

**The Highland Council
No. 10 2015/2016**

Minutes of Meeting of the Highland Council held in the Council Chamber, Council Headquarters, Glenurquhart Road, Inverness on Thursday, 10 March 2016 at 10.35 am.

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

Present:

Dr D Alston	Mr J McGillivray
Mr R Balfour	Mrs D Mackay
Mrs J Barclay	Mr D Mackay
Mr A Baxter (by video-conference)	Mr W MacKay
Mr I Brown	Mr G MacKenzie
Mrs I Campbell	Mr A Mackinnon
Miss J Campbell	Mr T MacLennan
Mrs H Carmichael	Mr K MacLeod
Mr A Christie	Mrs B McAllister
Mr B Clark	Mrs I McCallum
Dr I Cockburn	Mr D Millar
Mrs G Coghill	Mr H Morrison
Dr J Davis	Ms L Munro
Mrs M Davidson	Mr B Murphy
Mr N Donald	Mr F Parr
Ms J Douglas	Mrs M Paterson
Mr A Duffy	Mr G Phillips
Mr D Fallows	Mr T Prag
Mr G Farlow	Mr M Rattray
Mr B Fernie	Mr I Renwick
Mr J Ford	Mr M Reiss
Mr H Fraser	Mr G Rimell
Mr L Fraser	Mrs F Robertson
Mr S Fuller	Mr J Rosie
Mr B Gormley	Mr G Ross
Mr K Gowans	Mr R Saxon
Mr A Graham	Dr A Sinclair
Mr J Gray	Mrs G Sinclair
Mr M Green	Mrs J Slater
Mr R Greene	Ms M Smith
Mr A Henderson	Mr J Stone
Mr D Kerr	Mr B Thompson (by video-conference)
Mr R Laird	Mr H Wood
Mr B Lobban	

In Attendance:

Chief Executive	Director of Care & Learning
Depute Chief Executive/Director of Corporate Development	Director of Finance
Director of Development & Infrastructure	Director of Community Services

Mrs I McCallum in the Chair

Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of Mr D Bremner, Mrs C Caddick, Mr J Crawford, Mr M Finlayson, Mr C Fraser, Mr J Gordon, Mrs L MacDonald, Mr N MacDonald, Ms A MacLean, Mr A Rhind, Ms G Ross, Ms K Stephen and Mrs C Wilson.

Preliminaries

Prior to the commencement of the formal business, the Convener confirmed that Item 12 on the agenda - Re-design of the Highland Council – was to be withdrawn on the basis that a Briefing would be undertaken with Members on the issue following the meeting.

At this point, the Leader also paid tribute to former Councillor Billy Mowat who had recently passed away and extended the sympathy of the Council to his wife and family. In this regard, it was confirmed that a Memorial Service would be held on 19 March 2016 in St Fergus Church, Wick.

2. Declarations of Interest Foillseachaidhean Com-pàirt

The Council **NOTED** the following declarations of interest:-

Item 9(i) – Mr G Farlow (non-financial)

Item 9(ii) – Mr G Farlow and Mr D Kerr (financial)

Item 13 – Dr D Alston, Mr I Brown, Mr K Gowans and Ms L Munro (all financial) and Mr K Gowans and Mr F Parr (non-financial)

Item 14 – Mr G Farlow (financial)

Item 15 – Mrs H Carmichael, Dr D Alston, Mr M Green and Mr J McGillivray (all non-financial) and Mr M Rattray (financial)

Item 17 – Ms J Douglas, Mr K Gowans, Mr M Green and Mr F Parr (all non-financial) and Mr K Gowans (financial)

Item 20 – Ms J Douglas, Mr K Gowans, Mr M Green and Mr F Parr (all non-financial) and Mr K Gowans (financial)

3. Confirmation of Minutes Daingneachadh a' Gheàrr-chunntais

There had been submitted for confirmation as a correct record the Minutes of Meeting of the Council held on 17 December 2015 and the Minutes of the Special Meetings held on 21 January and 25 February 2016 as contained in the Volume which had been circulated separately - which were **APPROVED** – subject to the following correction –

Special Meeting (25 February) – Page 463 – Item 3 – Revenue Budget and Council Tax 2016/17 – it was **NOTED** that the votes for the Amendment should include reference to Mr B Lobban (and not Mrs I McCallum as stated).

