

## **The Highland Council**

Minutes of Meeting of the **Corporate Resources Committee** held in the Chamber, Council Headquarters, Inverness on Thursday, 20 November 2025 at 9.30am.

### **Present:**

Mr M Baird	Mr A Jarvie
Mr A Baxter	Mr S Kennedy
Mr R Bremner	Mr G Mackenzie
Mr A Christie	Mr S Mackie
Mr J Finlayson (sub for B Lobban)	Mr D McDonald
Mr L Fraser	Mr P Oldham (Chair)
Mr K Gowans	Ms M Reid (Vice Chair)
Mrs J Hendry (sub for Mrs G Campbell-Sinclair)	Mr R Stewart

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

Mrs T Collier	Mr T MacLennan
Ms C Gillies	Mrs Trish Robertson

### **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 M MacKenzie, Strategic Commercial Manager, Commercial and Procurement Shared Services  
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**

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

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Mr J Bruce, Mrs G Campbell-Sinclair, Mr B Lobban, and Mr M Reiss.

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

##### **Declarations of Interest:**

Item 4 – Mr L Fraser  
Item 12 – Mr R Stewart

## **Transparency Statements:**

Items 6, 8, 11, 12 and 13 – Mr A Christie

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

The Committee **NOTED** the good news as follows:

- Iona Fraser, Senior Paralegal, had been awarded Accredited Paralegal Status by the Law Society of Scotland;
- Catherine Mackintosh, Sarah Robertson and Rosie Maclean, Revenues' Service Delivery Team, had completed the Institute of Revenues, Rating and Valuation course in Council Tax Law;
- The Council's Trading Standards Manager, David MacKenzie, had been appointed Chair of the Chartered Trading Standards Institute;
- The Council's Modern Apprenticeship scheme had been shortlisted in the category of Large Employer of the Year at the Highland and Islands Apprenticeship Awards;
- Calum MacTavish was a finalist in the Modern Apprentice of the Year category;
- David Cowie, formerly our Occupational Health, Safety and Wellbeing Manager, had been appointed as Service Lead for Safety, Health and Emergency Planning; and
- Helen Aird, the new Strategic Lead for Corporate Communications, and Barbara Alexander, Solicitor, were welcomed.

### **4. Late Submission of Expenses Claims A' Cur A-steach airson Cosgaisean Anmoch**

**Declaration of Interest: Mr L Fraser declared an interest in this item as it related to his own expenses and left the room for the duration of the item.**

During discussion, Members reiterated that the late submission of expenses claims was not acceptable and asked that the Convener send a letter to all Members to remind them of this. Clarification was sought and provided that it was not competent to refuse payment of the expense claim. The Chief Officer, Legal and Corporate Governance, advised that he could further check this if required.

The Committee **APPROVED** the claim from Mr Laurie Fraser for £163.80 for mileage in May and June 2025.

### **5. Appointment to Sub-Committees, Working Groups, etc Cur an Dreuchd gu Fo-Chomataidhean, Buidhnean-obrach is eile**

The Chair advised that work was ongoing to achieve greater gender balance on the Appeals and Disputes Committee, with a view to the membership of this going to full Council for approval.

The Committee **AGREED** the appointment of Mr A Christie, to replace on Mr B Lobban, on the Central Safety Committee.

**6. Corporate Revenue and Capital Monitoring Report to 30 September 2025  
Aithisg Teachd-a-steach Corporra agus Sgrùdadh gu 30 An t-Sultainn 2025**

**Mr A Christie declared a connection to this item as a Non Executive Director of NHS Highland but, having applied the objective test, reviewed his position in relation to the item and any personal connection, did not consider that he had an interest to declare.**

**a. Corporate Revenue Monitoring and Forecast Report Quarter 2 of 2025/26  
Sgrùdadh Teachd-a-steach Corporra 2025/26**

There had been circulated Report No RES/34/25 by the Chief Officer - Corporate Finance.

During discussion, the following issues were raised:

- with reference to slippage on tourism income being reported and monitored at the Income Generation Board, information was sought and provided on when this was reported to Members. The Assistant Chief Executive (Corporate) summarised the Board's focus on the scope of the delivery plan and its continued commitment to transparency;
- further information on the use of the £50k drawn-down from Investment INV 26 - Rural Poverty Commission was sought and provided;
- the appropriate presentation of progress with recovery plans to relevant strategic committees was queried, with specific reference to detail that had been requested at the Economy and Infrastructure Committee on impacts on the roads budget. It was suggested that if a budget was affected by, for example, unexpected storm damage, full disclosure of the impact of unexpected expenditure on the planned budget should be provided. In response, the Chair of Economy & Infrastructure Committee gave a brief overview of key Service budget issues, including the overspend on the Corran Ferry, and the high cost of repairing storm damage at times. He provided assurance there had been no cuts to roads budgets;
- the importance of early Member scrutiny of the recovery plans was emphasised, and detail on the reporting of the recovery plans was provided;
- the reduction in the projected overall overspend was welcomed and the impact of such a significant change to the projected outturn in future quarters was queried;
- the financial risks around Adult Social Care were significant and more detailed financial figures on this should be included in the report;
- an explanation was sought and provided on the high level of Cleaning, Catering and Facilities Management vacancies in the Housing and Property Service and the impact this was having on the Council's buildings;
- concern was expressed at the overspend on Fleet and it was suggested this should be a relatively easy budget line to control;
- continued expenditure on the net zero agenda in the Climate and Energy service was concerning and any unnecessary non-statutory expenditure should be stopped; and
- noting that there had been £5k of expenditure on the campervan and motorhome scheme, information was sought on the total related income that had been received from the scheme to date (£10,080), which was significantly lower than originally hoped.

