

- APPROVED** the proposed prioritised Area Roads Capital Footpath Programme for Sutherland Area; and
- AGREED** to allocate £100,000 from the Sutherland Roads Capital Budget to the Footpath Programme.

**7. Winter Service Plan for 2025/26**  
**Plana Seirbheis a' Gheamhraidh 2025/26**

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

During discussion, it was explained there were a number of vacancies in the staffing establishment and details were provided on the posts being advertised, noting these were permanent posts. An update was also provided on the status of the winter gritting fleet, and the fact that new gritting vehicles were due to be delivered in Sutherland before the winter period. In terms of community self-help, further clarity was provided around the need for applications to be endorsed by local community councils in response to concerns about potential delays in this regard.

Thereafter, the Committee **APPROVED** the Winter Service Plan for 2025/26.

**8. Community Regeneration Fund Report Assessment of Applications**  
**Measadh Iarrtasan Aithisg Maoin Ath-bheothachadh Coimhearsnachd**

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

The Committee **APPROVED** the applications presented for a funding award from the Community Regeneration Fund as follows:

| <b>Applicant</b>                                | <b>Project</b>  | <b>Grant Awarded</b> |
|---|---|----------------------|
| Clyne Heritage Society                          | Old Clyne School Fit Out Phase                          | £100,000             |
| Elphin, Ledmore & Knockan Community Association | Community Hall Heating                                  | £3,458.77            |
| Ardgay Public Hall                              | Ardgay Public Hall Upgrade 2025                         | £85,353.83           |
| Durness Parish Hall Trustees                    | DPH Energy Efficiency project 2025                      | £23,500.61           |
| Go Golspie Development Trust                    | Fountain Road Hall Heating & Access project             | £55,790.00           |
| Assynt Leisure & Community Centre               | Sustainable Future for Assynt Leisure & Learning Centre | £31,457.20           |
| Scourie Development Company                     | Repopulating Scourie 2                                  | £70,245.70           |
| Communities Housing Trust                       | Borgie Affordable Housing                               | £100,000.00          |
|   |   |                      |

The Committee:-

- i. **AGREED** to approve £250,000 CRF towards a Development Officer Support Scheme as set out in Appendix 3; and
- ii. **AGREED** by homologation to approve a grant of £48,134 for project CRF4152 - Ardvreck Castle.

**9. Ward 1 & 4 Discretionary Fund Approvals 2025-26**  
**Aontaidhean Maoin fo Ùghdarras Uàird 1 & 4 2025–26**

The Committee **NOTED** the awards:-

**North, West & Central Sutherland Ward Discretionary Budget applications approved 1st April 2025 – 1st August 2025**

- i. Durness Community Council-Multimedia & TV Equipment - £1,400
- ii. Kyle of Sutherland Hub – Community Cycling Project - £1,000
- iii. Kyle of Sutherland Development Trust – Kyle Feeds - £1,000
- iv. Sutherland Sports Council – Supporting Sport in Sutherland - £1,000

**East Sutherland & Edderton Ward Discretionary Budget applications approved 1st April 2025 – 1st August 2025**

- i. Golspie Youth Action project – Youth Club Core Costs - £1,500
- ii. Go Golspie Development Trust – Go Golspie Community Car Service - £2000
- iii. Sutherland Sports Council – Supporting Sport in Sutherland - £1000
- iv. Fèis Chataibh - Fèis an t-Samhraidh - £2000

**10. Housing Repairs and Capital Report – 1 April 2025 to 30 June 2025  
Aithisg Chàraidhean Taigheadais agus Calpa – 1 Giblean 2025 gu 30  
Ògmhios 2025**

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

In discussion, officers were commended on the performance achieved in Sutherland and for the prompt responses received to issues raised in respect of housing maintenance.

Thereafter, the Committee **NOTED** the information provided on housing performance in the period 1 April 2025 – 30 June 2025.

