The Highland Council

Minutes of Meeting of the **Corporate Resources Committee** held in the Chamber, Council Headquarters, Inverness on Thursday, 4 June 2026 at 9.30am.

Present:

Mr M Baird
Mr R Bremner
Mrs G Campbell-Sinclair (remotely)
Mr A Christie
Mr K Gowans
Mr A Jarvie (remotely)
Mr S Kennedy
Mr B Lobban
Mr P Logue (remotely)
Mr G Mackenzie
Mr S Mackie (remotely)
Mr T MacLennan
Mr P Oldham (Chair) (remotely)
Mr M Prosser (remotely)
Ms M Reid (Vice Chair)
Mr M Reiss
Mr R Stewart (remotely)

Non-Members present:

Mr J Finlayson
Mrs T 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 E Barrie, Head of People
Mr D MacKenzie, Trading Standards Manager
Mrs L Dunn, Joint Democratic Services Manager
Ms F MacBain, Senior Committee Officer
Mr C Ross, 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 M Reid in the Chair

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

   An apology for absence was intimated on behalf of Mr J Bruce.

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

   Mr A Christie – Items 12 and 14 (Transparency Statement)

3. **Good News**
   Naidheachdan Matha

The Committee **NOTED** the good news on the following topics, the detail of which had been circulated:The Committee **NOTED** the good news on the following topics, the details of which had been circulated:

- Housing Benefit Processing
- Revenues & Commercialisation - Corporate Business Support
- Safety, Health and Emergency Planning
- 2026 Summer Placement Programme
- Business Solutions

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

The Council Convener expressed disappointment at the late submission of expenses, particularly as they were from the previous financial year, and he reiterated that this should not happen unless for reasons of illness.

The Committee **APPROVED** the claim from Mr Laurie Fraser £45.90 for mileage in November and December 2025.

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

The Committee **AGREED** Mr S Mackie replace Mr A Baxter on the Non-Domestic Rates Appeals Committee and Ms C Ramsay***** replace Ms M MacCallum on the Appeals and Disputes Sub Committee.

∗ **6. Establishment of the Fuel Poverty Working Group**
Stèidheachadh Buidheann Obrach na Bochdainn Connaidh

The Committee **AGREED** the group comprise of eight Members, 3 Independent, 3 SNP, 2 Liberal Democrats, as follows:

Glynis Campbell-Sinclair
Richard Gale*
Russell Jones*
Kate MacLean*
Thomas MacLennan
Paul Oldham
Matthew Prosser
Morven Reid

7. Treasury Management – Summary of Transactions to 31 March 2026
Rianachd Ionmhais - Geàrr-chunntas air Gnothaichean gu 31 Màrt 2026

There had been circulated Report No RES/19/26 by the Chief Officer - Corporate Finance.

The Committee **NOTED** the Treasury Management Summary of Transactions report for the period from 1 January 2026 to 31 March 2026.

8. Investors in People Programme Update
Cunntas air Pròg ram Luchd-tasgaidh ann an Daoine

There had been circulated Report No RES/20/26 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Corporate.

The Committee **NOTED** the:-

i. progress in rolling out Investors in People across the Council;
ii. high-level actions at paragraph 8.3 of the report; and
iii. Corporate 1 and Corporate 2 assessment reports.

9. Learning and Development Strategy
Ro-innleachd Ionnsachaidh is Leasachaidh

There had been circulated Report No RES/21/26 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Corporate.

The Committee **APPROVED** the Learning and Development Strategy and Action Plan.

10. People Strategy Update
Cunntas air Ro-innleachd nan Daoine

There had been circulated Report No RES/22/26 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Corporate.

During discussion, the strategy was welcomed, particularly the references to mental health support. While the overall demographic of Council staff was moving to a higher proportion of younger staff, as a result of the learning strategy and modern apprenticeships, it was hoped that the expertise and knowledge that came with long-term older staff was not lost.

Thereafter, the Committee:-

i. **NOTED** the progress of commitment provided in the People Strategy; and
ii. **AGREED** the People Strategy action plan as outlined in Appendix 1 to the report and updated Talent Strategy Action Plan in Appendix 2 to the report.

11. Corporate Cluster Workforce Action Plan - Annual Update
Plana-gnìomha Feachd-obrach na Buidhne Corporra – Cunntas Bliadhnail

There had been circulated Report No RES/23/26 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Corporate.

The Committee **NOTED** the Corporate Cluster workforce planning progress report.

12. Trading Standards Performance 2025/26 and Operational Plan 2026/27 Coileanadh Inbhean Malairt 2025/26 agus Plana Obrachaidh 2026/27

Transparency Statement: Mr A Christie declared a connection to this item in his capacity as Chief Executive of Inverness, Badenoch and Strathspey Citizens Advice Bureau but, having applied the objective test, he did not consider that he had an interest to declare.

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

During discussion, the following issues were raised: -

- the depth and breadth of the work undertaken by Trading Standards was acknowledged and the team praised for their work;
- it was hoped the banning of single use vapes had helped to reduce both the prevalence of vapes and the associated littering. Confirmation was provided that the ban had, in combination with other factors, resulted in improvement. However, attention was drawn to the industry's response which meant that relatively inexpensive vapes could now be purchased and discarded, which was disappointing;
- the provision of Trading Standards modern apprenticeships was welcomed;
- concern was expressed that in response to an increased potential risk to officers, stab vests had been purchased and would be used in certain situations. It was hoped that any incidents of violence towards officers were appropriately reported and it was confirmed that officers had received appropriate training in the use of the vests;
- it was suggested that at the appropriate time the Committee should support calls by the Chartered Trading Standards Institute to introduce Closure Order powers for Scottish local authorities. It was confirmed that any proposed legislative changes would be reported to Committee in due course;
- much of the information in the report would be useful for all Members of the Council;
- with reference to the recent significant fire in central Glasgow that was reported to have originated in a vape shop, information was sought and provided on efforts that could be made to minimise risks in this regard;
- the geographic spread of intelligence gathering and enforcement work was queried and summarised;
- in relation to inspection visits to premises where no wrong doing was detected, attention was drawn to the preventative benefits of such visits being known to be undertaken;
- with reference to the useful work being undertaken by Trading Standards, it was hoped the team might be expanded in future, and that the Highlands could maintain its reputation as a safe place to live and visit, with particular reference to health and safety adherence;