4. Minutes of Meetings of Committees Geàrr-chunntasan Choinneamhan Chomataidhean

There had been submitted for confirmation as correct records, for information as regards delegated business and for approval as appropriate, the Minutes of Meetings of Committees contained in Volume circulated separately as undernoted:-

Caithness Committee, 13 January

Education, Children & Adult Services Committee, 20 January

Nairnshire Committee, 27 January
City of Inverness Area Committee, 28 January
Ross & Cromarty Committee, 3 February
Community Services Committee, 4 February
Sutherland County Committee, 9 February
Lochaber Area Committee, 11 February
Planning, Development & Infrastructure Committee, 17 February
Gaelic Implementation Group, 18 February
Pensions Committee & Pensions Board, 18 February
Badenoch & Strathspey Area Committee, 23 February
Resources Committee, 24 February
Skye Committee, 29 February
City of Inverness Area Committee, 3 March

The Minutes, having been moved and seconded were, except as undernoted, **APPROVED** – matters arising having been dealt with as follows :–

Education, Children & Adult Services Committee

***Starred Item No. 13: P. 492: “Face Up to Child Poverty” Report**

AGREED that consideration would be given as to how to address poverty in Highland.

***Starred Item No. 13: P. 495: Community Justice Governance**

AGREED that six Members should be identified for the Community Justice Partnership by the Appointments Panel for External Bodies/ALEOs using a skills set scoring matrix.

Nairnshire Committee, 27 January

***Starred Item 10: P 505: Nairn Common Good Fund – Expenditure and Governance Update Report**

AGREED that, although the Nairnshire Committee had recommended that a Member should be appointed to the Investment Sub Committee, it had now been confirmed that non-Members could attend meetings of the Investment Sub Committee as and when they wished and Nairnshire Committee Members were content to proceed on that basis.

Lochaber Area Committee, 11 February

***Starred Item 6: P551: West Highland and Islands Local Development Plan Main Issues**

AGREED that, although the Lochaber Area Committee had agreed to recommend a specific amendment to the Scheme of Delegation in respect of decision making power on the content of Local Development Plans, it was now proposed that in principle Local Area Committees should have control of the content of Local Development Plans and that work should be undertaken, through discussion at Area Chairs Meetings, to try and expedite this as part of the Scheme of Delegation.

Badenoch & Strathspey Area Committee, 23 February

AGREED the following correction to Page 587 – Item 1 – wording to be amended to

clarify that the Chair had been nominated by Mr G Rimell and this had been seconded by Mr D Fallows.

Resources Committee, 24 February

***Starred Item 15: P 603: Revision of Standing Orders Relating to Contracts**

AGREED the recommended revisions to the Standing Orders Relating to Contracts as detailed.

Skye Committee, 29 February

***Starred Item 15: PP2-3 – Localism Action Plan Update**

AGREED to change the name of the Committee to 'Isle of Skye and Raasay Committee' (Comatahidh an Eilein Sgitheanaich agus Ratharsair) and that the Chair be referred to as 'Cathriache'.

City of Inverness Area Committee, 3 March

Item No 9: PP.15-16 – Victorian Market, Inverness

AGREED to check as to whether there had been specific reference at the meeting to the inclusion of Local Members in the Market Stakeholder Group.

5. Highland and Western Isles Valuation Joint Board Co-Bhòrd Luachaidh na Gàidhealtachd is nan Eilean Siar

There had been circulated Minutes of Meeting of the Valuation Joint Board held on 26 November 2015 which were **NOTED**.

