The Highland Council

Minutes of Meeting of the **Central Safety Committee** held in Council Headquarters, Glenurquhart Road, Inverness on **Monday, 15 June 2026 at 2.00pm.**

Present:

Employer's Representatives:
Mr R Gale
Mr P Oldham
Mrs M Reid

Staff Side Representatives:
Mr M Smith, UNITE/UCATT (remote)
Mr D Griffiths, GMB

In attendance:
Ms R Fry, Chief Officer HR & Communications
Mr D Cowie (**DC**), Service Lead, Safety Health Emergency Planning
Mr T Murdison (**TM**), Service Lead, Corporate Property Management
Mr F Scott, Property Manager (Asset Management)
Mr A Yates, Communities & Place Health & Safety Co-ordinator
Mr D Martin, Education & Learning, Health & Safety Wellbeing Co-ordinator (remote)
Ms M Montaner, Health & Social Care, Health & Safety Wellbeing Co-ordinator (remote)
Ms D Sutherland, Corporate Health & Safety Wellbeing Co-ordinator.
Mr W Mackinnon, Ross, Skye & Lochaber Area (remote)
Mr W Munro, Inverness, Nairn, Badenoch & Strathspey Area
Mr P Tomalin, Caithness, Sutherland & Easter Ross area (remote)
Mr A MacInnes, Senior Committee Officer, Corporate Service

Mr P Oldham in the Chair

Item No.	Subject/Decision	Action
1.	**Apologies for Absence** Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of Mr A Christie from the Employer's Side and Ms C Farmer-McEwan, UNISON from the Staff Side.	
2.	**Declarations of Interest/Transparency Statement** There were none.	
3.	**Update on Occupational Health, Safety and Wellbeing initiative and activities** There was circulated Report No. CSC/5/26 by the Chief Officer HR & Communications which provided an update on fire, health, safety and wellbeing issues and developments for the Highland Council for Quarter 4 2025/26. It reviewed activities arising from the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) interventions; activities and initiatives of the Occupational Health, Safety and Wellbeing (OHSW) team as well as proposed changes to strategies or policies.	

	Some of the main issues in the report were highlighted in relation to health and safety interventions; fire risk assessments; Safety Health Emergency Planning (SHEP) recruitment and activities such as providing conflict management training. Services were invited to contact the SHEP team for any specific health and safety training they required. Further, slips, trips and falls remained the largest cause of reported accidents which is consistent with the UK-wide reporting. The OHSW team continued to roll out roadshows of training to Education for Head Teachers and Deputy Head Teachers. These covered a range of subjects, including risk assessments, Assure reporting and Responsible Premises Officers duties. Information was provided on Viva Engage views on posts, messages posted and reactions for both health and safety and mental health wellbeing articles. For staff who did not have access to Council IT devices, Viva Engage articles of specific importance were sent to all Managers/employees for cascading to all staff. Work was ongoing to improve access to Viva Engage to all employees. The Committee **NOTED** the updated information on health, safety and wellbeing issues and developments contained in the report.	
4.	**Update on Occupational Health Services** There was circulated Report No. CSC/6/26 by the Chief Officer HR & Communications which provided an update on the Occupational Health (OH) service which includes the health surveillance and physiotherapy services contract for the period Q4 2025/26. It was highlighted that wasted OH appointments where staff did not attend or complete appointments had risen again from 7.5% to 11.40%. The Council was still charged for wasted appointments and there would now be a targeted approach to identify services that are higher in the wasted appointments to ensure improvements in attendance. A comment was made that it was not just the financial impact that was of concern but the wider underlying issues of why employees were not attending OH appointments that required to be identified. OH appointments were made for a very good reason and not attending could impact on the employees wellbeing and could impact on other employees who may require to cover absences for example. Home visits were not in the current OH contract, but the option of video consultations was being looked at. The Committee **NOTED**:- i the updated position in reference to the OH contract; and ii the usage of the OH service for the period Q4 2025/26.	

