

## **The Highland Council Resources Committee**

Minutes of Meeting of the Resources Committee held in the Council Chamber, Council Headquarters, Glenurquhart Road, Inverness on Wednesday 28 May 2014 at 10.40 am.

### **Present:**

|                  |                          |
|------------------|--------------------------|
| Ms M Smith       | Mr R Laird               |
| Dr D Alston      | Mr C Macaulay            |
| Mrs H Carmichael | Mrs I McCallum           |
| Mr A Christie    | Mr D MacKay              |
| Dr I Cockburn    | Mrs D MacKay             |
| Mrs M Davidson   | Mr A Mackinnon           |
| Mr N Donald      | Mr H Morrison            |
| Ms J Douglas     | Mr F Parr                |
| Mr D Fallows     | Mr J Stone               |
| Mr L Fraser      | Mr H Wood                |
| Mr B Gormley     | Mr G Rimell (substitute) |
| Mr D Hendry      |                          |

### **Non Members also Present:**

|                 |                |
|-----------------|----------------|
| Mrs I Campbell  | Mr R Greene    |
| Miss J Campbell | Mr B Lobban    |
| Mr B Clark      | Mr G MacKenzie |
| Mr G Farlow     | Mr T MacLennan |
| Mr J Ford       | Mrs M Paterson |
| Mr K Gowans     | Mr B Thompson  |

### **Officials in attendance:**

Ms M Morris, Depute Chief Executive/Director of Corporate Development  
Mr D Yule, Director of Finance  
Mr S Fraser, Head of Corporate Governance, Corporate Development Service  
Mr D Goldie, Head of Housing, Community Services  
Mr J Batchelor, Head of People & Performance, Corporate Development Service  
Mrs S McKandie, Exchequer Manager (Policy & Development), Finance Service  
Mr J Robertson, Corporate Improvement Programme Manager, Corporate Development Service  
Mr M MacDonald, Human Resources Manager, Corporate Development Service  
Mr K Fox, ICT Operations Manager, Corporate Development Service  
Mr P Mallard, Senior Information & Security Officer, Corporate Development Service  
Mrs K Lackie, Business Manager, Chief Executive's Office  
Ms G Falconer, Occupational Health, Safety and Wellbeing Manager, Corporate Development Service  
Ms C Christie, Learning & Development Manager, Corporate Development Service  
Mr G Bull, Corporate Property Asset Manager, Development & Infrastructure Service  
Ms H Cunningham, Property Manager (Asset Management), Development & Infrastructure Service  
Mr C Anderson, Property Manager (Operational Estate Management), Development & Infrastructure Service  
Mr G Summers, Principal European Officer, Development & Infrastructure Service

Mrs L Dunn, Principal Committee Administrator, Corporate Development Service  
Mr A MacInnes, Administrative Assistant, Corporate Development Service

**An asterisk in the margin denotes a recommendation to the Council. All decisions with no marking in the margin are delegated to the Committee.**

## **Ms M Smith in the Chair**

### **Business**

#### **1. Apologies for Absence Leisgeulan**

Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of Mrs C Caddick and Mrs C Wilson.

#### **2. Declarations of Interest Foillseachaidhean Com-pàirt**

Item 3 - Mr A Christie and Ms J Douglas (non-financial)

Item 4 - Mr A Christie (non-financial)

Item 8 – Mr A Christie (non-financial)

Item 9 – Mr A Christie (non-financial)

Item 10 – Mr A Christie (non-financial)

Item 15 - Ms J Douglas and Mr H Wood (non-financial)

### **FINANCE SERVICE**

#### **3. Welfare Reform Update Fios às Ùr mu Ath-leasachadh Shochairan**

**Declarations of Interest - Mr A Christie declared a non-financial interest in this item as General Manager and Company Secretary of Inverness, Badenoch & Strathspey Citizens Advice Bureau and Ms J Douglas declared a non-financial interest in this item as a volunteer and member of the Steering Group of the Badenoch and Strathspey Foodbank but having applied the test outlined in Paragraphs 5.2 and 5.3 of the Councillors' Code of Conduct, concluded that their interests did not preclude them from taking part in the discussion.**

There was circulated Joint Report No. RES/01/14 by the Director of Finance and Director of Community Services which provided information relating to the current status of Universal Credit, Discretionary Housing Benefit and Under Occupancy Rules. The report also provided details on sanctions applied to those claiming Job Seeker's Allowance and Universal Credit and other Welfare matters relating to Foodbanks and Scottish Legal Aid Board assisted projects.