**11. Dornoch Common Good Q4 2024/25 and Q1 2025/26 Monitoring**

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

In discussion, it was noted that applications to the Fund relating to community and indoor sports facilities were likely to be brought forward in future.

The Committee **NOTED** the Quarter 4 24/25 and Quarter 1 25/26 monitoring statements for the Dornoch Common Good Fund.

**12. Minutes  
Geàrr-chunntas**

The Committee **NOTED** the Minutes of the Sutherland County Committee held on 2 June 2025, which were approved by the Council on 26 June 2025.

Arising from item 3 of the Minutes and reference to depopulation, concern was expressed at the Council's decision to have no permanent Council officer based at the Dornoch Service Point, with customers being asked to use a freephone facility. There was deep concern and frustration within the community that these arrangements were both unsatisfactory and effectively a deemed closure of the Service Point.

The meeting concluded 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, 1 September, 2025 at 10.30 am.**

**Present:**

Mr J Finlayson  
Ms C Gillies

Mr D Millar  
Mr R Stewart

**Officials in attendance:**

Mr A Gunn, Assistant Chief Executive – Corporate  
Ms S Armstrong, Chief Officer Revenues & Commercialisation  
Mr G Smith, Service Lead, Infrastructure, Place Service  
Mr A MacBain, Client Manager, ICT Services  
Mr A MacDonald, Justice Social Work Team Manager  
Mr M Sutherland, Roads Operations Manager, Place Service  
Mr J Maclean, Bereavement Services Project Manager, Place Service  
Ms R Robertson, Project Co-ordinator, Place Service  
Ms F Cameron, Programme Manager, Community Regeneration Fund, Place Service  
Ms M A Gray, Project Officer, Community Regeneration Fund, Place Service  
Mr L Marchi, Housing Investment Officer, Place Service  
Ms L Bradley, Housing Investment Officer, Place Service  
Mr W MacKinnon, Community Development Officer (West & Mid Highland)  
Mr A MacInnes, Senior Committee Officer, Corporate Service

**Also in attendance:**

Mr M Colliar, Group Commander, Scottish Fire and Rescue Service  
Ms Jo-Anne Ford, Chief Officer, Skye and Lochalsh Council for Voluntary Organisations

**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. Recess Powers  
Cumhachdan Fosaidh**

The Committee **NOTED** that the recess powers granted by the Council at its meeting on 26 June 2025 did not require to be exercised in relation to the business of the Isle of Skye and Raasay Committee.

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

There was circulated Report No SR/18/25 by the Local Senior Officer for Highland.

In discussion, the following main points were raised by Members and responded to by the Group Commander:-

- The great work of the SFRS in the local area was recognised and thanks were extended to all the employees in the provision of this vital service.
- Recruitment and retention was the biggest challenge facing the service in remote and rural locations and this was recognised at a national level within the SFRS. There was a real focus on working on this to improve the situation.
- It was confirmed that there was legislative guidance on motorhome safety in campsites. In particular, there should be 6 metres space between parked motorhomes, so a fire in one motorhome could not spread to others. SFRS personnel provided guidance on expectations for campsite owners. If there were instances where the guidance was not being adhered, enforcement action could be taken. The SFRS would welcome any reports of instances where this guidance was not being followed, so this could be highlighted for public awareness purposes.
- The joint mobilisation protocol strategy had been introduced due to reduced staffing numbers in stations. The protocol aimed to provide a service that might otherwise not be provided or provided an extended timeline in order to respond to incidents. The Service had never failed to attend an operational incident.
- An update was provided in relation to new SFRS stations in Uig and Portree.

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

**5. Community Payback Service - Presentation**  
**Seirbheis Ath-Phàigheadh Coimhearsnachd – Taisbeanadh**

The Justice Social Work Team Manager was in attendance to give a presentation on the work of the Community Payback Service.

