The Highland Council

City of Inverness Area Committee

Minutes of Meeting of the **Inverness Common Good Fund Sub-Committee** held in Committee Room 3, Council Headquarters, Glenurquhart Road, Inverness on Monday 26 October 2026 at 9.30 am.

Present:

Mr C Ballance
Mrs G Campbell-Sinclair
Mr A Graham (Chair)
Dr M Gregson
Mrs I MacKenzie (Remote)
Ms K MacLean (Remote)
Mr D Macpherson
Mr D McDonald
Mrs M Reid

Non-Members also present:

Mr B Boyd (Remote)
Mr I Brown
Mr K Gowans

In attendance:

Mr M Greig, Community Development Manager, Inverness and South
Mr M Hilton, Project Manager, Energy, Climate Change and Energy Team
Ms T Ratnam, Programme Manager, Climate Change and Energy Team
Ms S Lamb, Project Officer, Community Regeneration (Remote)
Mrs H Tolmie, Administrative Assistant, Senior Community Development Manager's Office
Ms M Murray, Principal Committee Officer
Mrs G MacPherson, Senior Committee Officer

Mr A Graham in the Chair

Business

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of Mr M Cameron and Mr A Christie.

2. Declarations of Interest/Transparency Statements

There were no Declarations of Interest or Transparency Statements.

3. Solar PV Array at Longman Landfill Site, Stadium Road, Inverness

A presentation outlining the next steps of the proposed 9.9MW solar array at the former Longman landfill site was provided by Matthew Hilton, Project Manager (Energy). It was confirmed that planning permission had been secured and power off-take options were being explored. The next step was to formally request commencement of the necessary Common Good Consultation by way of a report to the City of Inverness Area Committee.

During discussion, the following main points were raised:-

- it was remarked that the option to buy in was exciting. Further information was sought, and provided, in this regard, including the projected cost. The Sub-Committee was informed of a number of funding options that were under review;
- in response to questions regarding active travel access, it was explained that access routes to the site might be suitable for active travel in the future, subject to SEPA licensing requirements. Clarification was sought in this regard, and a detailed response was provided;
- in response to concerns regarding the plan to run the Common Good Consultation over the festive period, Members were informed that the statutory consultation period of six weeks would be extended to eight weeks;
- information was sought, and provided, in terms of the mechanics of building the array and the connections to it. It was confirmed that the Climate Change and Energy Team was working closely with the Waste Management Team who, it was understood, were comfortable with the works carried out so far. Discussions were ongoing regarding the suitability of underground and overground connections. The Project Manager offered to provide further details and designs outside of the meeting;
- it was highlighted that the project was complex and substantial. Assurance was sought, and provided, in terms of the capacity and capability of the team to carry out the project;
- clarification was sought, and provided, on whether the solar array would be owned and operated by the Council rather than a third party;
- further information was sought, and provided, regarding how many of the interested off-takers could be supplied electricity by the array, and it was asked if surplus electricity could be sold to the Council's bus company and third parties such as Ember; and
- information was sought, and provided, in terms of delays encountered so far, and any anticipated impacts as a result.

The Sub-Committee **NOTED** the update and looked forward to future updates.

4. Inverness Floral Clock

There had been circulated Report No. ICGF/15/26 by the Assistant Chief Executive Place.

During discussion, the following main points were raised:-

- concerns were raised regarding long-term maintenance costs, particularly the annual replacement of bedding plants, and support was expressed for Option 2 (Hard Landscape Clock Face). However, it was commented that the clock would then cease to be floral, and that Option 2 offered no flexibility. A further suggestion included the use of local stone, such as Cairngorm granite, alongside heather plants;
- it was highlighted that the Inverness Castle Experience, which featured attractive landscaping, was in close proximity to the floral clock;
- in response to questions, it was confirmed that it had previously been agreed that the landmark would remain a clock, and that Community Regeneration Funding had been allocated in January 2026 to reinstate the clock mechanism;
- the importance of futureproofing the clock whilst retaining floral elements was emphasised. A design incorporating segments that could accommodate either plants or decorative gravel/stones would allow flexibility in the future. A hybrid

version of Option 3 (Planted Stone Frame) was suggested as a potentially affordable and sustainable solution, with the inner sections of the clockface incorporating a mix of bedding plants and lower-maintenance gravel, and the three protruding elements being hard-landscaped. Planting arrangements could then be determined on an annual basis;

- the Community Development Manager confirmed that, if a hybrid of Option 3 was the Sub-Committee's preferred option, he would liaise with the design team regarding the most appropriate design. He would also liaise with the clock manufacturer regarding plant heights to ensure they would not interfere with the clock mechanism;
- it was highlighted that the maintenance costs associated with Option 3 were estimated to be between £9,000 and £15,000 per year. However, other Members responded that the cost of the flowers could be as little as zero depending on the design chosen; and
- it was confirmed that the curlicues above the clock were a mixture of lavender and perennials.