6. Appointment of Vice Chair – Communities and Partnerships Committee Cur Iar-Chathraiche an Dreuchd – Comataidh nan Coimhearsnachdan agus nan Com-pàirteachasan

The Council **AGREED** to appoint Mr G Ross to the position of Vice Chair of the Communities and Partnerships Committee.

7. Membership of Committees, etc Ballrachd Chomataidhean, is eile

It was **NOTED** that Mr D MacKay and Mr D Bremner had left the Independent Group and would now be non-aligned and that Ms J Douglas had confirmed that she would be joining the Independent Group.

On that basis, the political make-up of the Council was now as follows:-

Independent – 31/SNP – 20 /Liberal Democrat – 12 /Labour – 8 /Highland Alliance – 5/Non Aligned - 4

It was further **NOTED** that the formula in respect of the number of places on Strategic Committees remained as 9/6/3/2/2.

The Council **AGREED** the following revisions to memberships of Committees, Sub Committees, etc –

Resources Committee – Ms J Douglas to replace Mr D MacKay

Planning, Development & Infrastructure Committee – Mr M Finlayson to replace Mr D MacKay

Communities and Partnerships Committee – Mr N Donald to replace Mr D MacKay

Audit & Scrutiny Committee – Mrs M Paterson to replace Mr D MacKay

Valuation Joint Board – Mr A MacKinnon to replace Mr D Bremner

CoSLA Education, Children & Young People Executive Group – Mr D Millar to replace Mrs F Robertson

8. Question Time Àm Ceiste

The following Questions had been received by the Depute Chief Executive/Director of Corporate Development in terms of Standing Order 42 –

(i) Mr A Christie

To the Leader of the Council

“What meetings have you attended (other than those internal to the Council), what apologies have been submitted and what meetings are planned for the next 3 month period?”

The response had been circulated.

In terms of a supplementary question, Mr Christie queried as to whether it was possible for specific detail to be provided on the Council Website on not just the meetings which had been attended but also the apologies which had been submitted and the meetings planned for the next three month period.

In response, the Leader confirmed that there were often security issues surrounding meetings planned for the next three month period and as such this detail could not be provided on the Council Website. However, apologies could be listed if required.

(ii) Mr A Christie

To the Depute Leader of the Council

“What meetings have you attended (other than those internal to the Council), what apologies have been submitted and what meetings are planned for the next 3 month period?”

The response had been circulated.

There was no supplementary question.

9. **Notices of Motion**
Brathan Gluasaid

The following Notices of Motion had been received in accordance with Standing Order 10.1 –

Notice of Motion (i)

Declaration of Interest - Mr G Farlow declared a non-financial interest in this item as a member of KIMO UK 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.

“The Highland Council has been at the forefront of pressure to reinstate Emergency Towing Vessel (ETV) cover to waters surrounding the Northern and Western Coast of Scotland and Islands. In partnership with Local Authorities from Aberdeenshire round to Argyll, including Shetland, Orkney and Western Isles, and further supported by KIMO UK, it is imperative that as a minimum this Council shall seek to have one ETV based in the Northern Isles and a second ETV in Stornoway or an alternative port along the North Western Mainland.

The announcement by the UK Transport Minister, Mr Robert Goodwill, to grant a six month extension of retention of the ETV based in the Northern Isles is very much welcomed.

It is proposed that the Leader should write to Mr Goodwill and the First Minister of Scotland, Nicola Sturgeon, requesting long term funding be identified to urgently reinstate two ETV's for operational duty in these waters.”