During discussion the following issues were raised:-

- it was important that there was ongoing engagement between the Council, DWP, Registered Social Landlords and the Scottish Housing Association Federation to ensure requests for 'switchback payments' were dealt with in a more timeous manner;

- that further information be provided to Mr R Laird on what types of jobs were categorised as being 'suitable' in regard to zero hours contracts;
- the seven day waiting period which was being applied in respect of Universal Credit awards was unnecessarily punitive;
- it was important alternative forms of personal budgeting support, with appropriate branding to provide a more accessible and less stigmatised service, be provided to reach those people who were experiencing difficulties paying their bills and to provide them with the necessary advice and support;
- the increase in the number of Foodbanks across Highland over the previous year was a clear demonstration of the problems created by welfare reform;
- there were also many people using Foodbanks on low salaries and wages who were not being recognised as they were outwith the benefits system;
- it was suggested that the Welfare Reform Working Group investigate the social and economic impacts of welfare reform and reduction in welfare expenditure in the Highlands, so that these impacts could be fully understood and inform policy going forward;
- the challenges and complexities associated with Universal Credit would increase following its extension to couples and families during the year;
- the reduction in household income experienced as a result of welfare reform was contributing towards increasing inequalities within society, and a widening health gap, both nationally and in the Highlands;
- there was no guarantee that discretionary housing payments which were currently used to offset the effects of the under occupancy policy in Highland would be continued into the future;
- that in regard to sanctions many claimants were signing up to unrealistic claimant commitments which were not achievable, and that there was a need to continue to engage with the DWP to address this problem;
- it was important that the Council adopted a holistic approach to mitigating the effects of welfare reform to ensure that people in the Highlands had an appropriate standard of living;
- the introduction of personal independent payments would inevitably lead to hardship and suffering with many claimants having their benefits removed and being declared fit for work when they were not fit to do so;
- that it was important those organisations providing money advice had the appropriate specialist training to the required national standards to ensure the correct and most up to date advice was being provided to the public;
- the intensive measures announced by the DWP to help the long-term unemployed returning back to work, and outlined in the report, were unrealistic particularly in many rural areas. For example many claimants would not have the appropriate skills to undertake a community work placement, and might suffer sanctions as a result. It was also not practical for people in the more remote areas to attend a job centre on a daily basis as required by their claimant commitment;
- there were opportunities for other public sector organisations to operate employability schemes, similar to the Council's scheme, to help individuals reach the stage where they were ready for

employment. In this regard the Exchequer Manager (Policy and Development) confirmed that she would provide Mrs I McCallum with details of the employability scheme run by NHS Highland;

- the fact that the DWP had published only limited information relating to sanctions applied to those claiming Job Seeker's Allowance and Universal Credit, meant that the Council could not report back effectively on the operation of the Universal Credit pilot scheme in its area. The Exchequer Manager (Policy and Development) reported that some information on sanctions, per job centre, had recently been published and that she would circulate an analysis of that information to Members; and
- that eligibility for European funding to mitigate against the impacts of welfare reform be explored.

The Committee:-

- NOTED** the current position;
- AGREED** to endorse the continuing mitigation actions by Council staff;
- AGREED** that the Welfare Reform Working Group investigate the social and economic impacts of welfare reform and reduction in welfare expenditure in the Highlands;
- AGREED** that the analysis which had been conducted of recently published information on sanctions be circulated to Members; and
- AGREED** that eligibility for European funding to mitigate against the impacts of welfare reform be explored.

#### **4. Finance and Welfare Budgets 2014/15 Buidseatan Ionmhais agus Sochaire**

**Declaration of Interest - Mr A Christie declared a non-financial interest in this item as General Manager and Company Secretary of Inverness, Badenoch & Strathspey Citizens Advice Bureau but having applied the test outlined in Paragraphs 5.2 and 5.3 of the Councillors' Code of Conduct, concluded that his interest did not preclude him from taking part in the discussion.**

There was circulated Report No. RES/02/14 by the Director of Finance which explained that the purpose of the report was to bring together all budgets under the direct responsibility of the Director of Finance, to note budget virements under delegated powers, to agree the creation of a Welfare Budget, and to agree to transfer the budget for Citizens Advice Bureaux from the Chief Executive's Service to the Finance Service.

The Report also confirmed that new policy work was underway, being coordinated across all services by the Chief Executive's Service, to ensure that the Council had the best possible response and preventative action for people affected now, or to be affected, by welfare reform changes. It was proposed that this would be overseen by the Welfare Reform Working Group.

During discussion the following issues were raised:-

- it was important that at a community planning level all agencies signed up to a preventative agenda in response to the impacts of welfare reform in the Highlands;
- further information was sought and provided on the level and nature of the savings which were proposed on the Finance Service budget and proposals for mitigation in respect of the impact on staff arising from the proposed deletion of vacant posts as set out in the report;
- it was important that the circumstances of rural areas such as the Highlands be strongly represented at a national and COSLA level in response to proposed Government policy changes. This was particularly important in view of recent policy decisions which it was suggested had resulted in a cumulative impact in terms of rural areas being disadvantaged;
- that it was important that the geographical implications of budget proposals such as the proposals set out in the report should also be considered, particularly in regard to the deletion of posts to ensure fragile communities were not being disadvantaged. The Finance Service should also consider opportunities to delegate out more of its functions to the more sparsely populated rural areas of Highland going forward; and
- noting that an officer team supported Members in ensuring the Council's views on rural issues was represented to COSLA, and the relevant staff were commended on their work in this regard. The Leader of the Council also worked together with the Leaders of other rural local authorities in Scotland to ensure a consistent approach was presented on issues at COSLA, and to ensure issues of specific importance to the Highlands were stressed and represented on an ongoing basis.

The Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the budgets under the responsibility of the Director of Finance;
- ii. **NOTED** the budget virements under delegated powers;
- iii. **AGREED** the creation of a Welfare Fund;
- iv. **AGREED** the transfer of the budget for Citizens Advice Bureaux, and the management of the contracts, from the Chief Executive's Service to the Finance Service;
- v. **NOTED** that new policy work was underway, being coordinated across all services by the Chief Executive's Service, to ensure that the Council had the best possible response and preventative action for people affected now, or to be affected, by welfare reform changes. This would be overseen by the Member working group; and
- vi. **AGREED** the deletion of 10.8 FTE posts from the Finance Service budget.

**5. Corporate Revenue Near Final Outturn Report for 2013/14**  
**Aithisg Fìor Shuidheachadh Faisg air Deireannach a thaobh Teachd-a-steach Corporra airson 2013/14**

There was circulated Report No. RES/03/14 by the Director of Finance which presented the revenue budget expenditure position for the period to 31 March and commented on the near final position for financial year 2013/14.

It was reported that the General Fund Statement showed a total annual budget allocated to Services of £566.327m; in year expenditure of £560.937m, giving a year end underspend of £5.390m on the Services Revenue budget. It anticipated that balances would therefore be £2.7m higher than forecast and that a report containing proposals in this regard would be submitted to the next meeting of the Council on 26 June 2014.

The Committee:-

- i. **APPROVED** the Revenue Expenditure Monitoring Statement as at 31 March 2014 which showed a near final position of £5.390m underspend; and
- ii. **NOTED** the near final General Fund surplus in 2013/14 of £2.511m.

**6. Corporate Capital Near Final Outturn Report for 2013/14**  
**Aithisg Fìor Shuidheachadh Faisg air Deireannach a thaobh Calpa Corporra airson 2013/14**

There was circulated Report No. RES/04/14 by the Director of Finance which provided an overview of the General Fund and Housing Revenue Account capital programmes for the year to 31 March 2014.

It was reported that the General Fund net capital budget for 2013/14 was £88.813m, net expenditure in the year of £85.332m, resulting in an underspend of £3.481m on the programme for the year. Gross expenditure for the Housing Revenue Account was £42.192m being an overspend of £1.192m for 2013/14.

The Committee **AGREED** the near final position on the General Fund and HRA capital programmes as at 31 March 2014.

**7. Treasury Management: Summary of Transactions**  
**Rianachd Ionmhais: Geàrr-chunntas de Ghnothaichean**

There was circulated Report No. RES/05/14 by the Director of Finance which provided details on the Treasury Management transactions for February, March and April 2014, reflecting activity undertaken to manage the Council's cash flows, and borrowing to fund capital expenditure.

In response to a question, the Director of Finance confirmed that he would arrange for a report on the implications of the Financial Services (Banking Reform) Act 2013 to be submitted to the next meeting of the Committee.

The Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the Treasury Management Summary of Transactions report for February, March and April 2014; and
- ii. **AGREED** that a report on the Financial Services (Banking Reform) Act 2013 be submitted to the next meeting of the Committee on 27 August 2014.

**8. Finance Service: Quarterly Performance Report  
Seirbheis an Ionmhais: Aithisg Dèanadais Ràitheil**

**Declaration of Interest - Mr A Christie declared a non-financial interest in this item as General Manager and Company Secretary of Inverness, Badenoch & Strathspey Citizens Advice Bureau but having applied the test outlined in Paragraphs 5.2 and 5.3 of the Councillors' Code of Conduct, concluded that his interest did not preclude him from taking part in the discussion.**

There was circulated Report No. RES/06/14 by the Director of Finance which provided a summary of key and statutory performance indicators for the Finance Service as at 31 March 2014.

The report provided performance monitoring details on the council tax in-year collection rate; non domestic rates in-year collection rate; the business improvement district levy; benefits administration – speed of processing; customer income maximisation and money advice, payment of invoices and attendance management.

During discussion Members raised the following points:-

- that clarification be provided on the difference in the income generation figures for 2012/13 and 2013/14 as set out in section 2.5 of the report;
- that the Finance Service be commended on its proposals to set more ambitious performance targets going forward;
- it would be helpful in future for further benchmarking information to be provided to allow performance to be compared to other local authorities in Scotland;
- information was sought on the barriers to improving timescales for the payment of invoices and achieving more consistency in regard to performance in this regard across all the Services;
- that more explicit information be provided on payments by the Council to companies and external organisations so that the nature of the payment could be more readily identified. The Director of Finance confirmed that he would again remind staff of the importance of providing a more detailed description when processing BACS payments.

The Committee **NOTED** the statutory and key performance indicators for the Finance Service to 31 March 2014.

