

The Highland Council

Minutes of Meeting of the **Housing and Property Committee** held in the Council Chamber, Council Headquarters, Glenurquhart Road, Inverness on **Wednesday 12 August 2026 at 9.30am.**

Present:

Ms S Atkin (Vice Chair)	Mrs J Hendry
Mr R Bremner (remote)	Mr R MacKintosh
Mr I Brown (remote)	Mrs A MacLean
Mrs G Campbell-Sinclair (Chair)	Mr D Macpherson
Ms L Dundas	Ms J McEwan (remote)
Mr L Fraser	Mr M Prosser (remote)
Mr R Gale	Mr R Stewart

Non-Members also present:

Mr A Christie	Ms M Hutchison (remote)
Mrs T Collier (remote)	Ms L Johnston (remote)
Mr D Fraser (remote)	Mr D Millar (remote)
Ms C Gillies (remote)	Mr J Murray (remote)
Dr M Gregson	Ms M Ross (remote)

Tenant Representatives in Attendance:

Mr A Dick
Ms L Richardson

Officials in Attendance:

Ms A Clark, Chief Officer – Housing and Communities
Ms S Barrie, Strategic Lead (Design and Construction)
Mr B Cameron, Strategic Lead (Housing and Customer Services)
Mr R Campbell, Strategic Lead (Investment Strategy)
Mr S Dalgarno, Strategic Lead (Asset and Property Management)
Ms C Pieraccini, Strategic Lead Finance (Place)
Ms H Cameron, Service Lead (Housing Development)
Ms D Delonnette, Service Lead (Housing and Homelessness)
Mr R MacLeod, Service Lead (Housing Investment and Building Maintenance)
Ms J Ross, Service Lead (Housing Policy and Performance)
Mr D Haas, Senior Community Development Manager Inverness & South
Mrs L Dunn, Joint Democratic Services Manager
Mrs G MacPherson, 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

Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of Mr S Cameron, Mr R Jones, Mrs I MacKenzie, and Mr R Stewart.

**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** that the recess powers granted by the Council at its meeting on 25 June 2026 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 presented.

**5. Housing & Property Developments Overview
Cunntas air Leasachaidhean Taigheadais & Seilbhe**

Due to technical difficulties during the meeting, the Committee **NOTED** that the presentation on the latest completed developments from Housing & Property would be circulated to Members and uploaded to the Council website following the meeting.

**6. Property & Facilities Management Services Revenue Budget; Final Outturn for 2025/26 and Monitoring Statement to 31 May 2026
Buidseat Teachd-a-steach Seirbheisean Seilbhe is Stiùireadh Ghoireasan;
Fìor Shuidheachadh Deireannach airson 2025/26 agus Aithris Sgrùdaidh gu 31 Cèitean 2026**

There had been circulated Report No HP/19/26 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Place.

In discussion, Members raised the following main points:

- in terms of Appendix 1 of the report, further information was sought and provided regarding other expenditure and it was confirmed that a breakdown of these non-staff costs, such as travel and stationery costs, would be provided outside of the meeting;
- it was questioned why planned improvement works did not take place in some schools during the holidays, despite contractors being available. There was concern that this might lead to further overspending and it was queried when the works would be completed. Clarification would be provided outside of the meeting; and
- in terms of section 6.2 of the report, Asset Rationalisation Savings, further information was sought, and would be provided, regarding the consideration of £400k savings during the current financial year.

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

- i. final outturn figures for the 2025/26 Property and Facilities Management Services Revenue Budget;
- ii. forecast financial position for 2026/27 as set out in the report and appendices to the report; and
- iii. explanations provided for any material variances and actions taken or proposed.