Following the presentation, the following points were raised by Members and responded to:-

- It was likely there would be more Community Payback cases in future due to plans for more early release of prisoners on short term sentences. It was queried if there would be an increase in staff as a result. If the Scottish Government wished to increase the number of community sentences, there should be more resources provided for staffing. The Service was funded by the Scottish Government.
- It was noted that there was no budget for tools to carry out works. If tools and other resources to carry out works were not donated, it should be recognised that there was a budget need for this.

- It was queried what was the scope of the work undertaken by offenders for Community Payback. Maintenance of cemeteries for example would be a positive news story for communities.
- The Service was keen not to be seen to be taking work off contractors etc. There was a recognition that if the Service did not undertake some work in the community, it would not get done, for example, grass cutting, litter picking.
- It was queried what impact the Service had on preventing re-offending and enabling offenders to get jobs after their sentence was completed. It was advised that unpaid work was one of the more successful ways to stop reoffending.
- A number of building companies were offering training opportunities for offenders and having links with employers would be a focus for the Service.
- There were individual placements such as for example maintenance work on a community centre and working in charity shops.
- Contact details for Community Councils and Groups to contact the Community Payback Service would be provided to Members.

The Committee **NOTED** the informative presentation on the Community Payback Service.

## 6. Skye and Raasay Future - Presentation

### **Àm ri Teachd an Eilein Sgitheanaich is Ratharsair – Taisbeanadh**

There was an update presentation on progress on the management of the Skye and Raasay Future (SARF) plan and activities.

Following the presentation, some of the points raised by Members and responded to were as follows:-

- Of the 94 projects originally identified in the SARF plan, 35 projects had already been completed. Contact through the SARF Board would enhance progress with projects and also the process of evaluating projects.
- A Development Trust meeting would be held in September and the feedback from this event would be submitted to the SARF Board in October.
- The SARF Board included the Council, community groups and other stakeholders. There was flexibility to invite other organisations onto the Board and the Board structure would be reviewed annually.
- There was no resources available to undertake case studies of the projects already completed.
- In terms of the involvement of the West Highland Chamber of Commerce in the SARF Board, there was a feeling by members of the public that given this organisation covered such a large area, it might be more appropriate for Skye and Raasay to have its own Chamber of Commerce.

The Chair on behalf of the Committee thanked the Chief Officer, Skye and Lochalsh Council for Voluntary Organisations for the presentation on SARF.

**7. Appointment of Vice Chair & Civic Lead  
Cur an Dreuchd Iar-Chathraiche & Ceannard Catharra**

Nominations were invited for the post of Vice Chair & Civic Lead of the Isle of Skye and Raasay Committee (Comataidh an Eilein Sgitheanaich agus Ratharsair).

Ms C Gillies was nominated by Mr R Stewart, but there was no seconder.

Mr D Millar was nominated by Ms C Gillies and this was seconded by Mr J Finlayson.

There being no further nominations, Mr D Millar was appointed Vice Chair & Civic Lead of the Committee.

**8. Winter Service Plan for 2025/26  
Plana Seirbheis Geamhraidh airson 2025/26**

There was circulated Report No. SR/19/25 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Place.

Following commentary on the report by the Roads Operations Manager, the following main points were raised by Members and responded to:-

- Filling vacancies and staff retention in the road maintenance team was challenging on Skye. There was great competition for staff on the island with examples of the private sector offering much higher rates of pay. Working with the employability service would hopefully help the situation.
- Preparations were being made for the availability of winter maintenance gritters and footpath tractors.
- Salt piles would be put in place as this was the most efficient method of putting a static winter maintenance resource in place. Salt bins were available for communities as self help during winter conditions, but safety should be the priority when undertaking this task. There were resources and support provided to communities to provide extra resilience in winter conditions. The Roads Operations Manager would be holding an event to brief other organisations on the Council's winter service plan and undertook to invite Members and some representatives from Community Councils to this briefing.
- It was the responsibility of the Trunk Road authority to carry out winter maintenance on pavements alongside trunk roads.
- There was limited flexibility in the winter maintenance plan to cover all school routes as the Council had a policy for primary and secondary routes to receive winter maintenance.
- It was queried what road data had been used to determine areas where winter maintenance resources should be deployed. It was advised that there was not much new data that would affect the winter maintenance plan. There had been new housing estates built, but the roads on those estates had to be adopted by the Council before they would receive winter maintenance treatment by the Council. Work was being carried out to adopt all roads that needed to be adopted.