**9. Finance Service Plan  
Plana Seirbheis an Ionmhais**

**Declaration of Interest - Mr A Christie declared a non-financial interest in this item as General Manager and Company Secretary of Inverness, Badenoch & Strathspey Citizens Advice Bureau but having applied the test outlined in Paragraphs 5.2 and 5.3 of the Councillors' Code of Conduct, concluded that his interest did not preclude him from taking part in the discussion.**

There was circulated Report No. RES/07/14 by the Director of Finance which introduced the Finance Service Plan, updated for 2014/15 which identified the enabling actions and key performance results which would deliver "Working together for the Highlands", the Programme of the Highland Council as revised on 8 May 2014. Progress against the actions was monitored quarterly through the Quarterly Performance Reviews with the Chief Executive. The report also outlined the statutory and core functions of the Service including the Single Outcome Agreement, and the corporate and service risks identified which required enhanced management action.

During discussion, the following main points were raised:-

- the view was expressed that the Council which had ethical employment practices and had implemented the Living Wage should also expect the same from contractors working for the Council. Although there had been consideration to this issue in the past, and it could not be legally insisted on, there were opportunities to promote and encourage suppliers to adopt the Living Wage through the procurement process, i.e. as part of the evaluation criteria, and further information on this was sought;
- it was noted that the Service Plan would be useful to many people including, staff, Customers, Elected Members, Other Council Services and partners or potential partners. It was queried what mechanism was in place for these groups to provide feedback on the plan;
- in terms of reviewing procedures in order to maximise opportunities for local businesses it was felt that the aim of increasing total direct spend with Highland businesses by 5% by 2017 was not an ambitious enough target;
- in relation to the aim of investigating new opportunities for non-domestic rate incentives for town centres/specified streets or localities, there did not seem to be many enabling actions and proactivity around what was a very important issue. In terms of Business Rates Incentives Scheme, it was advised that there was money that was not being spent due to uncertainty around sustainability and lack of agreement at COSLA. It was suggested that this should be referred to in the Service Plan. In this respect, it was advised that efforts had and would continue to be made to try and release this money at COSLA on behalf of the Highland Council and other Councils who would benefit from this fund;
- it was also suggested that the Service Plan should include reference to lobbying for change, for example the difficulties that there had been with the NHS budget over the last year and whether the Government



could make changes to make it easier to integrate budgets and to allow the NHS better budget control; and

- it was noted that 84% of Managers were satisfied with the support they received in relation to recruitment management following the implementation of the National Recruitment Portal. However, information was sought on the reasons behind the remaining Managers not being satisfied.

Following discussion, the Committee:-

- i. **APPROVED** the Finance Service Plan updated for 2014/15;
- ii. **AGREED** that a briefing note be circulated to Members on:-
  - a) the work being undertaken to explore opportunities through the procurement process to encourage suppliers to implement the Living Wage; and
  - b) the feedback from Managers on implementation of the National Recruitment Portal and the support they received in relation to recruitment management.

**10. Audit Scotland National Report: Review of Recovery of Benefits Subsidy in 2012/13**  
**Ath-sgrùdadh air Ath-bhuannachd Subsadaidh nan Sochairean ann an 2012/13**

**Declaration of Interest - Mr A Christie declared a non-financial interest in this item as General Manager and Company Secretary of Inverness, Badenoch & Strathspey Citizens Advice Bureau but having applied the test outlined in Paragraphs 5.2 and 5.3 of the Councillors' Code of Conduct, concluded that his interest did not preclude him from taking part in the discussion.**

There was circulated Report No. RES/08/14 by the Director of Finance which advised of an independent Report into the subsidy claims of Scottish Councils and spending in areas not fully funded by the Department for Work and Pensions, and provided a useful insight into subsidy losses funded from each Council's budget. The Report Summary identified areas of good practice, which had been reviewed by the Council and would continue to be the subject of improvement actions.

It was noted that there were subsidy losses of £1.6m for 2012/13 for the Highland Council and information was sought on how to improve this area of work. It was advised that performance in this area would be looked at, with a report back to Committee in due course.

During discussion, Members acknowledged that benefit administration was extremely complex, particularly in relation to overpayment administration. In addition, the letters issued seeking repayment, particularly if it had not been their fault, could be extremely stressful. Therefore, a request was made to review the letters issued to clients seeking recovery of overpayment of benefits and the Director of Finance provided an assurance to do this.

The Committee **NOTED** the useful information that was contained in the paper by Audit Scotland, and **AGREED** to endorse the actions that were being taken by officers in accordance with best practice.

**11. Audit Scotland National Report: Options Appraisal: “are you getting it right?”**

**Aithisg Nàiseanta Sgrùdadh Alba: Measadh Roghainnean: “a bheil thu ga fhaighinn ceart?”**

There was circulated Report No. RES/09/14 by the Director of Finance which referred to the publication of a recent Audit Scotland national report and considered the main points arising from this review and the extent to which the Highland Council followed best practice. The report set out some examples of options appraisals performed by the Council, including the role of Members in this process, and some points for action.