Signed: Mr R Greene Mrs M Davidson Mr A Henderson Dr A Sinclair

During discussion, Members raised the following issues:-

- there was a need to emphasise the huge area of coastline to be covered by the ETVs and that, although a meeting held on 9 March in Edinburgh had been promising, a final resolution was still required on the sourcing of appropriate funding. In this regard, it was hoped that the second ETV could be reinstated in the meantime in view of the safety implications of not having it in place;
- there was a need to also recognise the potential consequences for the Scottish food and drink industry in the event of an incident which was not promptly dealt with due to the distances to be travelled by a single ETV;
- lessons could perhaps be learned from the Netherlands which had 16 ETVs on a relatively small stretch of coastline;
- the Maritime and Coastguard Agency (MCA) and the Coastguard Agency had already undertaken risk assessments which clearly highlighted that the ETVs should remain in place;
- there were various examples of maritime accidents which had required urgent assistance from ETVs to avoid danger and damage to the environment and economy;
- it was important to look at the extent of the shoreline rather than the population;
- a maritime disaster could impact on a significant percentage of the Highland population with around 85% living within 5km of the coast;
- the support being demonstrated by the MCA was welcomed, as was that from

- the Oil and Gas Agency;
- there was a need to convey thanks to the Head of Environment and Development for work which had been undertaken on this issue and consideration should be given to the presentation of the Minutes from KIMO UK meetings to the Planning, Development and Infrastructure Committee and/or the Community Services Committee;
 - there was a need to highlight this issue to the First Minister if possible; and
 - the relationship with the Crown Estate in regard to responsibility for the sea bed should also be taken into consideration.

Decision

The Council **AGREED** that the Leader should write to Mr Robert Goodwill and also the First Minister of Scotland, Nicola Sturgeon, to request that long term funding be identified to urgently reinstate two ETV's for operational duty in these waters.

Notice of Motion (ii)

Declarations of Interest - Mr G Farlow and Mr D Kerr declared financial interests in this item as Council house tenants but, in terms of the dispensation granted by the Standards Commission, remained to participate in the discussion.

"We believe that the only way to progress the relief of the Highland's Housing Debt is to get people round the table. So we ask for Council's support to invite UK and Scottish Government Ministers and Highland MPs and MSPs to a summit on Highland's Housing Debt in order to promote the benefits of debt write off for the Highland and Scottish economy.

Signed: Mrs M Davidson, Mr A Henderson, Mr R Greene, Miss J Campbell, Mr R Balfour, Mr M Green, Mr G Ross, Mr M Finlayson

During discussion, Members raised the following issues:-

- the current housing debt figure was £205m, with annual loan charges of around £20m, which meant that roughly every 40p of £1 spent was being used to cover loan charges. As such, that money could be put to much better use, such as investing in housing for the future;
- there was a need to liaise with all interested parties in order to identify a collective solution. In this respect, it was understood that research was currently being undertaken by 2 MPs which included reference to models followed by other European countries in terms of handling housing debt and feedback was awaited;
- correspondence had been sent to the Housing Minister and a response was awaited;
- the previous level of debt, prior to necessary work being undertaken over the past three years to raise standards, had been around £153m;
- much of the debt had been the result of house building in previous years to support the expanding oil market which had been of benefit to the whole of the UK economy; and
- it was considered to be very unfair that current tenants across the Highlands were effectively paying the loan charges for properties which had been sold under the Right to Buy scheme.

Decision

The Council **AGREED** to invite UK and Scottish Government Ministers, as well as Highland MPs and MSPs, to a Summit on Highland's Housing Debt in order to promote the benefits of debt write-off for the Highland and Scottish economy.

10. Outcomes from Members' Seminar on the Scotland Bill and prospects for further devolution

Bile na h-Alba – Toraidhean bho Cho-labhairt nam Ball

There had been circulated Report No. HC/6/16 dated 29 February 2016 by the Chief Executive which provided an update on the outcomes from the Members' Seminar held on 21 January to consider the Scotland Bill and possible areas for devolution to a local area level.