Following discussion, Mr A Graham, seconded by Ms K MacLean, **MOVED** that Option 2 (Hard Landscape Clock Face) be recommended to the City of Inverness Area Committee.

As an **AMENDMENT**, Mr D McDonald, seconded by Mr D Macpherson, moved a hybrid of Option 3 (Planted Stone Frame) with flexibility to change the design as discussed above.

On a vote being taken, the **MOTION** received 2 votes and the **AMENDMENT** received 5 votes, with no abstentions. The **AMENDMENT** was therefore **CARRIED**, the votes having been cast as follows:-

For the Motion:
Mr A Graham, Ms K MacLean.

For the Amendment:
Mr C Ballance, Dr M Gregson, Mrs I MacKenzie, Mr D Macpherson, Mr D McDonald.

Decision

The Sub-Committee:-

i. **NOTED** the report attached at Appendix 1 and the options appraisal undertaken at Appendix 2 for the future development of the Inverness Floral Clock;
ii. **NOTED** the capital and annual maintenance costs associated with each option at Appendix 3 of the report; and
iii. **AGREED TO RECOMMEND** to the City of Inverness Area Committee that a hybrid of Option 3 (Planted Stone Frame), with flexibility to change the design as discussed, be considered as the basis for the future development of the site, subject to appropriate funding being identified.

5. Exclusion of the Public

The Sub-Committee **RESOLVED** that, under Section 50(A) of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973, the public be excluded from the meeting during discussion of

items 6 to 14 on the grounds that they involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraphs 6 and 9 of Part 1 of Schedule 7A of the Act.

6. Community Regeneration Fund – Consideration of Expressions of Interest

There had been circulated Report No. ICGF/16/26 by the Assistant Chief Executive – Place. Copies of the Expressions of Interest and supporting documentation had been made available via SharePoint in Booklet A.

Members were reminded that there was a two-stage process in respect of Community Regeneration Funding, the first being to submit an Expression of Interest which, if supported by the Sub-Committee, would lead to a full application being invited. It was highlighted there were no resource implications at this stage.

Following discussion, during which clarification was sought, and provided, on a number of points, the Sub-Committee determined the Expressions of Interest as follows:-

Ref: 4279
Organisation: Balnain Primary School Parents Council – Playpark Subgroup
Project title: Balnain Community Park Refurbishment
Grant requested: £5,000
Decision: **AGREED** to invite a full application.

Ref: 4280
Organisation: Cauldeen Primary School Parent Council
Project title: Play It Forward – Playground Improvement
Grant requested: £11,342.19
Decision: **DECLINED** to invite a full application on the grounds that the project did not meet the Community Regeneration Fund eligibility criteria.

Ref: 4281
Organisation: The Highland Council
Project title: Culloden Avenue Lighting
Grant requested: £20,000
Decision: **AGREED** to invite a full application.

Whilst acknowledging the safety reasons for extending the lighting, it was highlighted that artificial lighting in woodland areas could have an adverse impact on biodiversity, particularly birdlife, and it was suggested that consideration be given to the use of lighting that would switch off automatically at a specified time.

Ref: 4282
Organisation: The Highland Council
Project title: Inverness Castle Hill Clock
Grant requested: £60,000
Decision: **AGREED** to invite a full application.

Ref: 4283
Organisation: Ar Gàradh Community Interest Company
Project title: Community Gardening Support for Vulnerable Residents in Inverness
Grant requested: £8,147.20

Decision: **AGREED** to invite a full application.

The Sub-Committee:-

i. **AGREED** to determine the Expressions of Interest as detailed above; and
ii. **NOTED** that full applications would be considered at a future meeting of the Inverness Common Good Fund Sub-Committee with recommendations made to the City of Inverness Area Committee on selection of projects for approval and value of grants awards to be made.