- the increasing challenges associated with the use of AI, including deep fake imagery and phishing scams, were highlighted and acknowledged, and some of the beneficial uses of AI in terms of compliance with legislation were summarised. The benefits and limitations of call blockers were highlighted;
- growing areas of concern included the prevalence of organised crime, and the sale of counterfeit goods. Members were urged to report any intelligence on this to Trading Standards;
- attention was drawn to the value of Trusted Trader Schemes; and

- concern was expressed that there had been reports of car park fines being issued when payment machines were out of order, and the legislation around car park charging was summarised. Specific incidences of this should be reported.

Thereafter, the Committee:-

i. **NOTED** the performance of the Trading Standards team during the year 2025/26 as detailed in its Annual Report;
ii. **APPROVED** the Trading Standards Operational Plan for 2026/27; and
iii. **NOTED** the steps being taken to modernise performance measurement in relation to Trading Standards.

13. Delivery of ICT Strategy
Lìbhrigeadh Ro-innleachd ICT

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

During discussion, the following issues were raised: -

- the Chief Officer – Business Solutions was thanked for his contribution to the Committee during his time in the role;
- the decision to move to in-house ICT service provision was praised, with particular reference to improved data security, which tied into reducing corporate risk HC4;
- the strategy's impact/focus on local employment and job creation was credited and cited as a benefit to the wider Highland economy; and
- the saving of around £3m was highlighted.

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

i. benefits delivered so far from Project Dòchas;
ii. validation of benefits provided by Internal Audit; and
iii. progress in the delivery of the ICT Strategy.

14. Corporate Service – Performance Monitoring Q4 2025/26
Seirbheis Chorporra - Sgrùdadh Coileanaidh R4 2025/26

Transparency Statement: Mr A Christie declared a connection to this item in his capacity as a Non-executive director of Inverness BID but, having applied the objective test, he did not consider that he had an interest to declare.

There had been circulated Report No RES/26/26 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Corporate.

During discussion, information was sought and provided as to why the HR and Communications compliance with Freedom of Information (FOI) response timescales had reduced in Quarter 4. It was explained that the response period for FOI requests was bound by legislation and was not reflective of the complexity of each case. It was suggested that a breakdown of the FOI requests by completion time would be helpful.

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

i. performance information for the Corporate Cluster; and
ii. change to Freedom of Information reporting to align with the Chief Officer structure.

15. Corporate Systems Update – HR & Payroll Programme
Cunntas air Siostaman Corporra – Pròg ram Ghoireasan Daonna & Rola Pàighidh

There had been circulated Report No RES/27/26 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Corporate.

The Committee **NOTED**:-

i. progress, financial position, and risk management of the HR & Payroll Programme; and
ii. the summary in section 4.5 of the report to support the decision-making process.

16. Delivery Plan Budget Monitoring & Progress Update Q4 2025/26
Sgrùdadh Buidseit & Cunntas air Adhartas a' Phlana Lìbhrigidh R4 2025/26

a) Corporate Solutions
Freagairtean Corporra

There had been circulated Report No RES/28/26 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Corporate.

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

b) Income Generation
Togail Teachd-a-steach

There had been circulated Report No RES/29/26 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Corporate.

During discussion, Members were urged to attend the in-person Redesign Board income generation workshop that was taking place that afternoon. The huge success of the visitor centre at the Storr in Skye was welcomed and it was hoped the model could be replicated elsewhere. Attention was drawn to the partnership working that had been instrumental in the success of the Storr project, with staff and Members working closely with the local community and suppliers, not only to generate income and support the local economy but also to protect and value the site and locality. Local recruitment was a vital aspect of this and should be replicated for other projects.

Given that there were around 9m visitors to the Highlands each year, attention was drawn to the costs of this to the Council, in the provision and maintenance of facilities and infrastructure. In this regard, the importance of developing income generation projects was emphasised. It was suggested further specific income generation projects should be presented to the Committee at its next meeting.

In relation to the possible income generation project at Torvean, it was suggested that the historically significant Boar Stone, which had been moved from the Essich area of Inverness to a display at the entrance to the Council chamber, should be moved to Torvean.

Thereafter, the Committee **NOTED** progress on the projects covered in the report.

17. Minutes of Meetings
Geàrr-chunntasan Choinneamhan

The following Minutes of Meetings were:

i. **NOTED** – Non-Domestic Rates Appeals Committee held on 30 April 2026;
ii. **APPROVED** - Staff Partnership Forum held on 6 May 2026; and
iii. **NOTED** –Appeals and Disputes Sub Committee held on 29 April 2026 and 20 May 2026.

Closing remarks

The Chair paid tribute to Mr Jon Shepherd, Chief Officer - Business Solutions, and Ms Elaine Barrie, Head of People, both of whom had enjoyed long careers with the Council and been instrumental in implementing significant projects and system changes. Their outstanding contributions to the work of the Council, both for over three decades, was greatly appreciated and they were wished well on behalf of the Council for their imminent retirement.

The meeting ended at 10.50am.