During discussion, Members raised the following issues:-

- there had been twenty-two recommendations arising from the Seminar and whilst these were a good start to the process, more work on clarity and targets was required;
- the Leader was due to engage with CoSLA at both a local and national level and this was welcomed, particularly as devolution was only the first step on the process to local democracy;
- it would be important to quantify the potential costs and resources required for some the recommendations which had been put forward, as well as the possible implications;
- pathways for the recommendations should also be developed in order to help shape future strategy and policy;
- in relation to fuel poverty, the Highlands were in a unique geographical position which made local decision making even more important. In this regard, reference was also made to the mountains and island-like peninsulas;
- strengthening of the links with the Maritime and Coastguard Agency would be beneficial for the area;
- whilst the proposed letters from the Leader were welcomed, consideration should also be given to including a wider range of expertise during engagement on issues;
- there was a need to take account of the work being undertaken by the Northern Collaboration Board at both Member and Officer levels;
- in regard to Crown Estate funding, it was considered unlikely that changes would be made to this in the near future;
- the issue of tourism tax should be included as part of future discussions;
- formal recognition of the work undertaken in relation to the Commission on Strengthening Local Democracy, and in particular the report published in 2014, was required and in this respect specific reference was made to the considerable work undertaken at that time by Mr Drew Hendry, MP which had been both cross-party and cross-sector;
- more work was required on the recommendations which were broad-ranging and in this regard the Leader would seek further contributions from Members in due course; and
- a Briefing which had been recently received on Mountainous Area Status would be circulated to all Members and in this respect it was highlighted that future meetings concerning Island issues would now involve six (as opposed to three) Councils, including Highland Council.

Decision

The Council:-

- (i) **NOTED** the outcomes from the Seminar;
- (ii) **AGREED** that the Leader should engage at a local and national level as set out in Paragraph 7.1 of the report; and
- (iii) **AGREED** to re-confirm support for the recommendations contained in the Commission on Strengthening Local Democracy's report 'Effective Democracy: Reconnecting with Communities'

11. Proposal to establish a Commission on Highland Democracy Coimisean na Gàidhealtachd air Deamocrasaidh Ionadail

There had been circulated Report No. HC/7/16 dated 29 February 2016 by the Head of Policy and Reform which sought consideration of a Commission on Highland Democracy.

During discussion, Members raised the following issues:-

- this proposal provided an opportunity to establish a proper platform from which to take forward the work of the Commission on Strengthening Local Democracy;
- good progress had been made on the localism agenda within the Council, including the establishment of local Area Committees and the intention to engage with Area Chairs regularly as a means of extending the progress on the localism agenda and participatory budgeting, and this was welcomed;
- the work of the Commission would enable greater public involvement in decision making which would help to address feedback from the Citizens' Panel that only 18% of citizens currently felt they had influence on decision making;
- Mr Rory Mair CBE was to take forward this work in terms of developing the proposals and bringing back recommendations to the Council in May and this process would run in parallel with, and inform, the work on the re-design of the Council;
- it was recognised that the proposals were ambitious, particularly within the proposed timeframe, but it was essential to remove the barriers to local decision making and to deliver a new way of working with communities, with particular focus on the involvement of individuals and groups who were currently marginalised within communities;
- it was essential that future communication with the public was clear and straightforward, without complicated phrasing or jargon;
- it was suggested that individuals should be chosen at random to form part of the consultation;
- there was a need to consider how to manage community requirements as it was recognised that some communities would be keen to participate while others might not. This would ultimately have an impact on resources, particularly given the timescale for the process, and it was suggested that funding should be sourced from external bodies/sources wherever possible;
- there were often difficulties in attracting individuals to participate in Community Councils and this should be a focus within the process;
- the use of social media was an excellent way of gathering information and interacting with individuals and communities and should be undertaken as much as possible throughout the process; and
- local democracy needed devolved budgets on a fair and equitable basis.

Decision

The Council **NOTED** progress in establishing the Commission and **AGREED** that further progress should be reported in May 2016.

**12. Re-design of the Highland Council
Ath-dhealbhadh Chomhairle na Gàidhealtachd**

(Withdrawn from the agenda)

**13. Highland Health and Social Care Partnership – Joint Strategic Plan
Plana Ro-innleachdail airson Seirbheisean Chloinne agus Inbheach**

Declarations of Interest

Mr K Gowans and Mr F Parr declared non-financial interests in this item as Directors of High Life Highland 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.