5.	**Update on Employee Assistance Programme** There was circulated Report No. CSC/7/26 by the Chief Officer HR & Communications which provided an update on the Employee Assistance Programme for the period Q4 2025/26. It was highlighted that the employee assistance programme had recently been renewed with Spectrum Life, securing an enhanced package at no extra cost to The Highland Council. Changes included moving from a limit of six counselling sessions to up to eight sessions, A new AI-powered chatbot can signpost to supports, and there was a new ability to book online and request video consultations (these were previously telephone only). The Committee **NOTED**: i the updated position in reference to the usage of the Employee Assistance Programme; and ii the usage of the Employee Assistance Programme for the period Q4 January – March 2026.	
6.	**Property Related Health and Safety Issues** There was circulated Report No. CSC/8/26 by the Assistant Chief Executive Place which provided an update on significant property-related Health and Safety concerns, any emerging future risks and new policy and procedures introduced. It was highlighted that the Rosebank Primary School toilets were unavailable. A defect had been identified within a component of the roof structure above the changing rooms in the gym block. Based on advice from the appointed structural engineer, the affected area had been taken out of service while further investigations and testing are undertaken. It was intended that repairs would be undertaken over the school summer holiday period. Further, in relation to the Inverness Sports Centre & Aquadome, a full structural survey was completed as part of the ongoing feasibility project for the site. In line with the survey's recommendations, the flume tower and part of the health suite had been taken out of service to allow for further investigative works and the development of remedial solutions. This process was ongoing, with completion anticipated by the end of June 2026. There was a presentation on the Depot Transformation Programme which aimed to provide an evidence based prioritisation of depot investment. There was a strategic assessment of the depot network which had 83 depots and the top 10 depots requiring prioritisation were highlighted. The impact of the programme would be to modernise and join up the estate to enable improved service delivery; to address operational compliance, condition & suitability; and to support operational changes and future needs.	

	In discussion on the presentation there was information sought and provided in relation to how depots were prioritised in terms of compliance with health and safety legislation; portable appliance testing (PAT) and how risk was quantified and PAT prioritised. The backlog of maintenance on School roofs and the need for preventative maintenance so that roofs last their design lifespan was highlighted. There was a need for more revenue funding for planned preventative maintenance and capital funding to make improvements to the School estate. The Committee **NOTED** the property related risks arising and overall progress being made regarding improving and maintaining statutory compliance across the built estate.	
7.	**Minutes of Last Meeting** There had been circulated for confirmation, Minutes of the last meeting of the Committee held on 9 March 2026 the terms of which were **APPROVED**.	
8.	**Matters Arising from the Minutes** i Terberg bin lift, Refuse Collection Vehicle broken spring incident – it was advised that 31 vehicles had now had the retrofit installed with a further 17 vehicles still to have the retrofit. ii Lone workers – a working group was to be set up on lone working led by the Safety Health Emergency Planning team. Services would be contacted for representatives to join the working group.	
9.	**Minutes: Area Health & Safety Groups; Service Trade Union Health & Safety Liaison Groups** There was circulated for information, Minutes of Meeting of:- **Area Health and Safety Groups** i. Ross, Skye and Lochaber – 14 May, 2026. ii. Inverness, Nairn, Badenoch & Strathspey – 27 May, 2026 iii. Caithness, Sutherland and Easter Ross held on 21 May, 2026 **Service Trade Union Health and Safety Liaison Meeting** iv. Corporate – 1 April, 2026 v. Place – 27 May 2026 vi. Health and Social Care – 25 May, 2026 vii. Education – 11 May, 2026 The Committee **NOTED** the Area Health and Safety Groups and Service Trade Union Health and Safety Liaison Groups Minutes.	

	Matters arising from the minutes were highlighted as follows:- i trade unions were encouraged to have representation at all Area and Service health and safety liaison group meetings. ii Recording violent incidents in Education – Due to the prescriptive nature of Education's requirements, Evotix advised it will not be possible for them to cover the service on their system. Other options were being explored and there remained a recording mechanism (MS Forms) in place for Education. Further, all violent incidents were recorded on the Assure accident and incident reporting system, unless it was a pupil on staff or pupil on pupil incident, which were reported using a different system. The unacceptable behaviour survey had been completed and outcomes would be reported to each Service Cluster as well as a Council wide report. A Scotland wide violence and aggression group was to be formed with a link to the Scottish Government. It was intended to share information on violence and aggression in Schools. Also, a new Health and Safety Adviser (Education) would be working full time in Education and hopefully would make an impact on this issue. Statistical information on violence and aggression incidents in Schools would be brought to a future meeting of the Committee. iii Access to payslips – The ICT team were identifying who could and could not access their payslips in order to identify ways of making it more easily accessible. iv requests for information from Managers by trade union safety representatives had not been responded to as well as they could be. There was a legislative requirement to provide information when requested in a reasonable period of time. In response, the Property team would share information in relation to hard infrastructure and the generic e-mail account would be shared with the Staff Side representative, which should be used to request information. The Service Lead, Safety Health Emergency Planning and Service Lead, Corporate Property Management also undertook to meet with the trade union representative to discuss this matter further. A communication would also be issued to Chief Officers on the legal requirement to provide documentation to trade union safety representatives.	**DC** **DC/TM** **DC**

The meeting concluded at 3.22 pm.