The Committee:-

i **APPROVED** the Winter Service Plan for 2025/26.

ii **NOTED** that there would be a briefing to other organisations on the Council's Winter Service Plan and local Members and some Community Council representatives would be invited.

## 9. **Community Regeneration Fund Assessment of Applications** **Measadh Iarrtasan Maoin Ath-nuadhachadh Coimhearsnachd**

There was circulated Report No. SR/20/25 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Place which detailed current funding requests to the Isle of Skye and Raasay Community Regeneration Fund allocation for discussion and decision by Members.

The report detailed 3 community regeneration fund applications received for consideration. The total request of funding for the 3 applications was £107,696.50 with an available budget of £818,392.67. All 3 applications were eligible for support. The Committee were supportive of all the applications and the grants requested.

The South Skye Community Campus – Phase 1 project, was looking to develop a full-size all weather pitch with flood lighting in Broadford. The total value of the work for this project was £844,000. The report sought to secure the match funding to deliver the project, subject to approval of an Islands Programme application and to agree this will be funded via an award of £200,000 from the Isle of Skye and Raasay Community Regeneration Fund allocation. The Committee were supportive of this request.

The Committee **AGREED:-**

- i. the 3 applications for Community Regeneration Fund grant award and the grants requested; and
- ii. to approve an award of £200,000 of Community Regeneration Fund to the South Skye Community Campus – Phase 1 project, subject to approval of the funding application submitted for consideration as part of the Islands Programme 25/26.

## 10. **Housing Repairs Performance Report** **Aithisg Choileanaidh Taigheadais**

There was circulated Report No. SR/21/25 by the Assistant Chief Executive - Place.

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

- It was queried what the spend on the Environmental budget was. Information on this would be provided to Members.
- In relation to the emergency repair timelines in quarter 3 and 4 of 2024/25, repair times will have been higher during the winter period, for example availability to access properties and supplier delays due to winter weather.
- There were minimum standards to be met before void properties were relet. Also when properties were void, there was the opportunity to see what

funding was available to upgrade properties, for example to improve energy efficiency.

- The Isle of Raasay carbon neutral islands project was working on improving the housing stock on Raasay and they collated information on funding opportunities which would be useful information for the Housing team.

The Committee **NOTED** the information provided on housing performance in the period 1 April, 2025 to 30 June, 2025.

#### 11. **Portree Link Road Update** **Cunntas às Ùr mu Rathad-ceangail Phort Rìgh**

There was circulated Report No. SR/22/25 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Place.

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

- Since the report was written, the tender documents and drawings for the Portree link road had been completed and uploaded to Public Contracts Scotland. Tenders had been invited from 29 August and the tender return date was 25 September, 2025. It was estimated that the project would be completed by early summer, 2026.
- There was frustration expressed by Members and in the community in relation to delays to this project. It was advised that there was a statutory obligation to consult with all public utilities organisations and the Council had been proactive in engaging with them and in particular there had been discussions with Scottish Water on the project for a number of years. However, the Service could not go out to tender without a settled position in respect of utilities, as this would constitute a risk to the project. There was still a small risk to the project in terms of the Scottish Water programme, and this had been allowed for in the tender contract documents for this process to be completed.
- The contractor had an obligation to engage with public utilities organisations in terms of site service diversions for the road works. Also, there were time periods where the contractor had to give advance notice to public utilities that this work was happening.

The Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the funding position in respect of the Portree Link Road;
- ii. **NOTED** the proposed delivery programme.