Mr K Gowans also declared a financial interest on the grounds that a family member was an employee of High Life Highland 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.

Dr D Alston declared a financial interest in this item as a Board Member of NHS Highland but, in terms of the dispensation granted by the Standards Commission, remained to participate in the discussion.

Mr I Brown declared a financial interest in this item as an employee of NHS Highland and, having applied the test outlined in Paragraphs 5.2 and 5.3 of the Councillors' Code of Conduct, left the Chamber during discussion of the item.

Ms L Munro declared a financial interest in this item as an employee of NHS Highland and, having applied the test outlined in Paragraphs 5.2 and 5.3 of the Councillors' Code of Conduct, left the Chamber during discussion of the item.

There had been circulated Report No. HC/9/16 dated 28 February 2016 by the Director of Care and Learning which introduced and sought agreement to the Strategic (Commissioning) Plan for health and social care services which had been prepared in line with statutory requirements.

In this regard, it was confirmed that a further report would be submitted to the next Council meeting in May.

During discussion, it was suggested that the Plan should be presented to local District Partnerships in order to ensure a clear understanding of community priorities.

It was also highlighted that there was a need to ensure that the wording within the Plan was clear and easily understandable and that the use of overly complicated phrases or expressions were avoided wherever possible.

Decision

The Council **NOTED** the requirement for a Strategic Plan to be developed, consulted upon and published in line with legislation and **AGREED** the attached Strategic Plan on the basis that should any final amendments be required, these would be delegated to the Chief Executive in consultation with the Council Leader.

**14. By-Laws on the Employment of Children
Frith-laghan mu Fhastadh Chloinne**

Declaration of Interest - Mr G Farlow declared a financial interest in this item on the grounds that a family member was an employee within the context of the report 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 had been circulated Report No. HC/10/16 dated 24 February 2016 by the Director of Care and Learning which sought agreement to update the Council's By-Laws on the employment of children to bring them into line with current Scottish Government guidance.

Decision

The Council **APPROVED** the By-Laws on the Employment of Children 2016 as presented.

**15. Capital Discretionary Fund – Applications for Financial Support
Iarrtasan do Mhaoin Chalpa fo Ughdarras**

Declarations of Interest

The following Members declared non-financial interests in this item and, having applied the test outlined in Paragraphs 5.2 and 5.3 of the Councillors' Code of Conduct, left the Chamber during discussion of the item:-

**Dr D Alston – Trustee of Cromarty Harbour Trust
Mrs H Carmichael – Director of Visit Inverness Loch Ness
Mr M Green – Vice Chair of Inverness Ice Centre
Mr J McGillivray – Chair of the Embo Trust**

Mr M Rattray declared a financial interest as an employee of Cromarty Firth Harbour and, having applied the test outlined in Paragraphs 5.2 and 5.3 of the Councillors' Code of Conduct, left the Chamber during discussion of the item.

There had been circulated Report No. HC/11/16 dated 29 February 2016 by the Director of Finance which sought approval for a number of applications for financial support from the Capital Discretionary Fund.

During discussion, Members expressed general support for the applications which had been submitted. Also, in relation to the process for determining applications to the Capital Discretionary Fund, it was suggested that the specific criteria used should be included as background information in the future.

Decision

The Council **APPROVED** the six funding applications on the basis that the financial contributions would be conditional on a full project funding package being in place.

16. Digital Connectivity - Update
Fios às Ùr mu Bhann-leathann agus Fòn-làimhe

There had been circulated Report No. HC/12/16 dated 1 March 2016 by the Director of Development and Infrastructure which provided an update on digital connectivity across the Highlands.