The Highland Council

Minutes of Meeting of the **Fuel Poverty Working Group** held remotely on Friday 19 June 2026 at 2pm.

Present:-

Richard Gale	Thomas MacLennan
Russell Jones	Paul Oldham
Kate MacLean	Matthew Prosser

In attendance:-
Ms A Clark, Chief Officer, Housing & Communities
Mr B Cameron, Strategic Lead - Housing & Customer Services
Ms I MacMillan, Programme Manager, Climate Change and Energy

Mr Paul Oldham in the Chair

1. Appointment of Chair

The Group **APPOINTED** Mr P Oldham as Chair.

2. Apologies for Absence

Apologies were submitted on behalf of Mrs G Campbell-Sinclair and Mrs M Reid.

3. Declarations of Interest

There were none.

4. Developing the Terms of Reference

During discussion, reference was made to the Highland Poverty and Equality Commission report being considered by the Council on 25 June 2026. The report would not be published on the Council's website until Monday 22 June 2026 but would be circulated imminently.

In relation to the terms of reference of the Group, the following issues were raised:

- fuel poverty should be considered within the context of poverty in general;
- there was a higher prevalence of fuel poverty in the Highlands compared to the rest of Scotland, with refence made to Caithness and Sutherland having an estimated 70% of households experiencing fuel poverty;
- the value of the work of the Council's energy team was highlighted, as was the need to raise awareness of their work, and the work of other agencies and schemes tackling fuel poverty, for both Council and private tenants;
- the Highlands were bearing the burden of providing a high level of renewable energy infrastructure while experiencing higher fuel costs for heating homes and for transport than elsewhere;

- the Group should be involved in lobbying, education, and awareness raising of the assistance that was available to reduce fuel costs, for example how to reduce power usage in the home and the benefits of ventilation and insulation;
- a starting point for the Group was to define fuel poverty, who was affected by it, and what the Group's aims were;
- with reference to the Council elections in May 2027, the timescales for the work of the Group were tight;
- working with stakeholders was vital, and reference was made to the work of the Council's climate, energy and housing officers, to the Scottish Fuel Poverty Advisory Panel, to the Community Planning Partnership (CPP)'s Poverty Reduction Delivery Group, and to the work of Changeworks, with consideration to be given to inviting appropriate partner representatives to the meeting in September 2026;
- it was suggested the Group should aim to provide both practical short-term solutions as well as long-term strategic issues;
- reference was made to the benefits of district heating systems, local energy plans, and solar panels or farms, and these could be reported on at future meetings;
- it would be helpful to have more data on the types of heating used in homes across the Highlands, with the suggestion of a survey. It was important that equipment installed in houses was maintained or monitored and that people were aware of how to use it; and
- the Chair would meet with key officers to further consider the remit and future business, with a focus on quick wins and awareness raising. A draft remit would be circulated for consideration before being agreed at the next meeting of Corporate Resource Committee.

The Working Group:

i. **NOTED** that at its meeting on 26 March 2026, the Council had agreed to the establishment of a short-term Members Working Group, reporting to the Corporate Resources Committee, to explore ways the Council could mitigate the impacts caused by fuel poverty on Highland residents;

ii. having considered the focus and remit of the group, **AGREED** the Chief Officer, Housing & Communities would meet with the Chair and thereafter compile a draft Terms of Reference, which would be circulated to the Group for comment; and

iii. **AGREED** to invite representatives from Changeworks and the CPP Poverty Reduction Delivery Group to the meeting on 23 September 2026.

5. Dates of Meetings

The Group **NOTED** that meetings would be held on the following dates:

Wednesday, 23 September 2026 at 10am
Thursday, 12 November 2026 at 2pm
Thursday, 21 January 2027 at 2pm

The meeting ended at 2.45pm.