#### 12. **Bereavement Services Project updates** **Cunntasan às Ùr mu Phròiseact nan Seirbheisean Bàis**

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

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

- Staff were congratulated for the works undertaken on the Portree burial ground extension. An update was requested as to when snagging, landscaping and works on the paths at this site would be completed. Also, when lairs would be expected to become available. It was advised that contractors had recently been on site undertaking some works on landscaping. Once landscaping had been completed lairs would be available. An undertaking was given to arrange a site visit with Councillor Millar, and other Members should they wish to attend, to discuss these and other issues raised at the meeting, relating to this site.
- Work on the Dunvegan burial ground extension was programmed to commence in spring, 2026 and this was welcomed.
- An update was requested on the future of the Skeabost burial ground which was currently closed. This put pressure on other burial grounds site capacity.
- It was queried how it was determined which burial grounds should receive extensions. It was advised that data was provided by the burial administration team on the number of burials, lair sales etc. and from this an overall picture could be seen on burial ground capacity. Any site with less than ten years capacity would be considered for an extension.

The Committee **NOTED**:-

- i. the current capacities and progress of burial ground extensions in the Isle of Skye and Raasay area; and
- ii. the challenges with identifying and developing suitable land for burial ground development.

**13. Annual Report on Operational Activities at the Old Man of Storr: First Full Year of Delivery**  
**An Stòrr – Aithisg Ùrachaidh**

There was circulated Report No. SR/24/25 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Corporate.

Following commentary on the report by Officers, the following main points were raised and responded to at the meeting:-

- This was a very positive report and was a fantastic project and success story for the Isle of Skye. By way of reminder, there had been no capital borrowing for this project. The project aims were to promote sustainable tourism and economic resilience, with benefit for the local area and the creation of local employment. All these aims had been achieved.
- The share of net income generated at the site, such as a share of parking income, was invested in the local area on local infrastructure and services.
- To meet the growing demand from visitors, Phase 2 of the Storr project was currently underway and funding for this had come from the UK Shared Prosperity Fund.
- The staff at the Storr centre were commended for their positive attitude and welcoming approach to their job.
- Pricing at the Storr car park was decided by the Committee in 2023. Prices had been increased to reflect increased service provision at the site. Price increases for locals to use the carpark were kept to a minimum. With Phase

2 of the Storr project due to be completed by March, 2026, it would be appropriate to review the Storr car park pricing at that time as more services were being provided.

- In noting Members safety concerns regarding parking at the site, any improvements in parking capacity or governance of parking would be looked at.
- There was a waiting list of suppliers to the Storr centre and the extension to the centre would further enhance the ability to work with local suppliers. What visitors were purchasing and what could be supplied locally helps determine goods for sale. The emphasis continues to be on working with local suppliers to meet visitor demand and generate income.

The Committee **NOTED**:

- i. the achievements delivered at the Old Man of Storr whole site to date and supported the continued development of this important initiative for the Skye and Raasay area.
- ii. the ongoing developments at the Old Man of Storr site to ensure it continues to serve both visitors and the local community effectively.
- iii. that regular reports will continue to be taken to the Isle of Skye and Raasay Area Committee.

#### 14. **Ward Discretionary Budget** **Buidseat fo Ùghdarras Uàird**

The Committee **NOTED** the following Ward 10 Discretionary Fund Grant awarded since the last meeting of the Committee.

Dunvegan & District Community Council - Ground Maintenance St Mary's - £750  
Skye Cats - Animal welfare education and rehoming project - £507

#### 15. **Minutes** **Geàrr-chunntas**

There was circulated Minutes of Meeting of the Isle of Skye and Raasay Committee (Comataidh an Eilein Sgitheanaich agus Ratharsair) held on 30 June, 2025, the terms of which were **APPROVED**.

The meeting ended at 1.22 p.m.