7. Inverness Common Good Fund – Requests for Civic Hospitality 2026/27

There had been circulated Report No. ICGF/17/26 by the Senior Community Development Manager, Inverness and South. Copies of the applications and any supporting documentation had been made available via SharePoint in Booklet B.

The Sub-Committee:-

i. **NOTED** that applicants remained responsible for their own costs and might be held liable for the whole costs of the event if it was cancelled due to their own act or omission;
ii. **NOTED** that the cost of civic events continued to increase beyond expected levels and that decisions might need to be taken regarding the prioritisation of events to be supported; and
iii. **AGREED** to determine the applications listed in Appendix 2 of the report as detailed below:

Organisation: Highland Week Curling Committee
Event: Highland Week of International Curling
Venue: Inverness Town House (Civic Reception)
Cost: £4356.53
Decision: **APPROVED**

Organisation: Highland Council Lieutenancies
Event: Highland Council Lieutenancies Carol Service
Venue: Inverness Cathedral
Cost: £1,000 (Financial Assistance)
Decision: **APPROVED**

8. Grant Monitoring and Requests for Financial Assistance 2026/27

There had been circulated Report No. ICGF/18/26 by the Senior Community Development Manager, Inverness and South. Copies of the applications and any supporting documentation had been made available via SharePoint in Booklet C.

Following discussion on the merits or otherwise of each application, during which clarification was sought and provided on a number of points, the Sub-Committee determined the applications for financial assistance as follows:-

Applicant: Inverness BID Ltd
Project/activity: Heart of Inverness Project (Northern Meeting Park)
Amount requested: £1,580

Decision: **APPROVED** from the City Destination Projects budget.

It was commented that there did not appear to be a map or app showing the location of all defibrillators across Highland, and it was queried whether Inverness BID could explore the development of such a resource for the Inverness Area. The Community Development Manager confirmed that this suggestion could be fed back to Inverness BID.

Applicant: Visit Inverness Loch Ness
Project/activity: Taste of the Highlands 2027
Amount requested: £3,000
Decision: **APPROVED** from the City Destination Projects budget.

Applicant: Scottish Fire and Rescue Service
Project/activity: Portsafe Board – Bank Street, Inverness
Amount requested: £1,214
Decision: **APPROVED** from the City Destination Projects budget.

The Sub-Committee:-

i. **NOTED** the position in relation to current expenditure and existing grants; and
ii. **AGREED** to determine the applications for up to and including £10,000 as detailed above.

9. Inverness Common Good Fund – Internal Applications

a. Victorian Market Christmas Choir Programme

The Sub-Committee was asked to consider a request by the Victorian Market Manager for a contribution of £1,045 towards the cost of bus transportation for school choirs participating in the Victorian Market Christmas Choir Programme.

The Sub-Committee **APPROVED** a contribution of £1,045 from the City Promotions budget.

b. Tacking Hate Crime project

The Sub-Committee was asked to consider a request by Inverness Community Partnership for a contribution of £5,000 towards the Tackling Hate Crime project as detailed in the application which had been circulated.

Following discussion, during which clarification was sought, and provided, on a number of points, the Sub-Committee **APPROVED** a contribution of £5,000 from the City Promotions budget, subject to a contribution of £5,000 from Police Scotland.

In terms of Standing Order 8, the Chair had agreed to accept the following urgent additional item of business on the grounds that a decision was required to make the necessary arrangements planned for the visit.

c. Urgent Additional Item: La Baule Invitation

The Sub-Committee was asked to consider a request by the Senior Community Development Manager, Inverness and South, for a contribution not exceeding £5,000 towards a civic party invitation as detailed in the application which had been circulated.

During discussion, it was highlighted that, as only two representatives from La Baule could attend in November, the costs were unlikely to exceed £1,500.

Members commented that it would be helpful to receive written feedback on the positive impact of town twinning visits. Further discussion ensued in that regard, during which it was suggested that Corporate Communications should be involved in promoting such visits, and the Provost undertook to arrange for a report on the recent visit to Augsburg to be presented to the City of Inverness Area Committee.

The Sub-Committee **APPROVED** a contribution not exceeding £5,000 from the Town Twinning budget.

10. Inverness Common Good Fund – Operation Respect Festive 2026 – Inverness and Area

There had been circulated Report No. ICGF/19/26 by the Senior Community Development Manager, Inverness and South and the Community Safety Manager, Inverness BID.