Reference was made to the current budget consultation. Issues arising from this would require options appraisals, which would take time, and consequently timescales would be tight. Concern was expressed that some Members would not have sufficient time to scrutinise budget proposals before they were presented to Committee and it was requested that consideration should be given to reinstating the Budget Working Group. However, the Chairman confirmed that the spokesperson of each of the Political Groups of the Council would receive regular feedback on issues arising from the budget consultation.

The Committee **NOTED**:-

- i. the Audit Scotland report together with the response and the points for action; and
- ii. the “Questions for Councillors” at Appendix 2 to the Audit Scotland report which would assist in the scrutiny of future options appraisal exercises.

**12. Internal Audit Reports  
Aithisgean In-sgrùdaidh**

There was circulated Report No. RES/10/14 by the Director of Finance which informed Members as to the objectives and findings of four Audit Reports presented to the Audit and Scrutiny Committee on 27 March 2014, and gave an update on progress against each of the resulting Action Plans. The reports were as follows:-

- Access and Authorisation Controls (Pecos and Accounts payable)
- Travel and Subsistence – Travel Desk arrangements
- Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit Payments
- Debtors

The Committee **NOTED** the findings of the Audit Reports presented to the Audit and Scrutiny Committee on 27 March 2014 and the actions being taken to implement the recommendations.

**13. Finance Service: Update on Employee Survey Actions**  
**Seirbheis an Ionmhais: Fios às Ùr mu Ghnìomhan Suirbhìdh Luchd-obrach**

There was circulated Report No. RES/11/14 by the Director of Finance which provided an update of the key improvement actions identified for the Finance Service in response to the views expressed by staff in the sixth Highland Council Employee Survey. The action plans were summarised under the following headings, Information and Communication; Knowledge and Training, and Resource Management and updates on actions were provided.

The Committee **NOTED** the progress made against the agreed actions.

**CORPORATE DEVELOPMENT SERVICE**

**14. Draft Service Plan 2014/15: Corporate Development Service**  
**Dreachd Plana Seirbheis 2014/15: Seirbheis an Leasachaidh Chorpóra**

There was circulated Report No. RES/12/14 by the Depute Chief Executive/Director of Corporate Development which explained that the draft Service Plan for the Corporate Development Service outlined how the Service would lead and support commitments which would deliver 'Working together for the Highlands', the Programme of the Highland Council. The Plan also detailed how the new Service would operate, its approach and priorities. The report sought approval of the draft Plan.

A comment was made that in offering members of the public a range of access points including by phone, online and in person, there should also be a mechanism in place to provide the public with feedback on the outcome of their calls/queries. In this respect, the Council's new website, launched tomorrow, would enable this to happen and it would be much easier to navigate around the new website. It would also have an easier search function, better access to information about services and the ability to do transactions online.

It was felt that the Programme for the Council did not reflect enough on the impact of Council policies on communities, particularly rural communities. When looking at priorities for next year, it was queried how the Council was going to be reflective on how it was supporting community sustainability across the Highlands. In this respect, it was advised that the Programme for the Council was reviewed and Members were invited to submit suggestions for improving the Programme, and these would be considered. It was further highlighted that the impact of operational priorities would be monitored through the Performance report and that impact assessments were undertaken as part of policy development.

In addition, the need for the Council to be more aware of the potential impact of the Corporate Development Service operational priorities and how to take account of rural sustainability was emphasised.

The Committee **APPROVED** the draft Service Plan for 2014/15, subject to the inclusion of the need to provide feedback to customers on the outcome of calls/queries under Service I.D. 1.4.

**15. Corporate Improvement Programme  
Prògram Leasachadh Corporra**

**Declarations of Interest - Ms J Douglas declared a non-financial interest in this item as an Advisor to the Badenoch and Strathspey Community Transport Company, and Director of Partnerships for Wellbeing, and Mr H Wood also declared a non-financial interest as a Director of Partnerships for Wellbeing but having applied the test outlined in Paragraphs 5.2 and 5.3 of the Councillors' Code of Conduct, concluded that their interests did not preclude them from taking part in the discussion.**

There was circulated Report No. RES/13/14 by the Depute Chief Executive/Director of Corporate Development which explained that the Corporate Improvement Programme (CIP) was progressing with a target to achieve £5.98m in efficiency savings for the period 2013/14 and 2014/15. In addition, the process for aligning the next programme of work with the Corporate Budget setting process was underway and in the last period an independent review of the Programme had taken place.

Progress was provided on the following projects, Asset Management; Business Support; Customer Contact Transformation; Income Generation; Integrated Transport Provision; Managing Information; Mobile and Flexible Working; Procurement and work being undertaken to plan for future programme developments.

The Committee was advised that a report would be submitted to the Education, Children and Adult Services Committee with proposals for making best use of resources in delivering school business support.

The Committee **NOTED** the:-

- i. progress with the delivery of the Corporate Improvement Programme;
- ii. response to the independent review and the mitigating actions being taken to ensure the Programme and savings were delivered on target; and
- iii. The development of a new Programme.