**The Highland Council  
Pensions Committee and Pension Board**

Minutes of Meeting of the **Pensions Committee and Pension Board** held in the Council Chamber, Council Headquarters, Glenurquhart Road, Inverness on **Thursday 4 September 2025 at 10.30 am.**

**Present:**

**Pensions Committee**

Mr R Gale  
Mrs J Hendry  
Ms L Kraft  
Mr B Lobban  
Mr A MacKintosh  
Mr R MacKintosh  
Mr T MacLennan (remote)  
Mr P Oldham  
Mrs T Robertson

**Pension Board**

Mr S Kennedy, Highland Council  
Mr N MacDonald, Comhairle nan Eilean Siar (remote)  
Mr R Fea, representative for the other Employers (remote)  
Mr W Munro, Unison  
Mr D MacDonald, Unison (Western Isles (Local Government) Branch) (remote)  
Ms E Johnston, GMB

**Non-Members in attendance:-**

Dr C Birt  
Mr P Logue  
Mr R Stewart  
Ms M Ross (remote)

**Officers in attendance:**

Mr B Porter, Chief Officer Corporate Finance, Corporate Service  
Mr J Gibson, Trade Unions' Joint Secretary  
Ms C Strachan, Pension Fund Manager, Corporate Service  
Mr J Thurlbeck, Corporate Audit Manager, Corporate Service  
Mrs L Dunn, Joint Democratic Services Manager, Corporate Service  
Mr A MacInnes, Senior Committee Officer, Corporate 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 P Oldham in the Chair**

**Business**

**1. Apologies for Absence  
Leisgeulan**

Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of Mrs M Paterson of the Pensions Committee and Mr G MacKenzie of the Pension Board.

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

There were no declarations of interest/transparency statements.

**3. Recess Powers  
Cumhachdan Fosaìdh**

The Committee **NOTED** that the Recess Powers granted by the Council at its meeting on 26 June 2025 had not been exercised in respect of this Committee.

**4. Governance Policy 2025/26  
Aithris Poileasaidh Riaghlaidh 2025/26**

There had been circulated Report No. PC/6/25 by the Chief Officer, Corporate Finance.

Following consideration, the Committee **APPROVED** the Highland Pension Fund Governance Policy.

**5. Training Policy and Training Plan 2025/26  
Poileasaidh Trèanaidh agus Plana Trèanaidh 2025/26**

There had been circulated Report No. PC/7/25 by the Chief Officer, Corporate Finance.

During discussion the following points were raised:-

- Pension Fund induction training had recently been provided to new Members on the Committee/Board and the presentation slides had been sent out to Members for reference purposes;
- it was highlighted that responses had been low to the CIPFA Code and Framework: Training Needs assessment questionnaire and there was need for improvement in replies from Members;
- a Pension Fund manual would be developed for Members which was welcomed;
- training would be provided on the triennial actuarial valuation process and if Members had any other training requirements they were asked to contact the Pension Fund Manager; and
- attendance of Members at training sessions was recorded in the Annual Accounts.

Thereafter, the Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the LGPS Skills and Knowledge Statement (Appendix 2), which was adopted by the HPF in September 2022 in accordance with the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) Code of Practice Knowledge and Skills (2021);
- ii. **NOTED** the HPF's approach to training (section 8) which incorporated the CIPFA Knowledge and Skills Framework core areas (Appendix 3) and the CIPFA self-assessment matrix (section 7 and Appendix 4);
- iii. **NOTED** the training resources provided by The Pensions Regulator (TPR) alongside the recommendation from the Scottish Public Pensions Agency (SPPA) that Board and Committee members should be required to complete TPR training as part of their induction (section 9);
- iv. **NOTED** the requirements of TPR General Code of Practice (GCoP) (section 10) and results from formal audit to assess skills/knowledge and experience against the Knowledge and Skills Framework and schedule appropriate training, in accordance with best practice (section 7);

- v. **NOTED** the training delivered to date on pension fund matters (section 11 and Appendix 5) and that details of attendance were included in the Annual report and accounts (section 13); and
- vi. **AGREED** the training policy and programme for 2025/26 set out within the report (section 12).