The positive feedback on the initiative having been highlighted, the Sub-Committee:-

i. **NOTED** the targeting of objectives for Operation Respect Festive 2026 on providing added community safety and public resource and reassurance whilst supporting measures to reduce the cause and effect of anti-social behaviour and criminality, and the ongoing issues associated with the cost-of-living crisis on people's physical and mental health and wellbeing;
ii. **NOTED** that the total funding package directed towards Operation Respect Festive 2026 included substantial direct staffing and resource contributions from partners at Police Scotland, Scottish Fire and Rescue Service, Scottish Ambulance Service, NHS Highland and City Centre Businesses via Inverness BID; and
iii. **AGREED TO RECOMMEND** to the City of Inverness Area Committee approval of funding of £12,990 for Operation Respect Festive (Winter) 2026.

11. Inverness Common Good Fund – Merkinch Local Nature Reserve

The Sub-Committee **NOTED** that the previously approved award of £45,000 for improvement works to the Merkinch Boardwalk would not be drawn down from the Other Properties Grant Carry Forward budget, as this funding was no longer required. Improvement works to the path network were being progressed through the Active Travel Team. No further works were proposed to the Boardwalk itself.

12. The Clay Studio and Red Chair Highland

Sadness having been expressed regarding the closure of two excellent organisations, the Sub-Committee **NOTED** that:-

i. The Clay Studio had announced on 3 July 2026 that the charity had made the decision to wind up the organisation. A grant of £4,320 awarded in August 2025 had not been drawn down and would be returned to reserves; and
ii. Red Chair Highland had announced on 28 August 2026 that the Management Board had agreed to place the organisation into insolvency. A grant of £7,600 had been approved on 27 April 2026 with £760 still outstanding. The insolvency process would be monitored and an update would be provided to the Sub-Committee as and when required.

13. Inverness Common Good Fund – Evaluation Forms

There had been circulated, and were **NOTED**, Evaluation Forms submitted by applicants on completion of their projects, which had been made available via SharePoint in Booklet D.

14. Inverness Common Good Fund – Homologation and Noting

The following applications/requests had been approved by the Senior Community Development Manager, Inverness and South, in consultation with the Sub-Committee where appropriate, subject to homologation or noting at the next available Sub-Committee meeting:-

a. Town Twinning visit to La Baule

The Sub-Committee:-

i. **AGREED** to homologate the decision to award £1,500 towards a Town Twinning trip to La Baule by the Provost and a Member of the Inverness Town Twinning Committee; and
ii. **NOTED** that the total cost of the trip amounted to £1,197.47.

b. Town Twinning Visit from Augsburg

The Sub-Committee **NOTED** that The City of Augsburg Mayor's Office had advised that, due to emergency budget measures restricting spend, the planned visit to the City of Inverness, scheduled to take place from 1 to 6 November 2026, had regrettably had to be cancelled.

It was further **NOTED** that this was no reflection on the special relationship that existed between the communities of Augsburg and Inverness. Discussions were ongoing regarding setting a new date, especially to preserve the excellent links being created promoting economic development. Further updates would be provided in due course.

c. Floral Decorations 2027

The Sub-Committee **AGREED** to homologate the decision to purchase seedlings at a cost of £3,839 plus VAT for the Floral Decorations 2027.

d. Civic Hospitality Requests

The Sub-Committee **AGREED** to homologate the decision to award the following Civic Hospitality Request:-

- Strictly Inverness – extra costs of £439 for additional guests.

At this stage, discussion took place regarding the non-attendance of invited guests at civic receptions, the associated food waste, and potential measures to mitigate this.

e. Recurring Civic Hospitality Request

The Sub-Committee **NOTED** the approval of the following event on the Recurring List:-

- Kirking of the Council – agreed £6,500 - £6,500 on Recurring List

f. Civic Lighting

The Sub-Committee **NOTED** the following Civic Lighting requests for the period July to November 2026:-

Inverness Town House and Ness Bridge

- Scottish Learning Disability Week
- Fairtrade Fortnight
- World Meningitis Day
- World Arthritis Day
- Baby Loss Awareness
- Metastatic Breast Cancer Awareness Day
- Remembrance Week
- Alzheimer's Foundation of America
- 22q Deletion Syndrome
- 16 Days of Activism

g. Free Hall Lets

The Sub-Committee **NOTED** that there had been no free hall lets during the period August to October 2026.

15. Date of Next Meeting

The Sub-Committee **NOTED** that the next meeting would take place on Monday 22 February 2027 at 9.30 am.

The meeting concluded at 12.00 pm.