During discussion, Members raised the following issues:-

- there was widespread frustration amongst communities in regard to the inadequacy of current broadband and mobile coverage and as such there was an urgent need to secure accurate current and future coverage plans, to clarify “not-spots” and to develop an action plan with partners to improve the implementation of effective broadband and mobile coverage across the whole region;
- introducing an advice portal would be useful for individuals and businesses;
- the Highlands & Islands Enterprise maps, highlighting where mobile operators planned to roll out coverage, should be circulated to all Members;
- in relation to the second phase superfast rollout, it was noted that funding was available from the UK and Scottish Governments and this was welcomed;
- working with partners was crucial to future progress and this should be developed wherever possible;
- Citizens Online were currently undertaking good work in relation to digital inclusion. In this respect, attention was drawn to the introduction of the Universal Service Obligation which was welcomed;
- the changes in the provision of education, particularly to small remote and rural schools, and the roll out of individual devices required proper and reliable broadband infrastructure;
- access to the internet in the area was crucial in terms of future tourism; and
- a representative from British Telecom should be invited to a future meeting if possible in order to clarify the current position in relation to the Highlands.

Decision

The Council **NOTED** the terms of the report and that a Workshop would take place in April to commence a mapping exercise to identify the “not spots”.

It was also **AGREED** that digital connectivity should remain a key priority for the Council as part of the Highland First Programme.

17. Local and National Statutory Performance Indicators 2014/15
Comharran Coileanaidh Reachdail Ionadail agus Nàiseanta 2014/15

Declarations of Interest

Ms J Douglas, Mr M Green, Mr K Gowans and Mr F Parr declared non-financial interests in this item as Directors of High Life Highland 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.

Mr K Gowans also declared a financial interest on the grounds that a family member was an employee of High Life Highland 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 had been circulated Report No. HC/13/16 dated 8 February 2016 by the Chief Executive which provided information on the outcome of local and nationally benchmarked Statutory Performance Indicators for 2014/15.

During discussion, Members raised the following issues:-

- further information was required in regard to the increase from 11 to 16 weeks for the average time in temporary/emergency accommodation;
- the scrutiny review of attendance management had identified that statistics on sickness absence were not always recorded and it was essential that a performance indicator was implemented in this regard;
- clarification was needed on whether the cost per attendance at leisure facilities included visits using the High Life membership card;
- the significant savings achieved by the Finance Service in relation to payslips for Council employees and Non-Domestic Rates per chargeable property were welcomed;
- in light of the substantial impact of the budget savings on the Statutory Performance Indicators for 2015/16, consideration should be given as to how performance could be captured, modelled and measured;
- further information was required in relation to the significant increase in cost per participant for Ranger guided walks; and
- there was a need to review performance indicators in order to ensure that they were accurate for their purpose and meaningful to the Highland area.

Decision

The Council **NOTED** the outturn of the Statutory Performance Indicators for 2014/15 and where relevant their national benchmark position.

The Council also **AGREED** that reports should be submitted to Strategic Committees at the next cycle to provide detailed analysis of Statutory Performance Indicators and improvement actions.

18. Common Good Funds Officer Math Coitcheann

There had been circulated Report No. HC/14/16 dated 26 February 2016 by the Head of Corporate Governance which sought agreement for the establishment of a temporary post to support the management of the various Common Good Funds and to prepare for the coming into force of the new Community Empowerment duties.

During discussion, Members were generally supportive in principle of the appointment of a Common Good Funds Officer but expressed specific concern in relation to how the post would be funded. In this regard, it was suggested that a decision on funding should be deferred meantime in order to allow further examination of the remit and accountability of the role and to allow for community discussion.

It was also suggested that consideration should be undertaken at the next Local Chairs Meeting, and locally where necessary, with the intention of firm proposals coming back to the next meeting in May.

Decision

The Council **AGREED** in principle to the establishment of a temporary post.

It was **AGREED TO DEFER** consideration of the funding of the post and on this basis further discussion would be undertaken at the next Local Chairs Meeting, and locally if necessary, with firm proposals coming back to the Council Meeting in May.