Thereafter, the Committee **NOTED** the:

- i. forecast financial position for the year as set out in the report and appendices to the report;
- ii. explanations provided for any material variances and actions taken or proposed;
- iii. improvement in forecasts from Quarter 1 to Quarter 2; and
- iv. update provided regarding savings delivery.

**b. Corporate Capital Monitoring Report for Quarter 2 2025/26**  
**Sgrùdadh Calpa Corporra 2025/26**

There had been circulated Report No RES/35/25 by the Chief Officer - Corporate Finance.

The Committee **NOTED** the net spend for Q2 2025/26, the forecast year end outturn and funding profile.

**7. Treasury Management**  
**Rianachd Ionmhais**

**a. Treasury Management – Summary of Transactions to 30 September 2025**  
**Stiùireadh Roinn an Ionmhais – Aithisg Meadhan Bliadhna gu 30 An t-Sultainn 2025**

There had been circulated Report No RES/36/25 by the Chief Officer - Corporate Finance.

The Committee **NOTED** the Treasury Management Summary of Transactions report for the period from 1 July 2025 to 30 September 2025.

**b. Treasury Management – Mid Year Report 2025/26**  
**Rianachd Ionmhais - Geàrr-chunntas Ghnothaichean 2025/26**

There had been circulated Report No RES/37/25 by the Chief Officer - Corporate Finance.

The Committee **NOTED** the Treasury Management Mid-Year Review 2025/26.

**8. Corporate Cluster Service**  
**Seirbheis nam Buidhnean Corporra**

**Mr A Christie declared a connection to this item as a Non Executive Director of NHS Highland, a Non- Executive Director of Inverness BID, and as Chief Executive of Inverness Badenoch and Strathspey Citizens Advice Bureau but, having applied the objective test, reviewed his position in relation to the item and any personal connection, did not consider that he had an interest to declare.**

**a. Revenue Budget Monitoring**  
**Sgrùdadh Buidseit Teachd-a-steach**

There had been circulated Report No RES/38/25 by the Assistant Chief Executive - Corporate.

The Committee **NOTED** the performance of the Corporate Cluster.

**b. Performance Monitoring Q2 2025/26**  
**Sgrùdadh Coileanaidh Q2 2025/26**

There had been circulated Report No RES/39/25 by the Assistant Chief Executive - Corporate.

The Committee **NOTED** the performance information for the Corporate Cluster.

**9. Exclusion of the Public**  
**Às-dùnadh a' Phobaill**

The Committee **RESOLVED** that, under Section 50A(4) of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973, the public be excluded from the meeting for Item 10 only on the grounds that it involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraphs 6 & 9 of Part 1 of Schedule 7A of the Act.

**10. Inverness Castle Update**  
**Cunntas às Ùr mu Chaisteal Inbhir Nis**

There had been circulated to Members only Joint Report No RES/40/25 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Place, and Chief Officer – Corporate Finance.

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

**11. Leadership and Management Toolkit**  
**Pasgan-innealan Ceannardais is Stiùiridh**

**Mr A Christie declared a connection to this item as a Non Executive Director of NHS Highland but, having applied the objective test, reviewed his position in relation to the item and any personal connection, did not consider that he had an interest to declare.**

There had been circulated Report No RES/41/25 by the Chief Executive.

The Committee **NOTED** the development of the Leadership and Management Toolkit.

**12. Grievance and Resolution Policy and Guidance**  
**Poileasaidh agus Stiùireadh Chùisean-gearain is Rèitich**

**Mr R Stewart declared an interest in this item as a family member was an employee of the Council, and he left the meeting for its duration.**

**Mr A Christie declared a connection to this item as a Non Executive Director of NHS Highland but, having applied the objective test, reviewed his position in relation to the item and any personal connection, did not consider that he had an interest to declare.**

There had been circulated Report No RES/42/25 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Corporate.