The Highland Council
Appeals and Disputes Committee

Minute of Meeting of the **Corporate Resources Committee's Appeals and Disputes Committee** held in Council Headquarters/Remotely, Inverness on **Monday, 29 June 2026 at 10.00 am.**

PRESENT

Mr R Gale
Mrs J Hendry
Mr B Lobban
Mr D McDonald
Ms C Ramsay

Officials in Attendance:-

Ms A MacPherson, Strategic Lead (Resources, Education and Learning) (Management Side)
Ms K Smith, HR Business Partner (Management Side)
The Appellant
Ms L Regan, UNISON Area Organiser, Appellant’s Representative
Ms L McGunnigle, Strategic Lead – HR (Adviser to the Committee)
Mr A MacInnes, Senior Committee Officer, Democratic Services (Clerk to the Committee)
Mrs G MacPherson, Senior Committee Officer, Democratic Services

BUSINESS

Interim Chair

In the absence of the Chair, Mr B Lobban was appointed as interim chair for this meeting.

1. Apologies

Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of Mr J Finlayson, Mrs I MacKenzie, Mr D Millar, Mr P Oldham, Ms M Reid.

2. Declarations of Interest/Transparency Statement

There were none.

3. Exclusion of the Public

The Committee **RESOLVED** that under Section 50A(4) of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 the public be excluded from the meeting for this item on the grounds that it involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 1 of Part I of Schedule 7A of the Act.

4. Appeal Against Termination of Employment on Grounds of Capability

There had been circulated a written statement of case prepared by the Management side, a written statement of case prepared by the Appellant side and a copy of the appeals hearing procedure.

The Chair welcomed both parties and referred to the procedure for the Appeal Hearing.

In accordance with the appeals procedure, the Management side presented their case. Thereafter, the Appellant side presented their case to the Committee.

Following questioning and after the Management side and Appellant side had summed up their respective cases, both parties withdrew to allow the Committee to deliberate in private.

Having given careful consideration to the various issues raised, the Committee **AGREED** that the grounds of the appeal had not been substantiated and the appeal be not upheld.

The meeting ended at 11.05 a.m.

The Highland Council
Non-Domestic Rates Appeals Committee

Minute of Meeting of the **Non-Domestic Rates Appeals Committee** held in Council Headquarters, Inverness on **Monday 10 August 2026** at 10.35 a.m.

Present:
Mr S Mackie
Mr P Oldham
Mrs M Reid

In Attendance:
Mr M Albiston, Solicitor (Litigation & Advice), Corporate (Adviser to the Committee)
Ms A Foggo, Solicitor, Corporate (Revenue's Side)
Mr G Munro, Revenues Manager, Corporate (Revenue's Side)
The Appellant's Side
Mr A MacInnes, Senior Committee Officer, Corporate (Clerk to the Committee)

Mr P Oldham in the Chair

1. Apologies for Absence

There were none.

2. Declarations of Interest/Transparency Statement

There were no declarations of interest/transparency statements.

3. Exclusion of the Public

The Committee **RESOLVED** that under Section 50A(4) of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 the public be excluded from the meeting for this item on the grounds that it involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 6 of Part I of Schedule 7A of the Act.

4. Non Domestic Rates Appeal

The Chairman welcomed both parties to the meeting.

The Chair of the Committee referred to a late document from the Appellant's side that had been e-mailed to the Clerk immediately prior to the Appeal meeting. The document was circulated to the Committee and the Revenues side. There was an adjournment of the meeting for 30 minutes to allow the Revenues side to consider the document. Thereafter, oral submissions on the document were invited from both parties to the appeal as to whether the document should be allowed into the process. Thereafter, the meeting was adjourned for a short time in order for the Committee to deliberate in private.

Following the adjournment, both parties were advised that the meeting would proceed with the late document being included as part of the Appellant’s side written submissions.

There had been circulated a written Statement of Case prepared by the Revenue’s Side, a written Statement of Case prepared by the Appellant’s Side and a copy of the Code of Practice for Non-Domestic Rates Appeals.

In accordance with the Code of Practice, the Revenue’s Side presented their case to the Committee which was followed by questioning by the Appellant’s side and the Committee. Thereafter, the Appellant’s Side presented their case which was followed by questioning by the Revenues side and the Committee.

After the Revenue’s Side, and the Appellant’s Side, had summed up their respective cases, both parties withdrew to allow the Committee to deliberate in private.

The Committee **AGREED** that following consideration of the evidence and submissions presented by both parties, the grounds of the appeal have not been substantiated and the appeal is not upheld.

The meeting ended at 1.07 p.m.