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

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

In discussion, Members raised the following main points:

- in terms of section 8.7 of the report, Major Capital Projects in Dingwall, concerns were raised regarding differing expectations of design plans and it was queried when these would be presented to a stakeholder meeting. The importance of ensuring all parties had access to the same information was emphasised. Regarding the Dingwall Sports Centre, the first and next steps should be clearly set out, together with associated timelines, including confirmation of when elements would, or would not, be delivered;
- an update was sought, and provided, on the progress of the works to replace the toilet blocks at Rosebank Primary School;
- concern was expressed regarding the scale of the Major Capital Projects and it was queried if contractors were in place to complete the works. There was further concern that while significant investment was being directed towards new projects, some existing schools continued to face issues such as leaking roofs and poor facilities, with no planned upgrades. Therefore, clarification was sought on the level of capital investment being allocated to repairs and improvements within the existing school estate;
- reference was made to the importance of the Major Capital Projects having realistic completion dates. Reports should be transparent to indicate that the completion date was rescheduled or, if changed, refer to the original completion date that had been set. In addition, a specific request was made in terms of Appendix 4, School Estate Improvement Programme – Priority Projects, confirmation was provided that indicative dates (both original and any revised) would be included against each stage of the projects on future reports to provide transparency;
- attention was drawn to Appendix 2 of the report which indicated that £8k of expenditure had been incurred during Quarter 1 on improvements for Council owned care homes that were managed by NHS Highland. Concern was expressed at the low level of investment and the need for further maintenance and improvement works was emphasised. Major assets owned by the Council but operated by NHS Highland, Eden Court Highlands and High Life Highland often received less scrutiny as they were not operationally managed by the Council. It was therefore requested that a report be provided on the condition of these assets along with details of any planned works, the benefits of these and the proposed timescales for delivery;
- in terms of section 8.9 of the report, confirmation was sought that the stakeholder group at Inverness High School had been established;

- information was sought, and provided, regarding repairs and maintenance at Culloden Academy and the use of rolling maintenance plans; and
- confirmation was provided that further details would be provided outwith the meeting on the number of empty janitor houses.

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

- final capital monitoring position for the 2025/26 financial year;
- capital monitoring position for the 2026/27 financial year to 31 May 2026 and the forecast year-end position; and
- programme and project updates included in the report and the projects to be funded from the various budget allocations in 2026/27 and 2027/28, including a contribution of £0.4M to the Cromarty Courthouse project.

8. Housing Revenue Account (HRA) and Non-HRA Budget; Final Outturn 2025/26 and Monitoring Statement to 31 May 2026
Buidseat Cunntas Teachd-a-steach Taigheadais is Cunntas Teachd-a-steach Neo-Thaigheadais; Fìor Shuidheachadh Deireannach 2025/26 agus Aithris Sgrùdaidh gu 31 Cèitean 2026

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

In discussion, Members raised the following main points:

- funding for heating improvements and grants to improve properties were welcomed. The importance of rental income in supporting these improvements was highlighted and the work being undertaken by the Revenues Service to help tenants access benefits was recognised. Referring to forthcoming damp and mould legislation, it was suggested that a more joined-up approach, with Housing Management and Maintenance Officers undertaking joint visits to support vulnerable tenants and assess property conditions, should be considered. It was further suggested that a pilot scheme in a Highland area, taking a proactive “spend to save” approach to meet new legislative requirements, could benefit both tenants and the Council. The Chair welcomed the suggestion and agreed to discuss the matter further with officers outwith the meeting. While the legislation was welcomed, it was felt that additional funding would be required nationally to deliver the necessary work;
- a breakdown of the rent arrears by current and ex tenants was requested and this would be provided outside of the meeting;
- it was suggested that, in terms of section 7.3 of the report and the low levels of usage at some of the four Highland gypsy traveller sites, consideration be given to reducing the number of sites from four to three. In response it was indicated that ongoing engagement was taking place with the representative body;
- there was concern that the 2025/26 outturn suggested an underspend on repairs and maintenance. An explanation was sought, and clarification provided;
- disappointment was expressed that the Council had been unable to provide an alternative Council-owned premises for a small business owner following a fire and an update to the Member Enquiry would be provided after the meeting;
- community-based tenant forums could provide useful information to officers or Members, which would help identify and raise concerns at an earlier stage;

- it was asked when the snagging jobs in the Easter Ross area were planned in relation to the capital works being undertaken; and
- in welcoming the positive financial outturn highlighted in sections 6.4 and 6.5 of the report, bad debt provision and loan charges, information was sought, and provided regarding the HRA Financial Strategy which set out how the Council intended to reduce HRA debt levels and progress towards the recommended borrowing threshold, thereby maximising resources available for investment in housing stock and repairs.