**16. Carbon Clever Committees  
Comataidhean Càrboin Chiallaich**

There was circulated Report No. RES/14/14 by the Depute Chief Executive/Director of Corporate Development which advised of the work that had been undertaken to date to reduce the reliance on paper reports at Committees, the outcome of the assessments and the potential future direction of this initiative.

The proposal to move towards Carbon Clever Committees presented an opportunity to modernise how the Council's committees operated, reducing reliance on printed documents and providing access to electronic agendas

and reports, which would enable Members and officers to work in a more flexible way and would improve efficiency and reduce costs.

The report outlined the current position of Committee paper production and postage costs, proposed implementation of electronic receipt of committee papers and benefits.

Members noted that in 2012/13 the Council printed and distributed over 1,029,000 pages of papers to support meetings of the Council and its Committees. The cost of printing and distributing these papers was approximately £28,000. There would also be costs associated with disposal and recycling of the paper, so changing to electronic agendas and papers would achieve even greater savings. The ability for Members to use their own devices to access agendas and reports would be another option.

In terms of the pilot scheme for this initiative, Members suggested that as part of the upgrade for the Chamber at Headquarters, consideration be given to accommodating the portable devices to be used, as part of the upgrade. In particular there was a need to have charging points for devices in the Chamber. It was not always suitable to read committee papers on a portable device, and therefore consideration should be given to allowing Members to keep their computers and printers at home for this purpose. It was noted that the portable device that had been used in the pilot scheme would not be used going forward with the project, and it was requested that Members involved in the pilot should be able to trial the next device. Further all the functions normally associated with computers, might not be required in a portable device for the purposes of this project, which could reduce costs on the device selected. It was confirmed that there would still be a limited number of paper copies available at meetings for Members and members of the public.

The Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the progress that had been made to date in supporting a move to Carbon Clever meetings and that Members comments on this initiative would be considered;
- ii. **APPROVED** the initiative to enable officers to progress the work needed to deliver Carbon Clever Committees; and
- iii. **APPROVED** the use of the capital budget, allocated to ICT Refresh, as detailed in paragraph 7.1 of the report.

*At this point the meeting was adjourned at 1.10 pm and resumed at 1.50 pm.*

## **17. ICT Performance Report Aithisg Dèanadais TFC**

There was circulated Report No. RES/15/14 by the Depute Chief Executive/Director of Corporate Development which gave an update on the key achievements of the ICT Services Team, the delivery of services by the Council's ICT providers principally Fujitsu Services and Vodafone for the period from September 2013 to February 2014.

The report provided details of Fujitsu Services contract performance and delivery and a summary was provided of ICT Development projects delivered by Fujitsu and the Council. Details of Community Benefits plan provided by Fujitsu Services was provided and it was noted that all 42 commitments in the plan had now commenced. Thirty nine of these commitments had now been completed or were on target to be completed as planned.

Details of the Vodafone Pathfinder North contract performance and the Scottish Wide Area Network Vanguard project were also provided.

Members acknowledged the tremendous amount of work by officers and Fujitsu over the last two years and the good partnership working was very encouraging. They welcomed the fact that the unified communications project was progressing, which would allow ICT equipment to be used much more effectively across the Council and would enable efficiencies in working practices to be made. Further, the fact that all the Community benefits commitments were now on target was welcomed, and the work on the Scottish Wide Area Network with the Council's partners had been very successful. Savings were now being made in ICT performance and the challenge was to continue to stretch the limits to which technology could generate savings and provide efficiencies in working practices.

The Committee **NOTED**:-

- i. the content of the report and the positive outcomes being delivered from the Contracts with Fujitsu and Vodafone;
- ii. that PSN Accreditation had been achieved and further work was now underway to ensure accreditation was retained at the next assessment in April 2015; and
- iii. that robust contract management and governance arrangements continued to be applied and pursued by the Council to the Fujitsu and Vodafone contracts.

**18. Records Retention Policy and Disposal Authority**  
**Ùghdarras Poileasaidh a thaobh Gleidheadh is Cur Às do Chlàran**

There was circulated Report No. RES/16/14 by the Depute Chief Executive/Director of Corporate Development which advised of the review of the Records Retention Policy and Disposal Authority and sought approval of this updated Policy.

It was advised that recent records management work being carried out through the MI Project had identified weaknesses in the record disposal process as set out in the Disposal Authority. As a result of this and on-going work to support compliance with the Public Records Scotland Act a review had been carried out of the Policy. The report gave details of a proposed revised policy.

In response to a request to archive recordings of meetings held on CD, it was indicated that the Archive Centre generally only retained paper copies but the feasibility of this would be investigated.

The Committee:-

- i. **APPROVED** the revised Records Retention Policy and Disposal Authority; and
- ii. **AGREED** to investigate the feasibility of archiving recordings of meetings held on CD.

**19. Review of Safety Representatives Charter and Health and Safety Partnership Agreement**  
**Ath-sgrùdadh air Cairt Riochdairean Sàbhailteachd agus Aonta Com-pàirteachas Slàinte is Sàbhailteachd**

There was circulated Report No. RES/17/14 by the Depute Chief Executive/Director of Corporate Development which advised that the Safety Representatives Charter and Health and Safety Partnership Agreement between the Highland Council and recognised Trade Unions had last been reviewed in March 2011. There was a commitment to review these documents every three years and the report introduced the most recent versions of the Charter and Agreement.