## 6. Pension Fund Administration Tabhartasan agus Rianachd Maoin Peinnsein

There had been circulated Report No. PC/8/25 by the Chief Officer, Corporate Finance.

During discussion the following points were raised by Members and responded to:-

- it was welcomed that the Pensions team had been successful in recruiting additional staff given the challenges with workload;
- it was noted that the guidance on implementing the McCloud remedy for transfers was not received until towards the end of 2024 and during this period the processing of Pension administration cases had been put on hold until guidance on the remedy was received. It was queried how much an impact this delay had had on the overall timescale for processing cases. It was advised that now the guidance had been received, transfer of funds to other Pension Funds was being progressed. However, this was a long process given the current need to do manual calculations;
- in terms of outstanding cases, it was queried how long a case could be expected to be in the system before they were completed. It was advised that the focus was on getting pension benefits and death grants paid all within the pension scheme targets, which the team were working hard to achieve. A large number of outstanding cases were where scheme members had changed job role with their employer. There was a focus was on members over 55 years old, so pension benefits were accurate by the time they retired. All cases were different with some more complicated than others;
- in terms of performance, the Pension Board were keen to see a focus on ensuring that the first pension payment was made on time along with the lump sum pension payment and death grant issues resolved. There had been a significant change in pension processes and investment in additional staff and it would be helpful to see how this investment impacted on improved performance going forward;
- Pension fund administration performance was not where the Pension team would like it to be and the report highlighted what was being done to improve performance. This included additional management capacity and other additional staff in the team and significant improvements to pension systems. This would hopefully ensure that there would be improved pension administration performance going forward.

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

- i. update on the Member Self Service (Engage) and Altair Pensioner Payroll projects (section 6);
- ii. action being taken by officers to ensure HPF compliance with The Pension Regular (TPR) General Code of Practice and reporting in respect

incorporating the McCloud remedy into Annual Benefits Statements (section 7);

- iii. current HPF administration performance and action being taken to improve performance, with regular updates to be provided to Pensions Committee on an ongoing basis (section 8);
- iv. update on the Pensions Bill 2024/25 (England and Wales) (section 9) and that the Pensions Bill did not apply to Scotland and this update was provided for information only;
- v. update on HPF Annual Report and Accounts 2024/25 and progress of the external audit being undertaken by Audit Scotland (section 12); and
- vi. update on progress on implementing and testing connection to the Pension Dashboard (section 16).

## **7. Internal Audit Reports In-Sgrùdadh**

### **7.a Pension Fund Internal Audit Annual Report 2024/25 Aithisg Bhliadhnail In-Sgrùdaidh Maoin Peinnsein Chomhairle na Gàidhealtachd 2024/25**

There had been circulated Report No. PC/9/25 by the Strategic Lead, Corporate Audit.

In discussion, it was noted that the tender process for the appointment of an Investment Advisor to the Pension Fund was to be completed by 1 October 2025. In response to a query as to why it had taken so long to renew this contract, it was explained that Officers had been working with the Fund's Investment Advisor in the implementation of a transition plan in order to achieve the revised strategic asset allocation included in the Statement of Investment Principles. It was important that this work be concluded prior to a new contract for Investment Advisor going out to tender.

Thereafter, the Committee **NOTED** the content of the report and the audit opinion provided.

### **7.b Pension Fund Governance Arrangements Ullachaidhean Riaghlachas Maoin Peinnsein**

There had been circulated Report No. PC/10/25 by the Strategic Lead, Corporate Audit.

It was highlighted that an audit opinion of substantial assurance was very positive and staff were congratulated for this.

The Committee **NOTED** the content of the report and the audit opinion provided.

## **8. Risk Management Update 2025/26 Fios às Ùr mu Rianachd Chunnairt 2025/26**

There had been circulated Report No. PC/11/25 by the Chief Officer, Corporate Finance.

The Pensions team were congratulated for all their work and the Committee **NOTED** the updated risk register extract.

The meeting ended at 11.04 a.m.