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

- i. final outturn figures for the Housing Revenue Account and Non-Housing Revenue Account 2025/26;
- ii. forecast financial position for 2026/27 as set out in the report and appendices to the report; and
- iii. explanations provided for any material variances and actions taken or proposed.

9. Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Capital Monitoring Outturns 2025/26 to 31 March 2026 and HRA Capital Monitoring 2026/27 to 31 May 2026
Suidheachaidhean Làithreach Sgrùdadh Calpa Cunntas Teachd A-steach
Taigheadais 2025/26 gu 31 Màrt 2026 agus Sgrùdadh Calpa Cunntas Teachd
A-steach Taigheadais 2026/27 gu 31 Cèitean 2026

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

In discussion, Members raised the following main points:

- an explanation was sought, and provided, regarding the cause of the £23.6m underspend as highlighted in section 6.2 of the report. It was suggested that consideration be given to using some of the underspend on adapted kitchens and bathrooms within sheltered housing to support tenants living in their own home for longer. Members were informed that for any underspend left over at the end of the 2022-2027 programme a recommendation would be made to a future Committee to profile those funds into a following programme;
- the Healthy, Safe and Secure Project was a welcome investment. Information was sought, and provided, in terms of the number of ground floor accessible homes;
- responding to concerns, it was clarified that the Council part of the aids and adaptations process was not lengthy. It was asked what the Council could do in order to make properties more suitable for older tenants to meet the needs of an ageing population;
- it was raised whether prospective tenants, particularly those considering downsizing, could be invited to view new housing developments to learn of the accommodation and facilities available;
- clarification was sought, and provided, on the main factors contributing to delays in housing project delivery, which varied from year to year;
- following community concerns after a recent private house fire, information was sought, and provided, regarding safety measures in place surrounding solar panels;

- information was sought, and provided, in terms of sound insulation. All new properties had to meet certain standards and initiatives carried out on existing stock had had varying levels of success;
- in response to a question regarding the impact of air source heat pumps, Members were informed that positive feedback had been received in terms of affordability, alongside other measures;
- it was asked and confirmed that an information board be erected on Balloan Road, Inverness, which would highlight future project works to be carried out; and
- the tenant representative highlighted the importance of educating tenants and reference was made to the ongoing national work to review and improve the adaptations process, including measures to reduce delays associated with NHS Occupational Therapy assessments.

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

- i. final outturn figures for the Housing Revenue Account Capital Programme 2025/26: and
- ii. May 2026 figures and projected outturn for the Housing Revenue Account Capital Programme 2026/27.

10. Highland Housing Register (HHR) Allocations Monitoring Report 2025/26 Aithisg Sgrùdaidh Riarachaidhean Clàr Taigheadais na Gàidhealtachd 2025/26

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

In discussion, Members raised the following main points:

- the report was welcomed, however, there was a need to be more realistic with applicants about their prospects of securing a council house. Reference was made to tables 1 and 2 in the appendix to the report and it was highlighted the shortage of four-bedroom properties, and the impact this had on families with significant housing needs, including those with disabled children that had an urgent need of additional or ground floor space. It was suggested that the Strategic Highland Investment Plan should place greater emphasis on the provision of larger family homes. It was requested that a Member workshop to explore potential solutions and innovative ways to increase housing allocations, particularly for larger family homes, be arranged;
- table 2, which covered applicants aged 16 to 25, was concerning as it highlighted the number of young people in temporary accommodation or living with parents/relatives. In addition, youth homelessness figures might be underestimated due to sofa surfing and applicants not maintaining registration;
- assurance was sought and provided that key worker status was verified with appropriate checks made both at application and allocation stage. It was highlighted that the definitions of key workers could vary between urban and remote and rural communities. As an example, reference was made to the importance of other sectors such as retail workers providing an essential service and maintaining local communities;
- it was clarified that there was no fixed points threshold for sheltered housing allocations;