19. Disaggregation of Community Services Budgets and Scheme of Delegation to relevant Committees

Sgeama Tiomnaidh agus Rianachd gu Comataidhean Ro-innleachdail agus Fochomataidhean agus gu Oifigearan

There had been circulated Report No. HC/15/16 dated 29 February 2016 by the Director of Community Services which provided details of Community Services budgets which could be disaggregated to Local Committees and the policy basis for disaggregation.

The report also provided recommendations for changes to the Council's Scheme of Delegation to Committees in relation to disaggregated budgets.

During discussion, Members raised the following issues:-

- the challenging process of disaggregating budgets to Local Committees would be based on historical budget distributions and would require further alteration due to the budget savings which had been agreed and as an outcome of voluntary redundancy;
- the functions which had been identified for delegation to Local Committees were of the highest priority for communities;
- Members had a duty to act in the interests of the Council as a whole and all the communities served by it and to help manage community expectations;
- consideration should be given to Local Committees sharing funding where it was felt necessary or where projects had been identified which required additional funding;
- there was potential, particularly in rural areas, for the role of Village Officers to be considered and local budgets, together with funding from other sources, could enable this to happen;
- it should be recognised that Tenant Participation Officers and Community Wardens were an asset to local areas;
- further consideration should be given as to whether issues relating to public toilet provision and Community and Traffic Wardens should be delegated to Local Committees or dealt with at a Strategic level; and
- performance reporting would be important, particularly financial reporting, as it was important that budgets did not overspend.

Decision

The Council **AGREED**:-

- (i) the areas of discretion on local budgets contained in the report;
- (ii) changes to the Scheme of Delegation to Committees as detailed in Appendices 2 to 4; and
- (iii) to hold local Member briefings on the detail of individual disaggregated budgets, including ongoing legal and policy commitments and the

options for wider public participation in setting local priorities and scrutinising local service delivery.

**20. High Life Highland – Appointment of Independent Director
High Life na Gàidhealtachd – Comataidh Ainmeachaidh**

Declarations of Interest - Ms J Douglas, Mr M Green, Mr K Gowans and Mr F Parr declared non-financial interests in this item as Directors of High Life Highland 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.

Mr K Gowans also declared a financial interest on the grounds that a family member was an employee of High Life Highland 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.

It was advised that a recommendation had been received from the High Life Highland Nominations Committee for Mr Mark Tate to be appointed as an Independent Director to join the High Life Highland Board.

Decision

The Council **AGREED** that Mr Mark Tate should be appointed as an Independent Director to the High Life Highland Board as detailed.

**21. Timetable of Meetings
Clàr-ama Choinneamhan**

It was **NOTED** that confirmation had now been received that the EU Referendum would take place on Thursday, 23 June 2016. On the basis that this was the date originally scheduled for the Highland Council meeting, it was proposed to change the date of the Council meeting to Wednesday, 29 June 2016.

Decision

It was **AGREED** to change the date of the Highland Council meeting as detailed.

It was also **AGREED** that a Special Meeting of the Council should be held on Thursday, 24 March at 2.00pm (or after the Audit & Scrutiny Committee meeting – whichever was the later) in order to consider a revised report on Re-Design of the Highland Council.

**22. Deeds Executed
Sgrìobhainnean Lagha a Bhuilicheadh**

It was **NOTED** that a list of deeds and other documents executed on behalf of the Council since the meeting held on 17 December 2015 was available in the Members' Library and on the Council's Website.

Additional Urgent Report

Banking and Related Financial Transactions – Authorised Signatories

There had been tabled Report No. HC/15a dated 9 March 2016 by the Director of Finance which addressed the matter of Officers appointed to authorise banking and related financial transactions on behalf of the Council.

Decision

The Council **AGREED** the following as authorised signatories for banking and related financial transactions from 8 April 2016 –

Derek Yule – Director of Finance
Edward Foster – Head of Corporate Finance
Nigel Rose – Head of Audit and Risk Management
Allan Gunn – Head of Revenues and Business Support

It was also **AGREED** that Edward Foster should be added to the list of authorised signatories for banking and related financial transactions with immediate effect.

The meeting ended at 4.30pm.