During discussion, the following issues were raised:-

- the Chair indicated that an update report would be submitted to the Committee in 12 months to review implementation of the policy;
- the challenges securing Members to sit on appeal panels was highlighted, as was the significant amount of work they required. It was queried whether all Members could receive the appropriate training;
- with regard to Trade Unions, it was noted that Unison supported the policy changes, while GMB and Unite opposed them;
- Members stated the importance of not creating a two-tier system, and queried why certain groups of staff, such as teachers, might have a separate procedure. It was explained that some staff groups had significantly different terms and conditions of employment;
- the Chair offered to provide Members with the Chief Officer's (HR and Communications) report on Third Stage Member Appeal Panel of the Disciplinary Policy, once it had been to the HR Sub Group;
- the grievance policy was non-punitive, whereas the disciplinary policy was punitive as it could result in action such as demotion and dismissal. As a trauma-informed organisation, it was important to reduce the time taken to resolve a grievance. The inclusion of a Chief Officer from a different Service cluster in stage 2 grievance panels was welcomed and attention was drawn to the proposed changes in the report to bring the Highland Council in line with ACAS guidance; and
- some Members felt that more thought was required to be given to some of the various scenarios that could arise, such as a grievance and disciplinary being lodged simultaneously or a collective grievance. It was therefore proposed to continue with the pilot, to enable further exploration of these issues to ensure no group would be disadvantaged, and defer a decision until the next meeting of the Committee.

Thereafter, Mr P Oldham, seconded by Mrs M Reid, **MOVED** the recommendations as detailed in the report.

Mr A Christie, seconded by Mr A Baxter, moved as an **AMENDMENT**, that a decision on the plan be deferred until the concerns raised in debate could be addressed in a future report to this Committee.

On a vote being taken, there were 9 votes for the motion and 5 for the amendment, with no abstentions, and the **MOTION** was therefore carried, the votes having been cast as follows:

**For the motion:** Mr R Bremner, Mr J Finlayson, Mr L Fraser, Mr K Gowans, Mrs J Hendry, Mr S Kennedy, Mr G MacKenzie, Mr P Oldham, Mrs M Reid.

**For the amendment:** Mr M Baird, Mr A Baxter, Mr A Christie, Mr S Mackie, Mr D McDonald.

The Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the findings from the trial implementation of the policy changes; and
- ii. **APPROVED** the changes to the Grievance and Resolution Policy and Guidance as outlined in Section 7 of the report.

**13. Annual Procurement Report 1 April 2024 – 31 March 2025  
Aithisg Bhliadhnail Solair 1 Giblean 2024 – 31 Màrt 2025**

**Mr A Christie declared a connection to this item as a Non Executive Director of NHS Highland but, having applied the objective test, reviewed his position in relation to the item and any personal connection, did not consider that he had an interest to declare.**

There had been circulated Report No RES/43/25 by the Chief Officer - Corporate Finance.

During discussion, assurance was sought and provided that the strategy included reference to the procurement of Halal meat.

The Committee **NOTED** the content and publication of the Highland Council Annual Procurement Report 2024-2025 as circulated as Appendix A to the report.

**14. Corporate Systems Update – HR & Payroll Programme  
Cunntas às Ùr mu Shìostaman Corporra – Prògram Ghoireasan Daonna & Rola-pàighidh**

There had been circulated Report No RES/44/25 by the Assistant Chief Executive - Corporate.

The Committee **NOTED** the updates and progress of the HR and Payroll Programme.

**15. Delivery Plan Budget Monitoring and Progress Update  
Aithris Plana Libhrigidh**

**a. Income Generation  
Togail Teachd-a-steach**

There had been circulated Report No RES/45/25 by the Assistant Chief Executive - Corporate.

During discussion, the following issues were raised: -

- the success of the Storr Centre, on Skye, was welcomed, and it set a standard for the future of other tourism-related income generation projects. Attention was drawn to the significant levels of local negotiation, procurement and employment which had been key to the project's success and which should be a starting point for other projects. Assurance was sought and provided that any expansion would involve analysis of the resources and staff required to administer it;

- the voluntary nature of the campervan and motorhome scheme had contributed to its lack of success, and reference was made to its possible negative impact on local businesses and its failure to meet expectation or targets. Attention was drawn to other benefits of the scheme, such as the provision of waste collection points, which helped to promote sustainable tourism and the future provision of black waste disposal and freshwater replenishment, both of which would be income generating; and
- there was a Members' workshop on Visitor Experiences that afternoon immediately following the Redesign Board meeting.

Mr P Oldham, seconded by Mrs M Reid, **MOVED** the recommendations as set out in the report. Mr R Stewart moved as an **AMENDMENT** to discontinue the Campervan and Motorhome scheme across the Highlands, but, having failed to find a seconder, his amendment fell, and the Committee **NOTED** the progress of each Income Generation Projects.

#### **b. Corporate Solutions Fuasglaidhean Corporra**

There had been circulated Report No RES/46/25 by the Assistant Chief Executive - Corporate.

The Committee **NOTED** progress on the projects covered in the report.

### **16. Minutes of Meetings Geàrr-chunntasan Choinneamhan**

The following Minutes of Meetings were:

- NOTED** – Appeals and Disputes Sub Committee on 11 September 2025;
- APPROVED** - Central Safety Committee held on 29 September 2025;
- NOTED** – Employment Release Sub Committee held on 9 and 29 October 2025; and
- APPROVED** - Staff Partnership Forum held on 11 November 2025.

The meeting closed at 11.40am