- disappointment was expressed at the lack of modern practices to assist applicants with mental health, depression or neurodivergent needs, particularly where medical evidence was difficult to obtain, and it was queried whether it was feasible to update processes without putting extra pressure on Occupational Health;
- further information was sought and provided regarding purchasing former council houses and using the empty homes policy to bring more properties back into use for local housing needs, particularly as an alternative to their use as short term let accommodation;
- reference was made to the changing demographics and family structures and the impact of this on the demand for housing. It was queried if these statistics could be provided by way of explanation of the increasing housing demand;
- it was queried whether the current approach was delivering fair outcomes for those that were homeless but trying to maintain employment and contribute to local communities and if these factors had any weight when assessing need. It was explained that housing needs were assessed against the Housing Allocations policy along with evidence and points, which could include need to reside; and
- confirmation was provided that support was available for young people entering a tenancy agreement for the first time. Further reference was made to the need to balance tenancy sustainment with expectations that tenants complied with their tenancy agreements.

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 Partnership continued to provide affordable and secure social housing in Highland communities; and
- AGREED** that a workshop be held to explore developing innovative ways to overcome the supply challenges, encourage tenants to downsize and improve housing outcomes.

11. Highland Housing Register (HHR) – Review of Allocations Policy Clàr Taigheadais na Gàidhealtachd – Ath-sgrùdadh Poileasaidh Riarachaidhean

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

In discussion, Members raised the following main points:

- confirmation was sought and provided that the Rightsizing policy would be included in the Member workshop (as agreed at Item 10), to allow for further consideration of incentives to make it more attractive for tenants to downsize;
- a point that tenants in rent arrears should not be offered incentives to downsize;
- in response to a query, it was confirmed that consideration would be given in advance as to how those Members unable to attend could feed into the workshop and how broader information could be gathered from tenants to help inform the discussions;

- it would be helpful if the date of the Member workshop was arranged primarily to suit Committee Members, while acknowledging it would be open for all Members to attend;
- the report demonstrated the Council was compliant, transparent and open to robust scrutiny in terms of the Allocations Policy; this provided reassurance to Members, tenant representatives and tenants that the stock was being managed correctly and those on the Highland Housing Register that there was a fair system in place;
- the review of the Allocations Policy should also consider the approach taken elsewhere in the UK and Europe, and all other available measures to manage the housing stock in a way that helped more people; and
- it was important to recognise that a one size fits all approach was not appropriate for the Highlands and that the Areas might have different requirements and needs.

Thereafter, the Committee:-

- NOTED** the findings of the HHR Policy Review and the work undertaken to date;
- NOTED** that the review confirms the HHR Allocations Policy was in line with national legislation and guidance such as the Housing (Scotland) Act(s) 1987, 2001, 2014, 2025 and Social Housing Allocations Legal Framework: Statutory Guidance for Social Landlords;
- AGREED** to enhancing the Rightsizing Scheme, including revised and enhanced incentives;
- AGREED** that Accessible Housing provision was progressed as a separate, partnership-led workstream and be reported back to this Committee; and
- NOTED** that any future proposed policy changes would be subject to discussions with the HHR partnership group, must be legislatively compliant and would be subject to a full Integrated Impact Assessment.

12. Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Capital Plan 2027-2032 Plana Calpa Cunntas Teachd-a-steach Taigheadais 2027-2032

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

In discussion, Members raised the following main points:

- the proposed investment of £116.151m over the five-year period of the Plan was a good news story;
- further clarity was sought and provided on the rationale for £5m being allocated for equipment and adaptations, noting this was a demand led budget and would be monitored annually;
- an assurance was sought and provided that a comparison of the average lifecycle of components included in the Capital Programme could be provided and in terms of building this into investment plans and providing more transparency on costings;
- whether it would be prudent for the Council to invest in a supply of bathrooms, kitchens, windows and doors to reduce costs. It was explained there were challenges in having sufficient facilities for storage and different dimensions being required for individual properties, however the Service considered any opportunities for savings in this regard; and

- whether sufficient consideration had been given to inflation in the figures for the proposed annual level of planned investment to be delivered over the five-year period of the Plan and the action being taken to future proof the investment going forward. It was confirmed inflationary projections were considered as part of the annual monitoring of the Plan and if adjustments were required, the Service would continue to prioritise works according to people's needs.