It was advised that the Partnership Agreement had been updated to reflect changes in job titles and update links and references to Council policy documents. It also recognised that some of the Trade Union representatives were mobile workers which should be taken into consideration when allocating resources to them. The Safety Representative Charter remained unchanged.

The Committee **APPROVED** the updates to the Safety Representatives' Charter and the Health and Safety Partnership Agreement.

**20. Chief Executive's Service: Quarterly Performance Report**  
**Seirbheis an Àrd-oifigeir: Aithisg Dèanadais Ràitheil**

There was circulated Report No. RES/18/14 by the Depute Chief Executive/Director of Corporate Development which provided the Chief Executive's Service quarterly Statutory Performance Indicators for Quarter 4 of 2013/14.

It was reported that the average number of days lost per employee for the Service for the fourth quarter was 1.8 days, which was a decrease of 0.5 days compared with the same period in 2012/13 and significantly below the Highland Council average of 2.7 days. Detailed statistics were used to highlight repetitive absences and to manage long term and repetitive absences. All Services would report absence statistics to the relevant Strategic Committees. The report also set out indicators for the Chief Executive's Service performance in respect of payment of invoices.

The Committee **NOTED** the continued improvement in performance in relation to sickness absence and payment of invoices.

**21. Chief Executive's Service: Employee Survey Actions**  
**Seirbheis an Leasachaidh Chorporra: Fios as Ùr mu Ghnìomhan Suirbhidh Luchd-obrach**

There was circulated Report No. RES/19/14 by the Depute Chief Executive/Director of Corporate Development which outlined the progress to date on the actions agreed by the Chief Executive's Service as a result of the Employee Survey 2012. Specific actions were identified to support improvement in three key actions, namely Improving Morale; Eliminating Workplace Stress; Keeping Employees informed. Progress on these actions had been detailed in the report.

The Committee **NOTED** the progress made so far in the Chief Executive's Service Employee Survey actions.

**22. Internal Audit Report: Data Handling and Security**  
**Aithisg In-sgrùdaidh: Làimhseachadh Dàta agus Tèarainteachd**

There was circulated Report No. RES/20/14 by the Depute Chief Executive/Director of Corporate Development which advised that the Internal Audit Review of Data Handling and Security was recently considered by the Council's Audit and Scrutiny Committee. The report was now presented to the Committee for its consideration as part of the corporate governance process.

The scope of the Review Data Handling and Security included locations classified as data centre sites which held server equipment and Council data of significance. The report provided details of the review objectives and findings from the review. The review found substantial assurance with the identification of eight recommendations. Of these, three had already had agreed actions completed, and the remaining five were in progress to be completed by April 2015.

Members welcomed the fact that this was another internal audit report whereby substantial assurance had been found that the overall system was sound and this was a credit to Services.

The Committee **NOTED** the Internal Audit Review and action plan, and that appropriate actions were being taken to address all the recommendations contained therein.

**23. ICT Executive Board (Members)**  
**Bòrd Gnìomhach TFC (Buill)**

The Committee **APPROVED** the revised membership of the ICT Executive Board (Members) as follows:-

1. Maxine Smith
2. Dave Fallows



3. David Alston
4. Kate Stephen
5. Jimmy Gray
6. Carolyn Wilson
7. Bill Fernie
8. Isobel McCallum
9. Margaret Davidson

**24. Minutes of Meetings  
Geàrr-chunntasan Choinneamhan**

The Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the Minutes of the Early Retirement Sub-Committee held on 26 February and 23 April 2014;
- ii. **APPROVED** the Minutes of the Welfare Reform Working Group held on 14 March and **NOTED** the Briefing Note held on 21 March 2014;
- iii. **NOTED** the Minutes of the Head of Service Recruitment Panel held on 14 March, 23 April, 25 April and 28 April 2014;
- iv. **APPROVED** the Minutes of the Joint Consultation Group (Administration Etc, Manual and Crafts Staffing) held on 11 April 2014; and
- v. **APPROVED** the Minutes of the Central Safety Committee held on 11 April 2014.

**CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S OFFICE**

**25. Council's Flag Flying Policy  
Poileasaidh Togail Bhrataichean na Comhairle**

The Council's Flag Flying policy required the Saltire to be flown every day at the Council's main administrative buildings except for a number of specified days. These were:-

| <b>Date</b> | <b>Day</b>                                       | <b>Flag type</b>    |
|-------------|--|---------------------|
| 10 March    | Commonwealth Day                                 | Commonwealth Flag   |
| 9 May       | Europe Day                                       | European Flag       |
| 29 June     | Armed Forces Day<br>(For period proposed by MOD) | Armed Forces Flag   |
| 24 October  | United Nations Day                               | United Nations Flag |
| 10 November | Remembrance Sunday                               | Union Flag          |
| 1 December  | World Aids Day                                   | World Aids Flag     |
| Ad hoc      | State event (visit, royal wedding etc)           | Union Flag          |

Government guidance and practice was followed for flying the flag at half-mast.