The Tenant Representative advised that the installation of dark floors in properties could be problematic as tenants become older on the basis they were unsuitable for those with a visual impairment or dementia and an assurance was provided that officers would reflect on this feedback. She also complimented officers on citing articles from the Human Rights Act within the report and further referenced relevant articles within the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

Thereafter, the Committee:-

- APPROVED** the overall HRA Mainstream Capital Plan 2027-2032 budget of £116.151m, an increase of £28m from the previous 5-year capital plan;
- APPROVED** the proposed investment priorities for the Mainstream Capital Plan, as set out in Section 5 of the report;
- NOTED** that this was a 5-year plan and, as with all long-term programmes, there would be a level of reprofiling reported to Committee during the course of the 2027-2032 Plan. This would manage delivery risk, price fluctuations, funding variances and unavoidable pressure arising from urgent or compliance-driven works;
- APPROVED** the continued bi-annual reporting of the programme to Area Committees to ensure ward Members were fully informed of progress of projects in their communities; and
- NOTED** that future revenue budget agreements and rent setting decisions would continue to be on an annual basis, and any resulting implications for / amendments to, the capital plan, would be managed as part of that annual process.

13. Annual Assurance Statement Aithris Barantais Bhliadhnaill

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

The Tenant Representative suggested that the fire safety section was vague, particularly in relation to the issues around ensuring people with a disability could escape and were safe and whether the Council was undertaking further work on this issue. In response, details were provided on ongoing discussions with the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service around the need for a proportionate and individual property response, and in relation home fire safety visits. The HRA Capital Plan included an indicative budget for the investment needs around the new legislative requirements for single building assessments and this included fire safety, some of which would involve promotional work with tenants.

The Committee **APPROVED** the Annual Assurance Statement for 2026 detailed in Appendix 1 to the report which would be subsequently submitted to the Scottish Housing Regulator.

14. Annual Community Asset Transfer Report 2025/26
Aithisg Bhliadhnail Glusad So-mhaoin Coimhearsnachd 2025/26

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

The Committee **AGREED** the annual report on Community Asset Transfer as detailed in the report, summarised at Appendix 1 of the report and a copy of the full version was circulated separately as an Excel file, for submission to the Scottish Government.

15. Housing Performance Report to 30 June 2026
Aithisg Coileanaidh Taigheadais gu 30 Ògmhios 2026

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

The Committee **NOTED** the information provided on housing performance in the period 1 April 2026 – 30 June 2026.

16. Service Performance Report Q1 2026/27
Aithisg Coileanaidh Seirbheis R1 2026/27

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

The Committee **NOTED** the:-

- i. performance information for the Housing & Property Service; and
- ii. change to Absence and Freedom of Information reporting to align with Chief Officer structure.

17. Delivery Plan Budget Monitoring & Progress Update
Sgrùdadh Buidseit & Cunntas Adhartais a' Phlana Libhrigidh

There had been circulated Report No HP/30/26 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Place.

The Committee **NOTED** the project/programme updates provided in the report.

18. 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 item on the grounds that it involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 6 & 9 of Part 1 of Schedule 7A of the Act.

19. Housing Development Initiatives
Iomairtean Leasachaidh Taigheadais

There had been circulated to Members only Report No HP/31/26 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Place.

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

20. Land and Property Fearann agus Seilbh

There had been circulated to Members only Report No HP/32/26 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Place.

During discussion, Mr R Gale moved an amendment for an additional recommendation in relation to one of the leases within the report. However, the Chair deemed that the amendment was not competent.

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

21. Property Transactions Monitoring Aithisg Sgrùdaidh Ghnothachasan Seilbhe

There had been circulated to Members only Report No HP/33/26 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Place.

Following discussion, the Committee **NOTED** the recommendations as detailed in the report.

The meeting was concluded at 1.05pm.