The Scheme of Delegation currently required the approval of Resources Committee to amend this list in any way.

It was proposed to delegate authority to decide on changes to the Council's approved Flag Flying Days, to the Depute Chief Executive/Director of Corporate Development, in consultation with the Convener. Changes would be communicated to the relevant Responsible Premises Officers to ensure compliance and an up to date schedule would be made available on the Council's Website.

The Committee **AGREED** that authority to amend the approved list of flag flying days be delegated to the Depute Chief Executive/Director of Corporate Development in consultation with the Convener.

## **DEVELOPMENT AND INFRASTRUCTURE SERVICE**

**26. Conference of Peripheral and Maritime Regions Meeting of the Political Bureau: 6 June 2014, Inverness**  
**Coinneamh Biùro Phoilitigeach Co-labhairt nan Roinnean Iomallach agus Mara: 6 Ògmhios 2014, Inbhir Nis**

There was circulated Report No. RES/21/14 by the Director of Development and Infrastructure which updated Members on the preparations being made and the costs involved for the Council hosting a meeting of the Political Bureau of the Conference of Peripheral and Maritime Regions (CPMR) in Inverness on 6 June 2014. Costs were currently estimated at £21,000 and were based on 70 people attending the Bureau meeting and 50 staying on for the excursion on Saturday 7 June 2014. The high percentage of people expected to stay on for the excursion reflected the level of interest of Europeans in visiting the Highlands. Funds to meet the cost of hosting this event had been sought from Visit Scotland and the Inverness Common Good Fund. The balance would be met from the EU projects budget 2014/15, held within the Development & Infrastructure Service.

The hosting of this event was welcomed by Members. It was advised that the CPMR had been helpful to the Council over a number of years and particularly over the last two years when the Council had been lobbying to ensure that the Council retained transition status within the Highlands and Islands. The CPMR was a key influence for the European Commission and therefore was an important vehicle for the Council to promote issues that were important in the Highlands, to the European Commission. It was also suggested that encouraging the European Union General Assembly to meet in this area should be an ambition for the future, as the economic benefits would be significant.

The Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the contents of the report;
- ii. **AGREED** to support the hosting of the CPMR Political Bureau in Inverness on 6 June 2014; and

- iii. **APPROVED** expenditure up to a maximum of £21,000 to deliver the event with the cost being met from the Development and Infrastructure EU projects budget 2014/15, the Inverness Common Good Fund and the Visit Scotland Conference Bid Fund.

**27. 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 during discussion of the following items on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraphs 6 & 9 of Part 1 of Schedule 7A of the Act.

**28. ICT Executive Board: Minutes of Meeting**  
**Buidheann-obrach TFC Bhall: Geàrr-chunntas Coinneimh**

The Minutes of Meeting of the ICT Executive Board (Members) held on 12 May 2014 were circulated and **APPROVED**.

**29. Internal Audit Report: Information Security**  
**Aithisg In-sgrùdaidh: Tèarainteachd Fiosrachaidh**

There was circulated to Members only Report No. RES/22/14 by the Depute Chief Executive/Director of Corporate Development which advised that the Internal Audit Review of information security arrangements within the Highland Council was recently considered by the Council's Audit and Scrutiny Committee. The report was presented to the Committee for its consideration as part of the corporate governance process.

The report detailed the objectives of the review and its findings. The review found that substantial assurance could be given with five recommendations being made. An action plan was in place to address the areas identified for improvement. Many of those actions were on track for completion and all recommendations were to be completed by December 2014.

The Committee **NOTED** the Internal Audit Review and action plan, and that appropriate actions were being taken to address all the recommendations contained therein.

**30. Debts Recommended to be Written-off**  
**Fiachan a Thathar a' Moladh airson an Dubhadh Às**

There was circulated to Members only Report No. RES/23/14 by the Director of Finance which in accordance with good accounting practice, recommended the write-off of uncollectable debts.

The Committee **AGREED** that the total value of debts as detailed in the report be written off.

**31. Land and Property**  
**Talamh agus Taigheadas**

There was circulated to Members only Report No. RES/24/14 by the Director of Development and Infrastructure which sought approval in respect of a number of land and property transactions in relation to the former outdoor Resource Centre (Old Tarradale School), Muir of Ord, Long leases and the former Graham House Resources Centre, Dornie.

It was suggested that should the open market sale of the former Graham House Resource Centre proceed then advertising of the site nationwide be considered.

The Committee **AGREED** the recommendations set out in the report.

**32. Fort William: Tweeddale Update**  
**An Gearasdan: Fios às Ùr mu Shrath Thuaidh**

There was circulated to Members only Report No. RES/25/14 by the Director of Development and Infrastructure which provided an update on the Tweeddale feasibility study.

The Committee **NOTED** the report.

The meeting ended at 2.40 pm.