

The Highland Council

Minutes of Meeting of the **Community Services Committee** held in the Council Chamber, Council Headquarters, Glenurquhart Road, Inverness on Thursday, 18 August 2016 at 10.30 am.

Present:

Dr D Alston	Mr D Kerr
Mr R Balfour	Mrs B McAllister
Mrs J Barclay	Mrs L MacDonald
Mr B Clark	Mr G MacKenzie
Mrs G Coghill	Mr K MacLeod
Dr J Davis	Mrs B McAllister
Mr N Donald	Mr H Morrison
Mr G Farlow	Mr B Murphy
Mr A Graham	Mr G Phillips
Mr R Greene	Mrs F Robertson (Substitute)
Mr A Henderson	

Non-Members also present:

Mrs I Campbell	Mrs A MacLean
Miss J Campbell	Mrs I McCallum
Mrs M Davidson	Mr D Millar
Mr D Fallows	Ms L Munro
Mr R Laird	Mrs M Paterson
Mr B Lobban	Mr J Stone
Mr D MacKay	

In attendance:

Mr W Gilfillan, Director of Community Services
Ms C Campbell, Head of Performance and Resources
Dr C Clark, Head of Environmental and Amenity Services
Mr A Summers, Head of Environmental and Amenity Services
Mr D Goldie, Head of Housing and Building Maintenance
Ms T Urry, Head of Roads and Transport
Mr A Yates, Environmental Health Manager
Mr M Mitchell, Finance Manager
Mr I Souter, Senior Transport Officer
Mr S Graham, Project Manager, Chief Executive's Office
Miss J MacLennan, Principal Administrator, Corporate Development Service
Ms F MacBain, Committee Administrator, Corporate Development Services
Miss J Green, 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 Committee.

Mr A Henderson in the Chair

Business

Preliminaries
Ro-fhiosrachadh

In accordance with Standing Order 18, the Committee **AGREED** item 18 on the agenda, Grass Cutting Contract, be taken immediately following item 4, Good News.

1. Apologies for Absence
Leisgeulan

Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of Mr A Baxter, Mr A Rhind and Mr J Rosie.

2. Declarations of Interest
Foillseachaidhean Com-pàirt

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

In terms of the general dispensation granted by the Standards Commission, Mr G Farlow and Mr D Kerr declared financial interests in any items which might arise during discussion in regard to Council housing on the grounds of being Council House tenants.

Items 8 and 16 - Mr B Murphy (financial)

3. Recess Powers
Cumhachdan Fosaidh

The Committee **NOTED** that the Recess Powers granted by the Council at its meeting on 29 June 2016 had not been exercised in relation to the business of the Community Services Committee.

4. Good News
Naidheachdan Matha

The following areas of good news were reported:-

- Outcome of Inspection Report, Inverness Crematorium, 12 January 2016 – Inspector of Crematoria, Scotland

Overall Assessment:

A well run Crematorium by staff who display a caring and professional approach to their duties. The Inspection found no shortcomings in either the administration functions performed or the procedures in place within the Crematory. Good practise was noted in respect of ensuring continuity of identity throughout, with safeguards in place to minimise the risk of error. At the time of Inspection consideration was being given to the recently published revised Code of Practice which would require a number of changes to current procedures in respect of hospital arranged infant cremations and staff training. These would be examined on a future visit.

In discussion, Members asked that the Inspection Report be circulated. In addition, assurance was sought, and received, that the lack of adequate seating, an issue raised by members of the public as well as funeral directors, was being addressed.

- Jetpatchers

Use of the two Jetpatchers across Highland continued to receive favourable comments from communities and local road users. The Council's own machine remained on schedule for delivery in October 2016.

Members sought, and received, assurance that the jetpatchers would be fully utilised as long as the materials budget and weather conditions permitted. It was suggested that record be kept of meterage and utilisation.

- Highland Third Sector Awards – Partner of the Year

In autumn 2015, the Government announced that the UK would resettle 20,000 of the most vulnerable Syrian refugees by 2020. The Highland Council agreed with COSLA to take up to 25-30 families over the period of the national re-settlement programme. The first 4 families arrived in Highland in May and another family was arriving in August. A working group of officers and volunteers from the Highland Council, Police Scotland, NHS Highland and the Highland Third Sector Interface had been awarded the 'Partner of the Year' award by the Board of the Highland Third Sector Interface. This was in recognition of the hard work and excellent partnership working that had taken place over the last few months to ensure that the complex needs of the families were met.

Preparations were well underway for the arrival of more families in Autumn.

The Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the items of Good News; and
- ii. **AGREED** that the Inspection Report of Inverness Crematorium be circulated to Members.

18. **Grass Cutting Contract** **Cùmhnant Gearradh Feòir**

There had been circulated Report No COM/37/16 dated 4 August 2016 by the Director of Community Services giving the background to the current grass cutting contracts and service delivery model and proposing that an Options Appraisal was undertaken, given the changes to Community Services and the Council's reporting and budgetary structure, with a view to providing a service which fitted the needs of both.

Following a detailed introduction by the Director, Members made the following comments during discussion:-

- contracting out aspects of the service had been prompted by the need to cut costs, with around £600k having been removed from the budget in 2011/12;
- all Members were affected by public expectations from this service;
- the proposals to deliver grass-cutting services in-house in Skye and Lochalsh from 1 April 2017 were welcomed;
- disappointment was expressed that the report did not contain more

comprehensive information;

- concern was voiced that Lochaber did not appear to have its complement of 6 Full Time Equivalent posts working in grounds maintenance;
- various areas of poor performance were highlighted including verge maintenance and associated road safety issues. The Director emphasised that, in some areas, the desire to bring services in-house was to improve control and flexibility rather than due to poor performance;
- it was hoped that the budget for each Area would be separated to facilitate local decision-making on priorities and service levels;
- the additional costs of a contracted-out service were highlighted, such as procurement and loss of workforce flexibility;
- it was important, going forward, that mapping analysis was undertaken of areas which might no longer require grass-cutting, with alternative options being considered, such as wild flowers, which would also be of benefit to bees and other insects;
- staffing level discrepancies between Areas were queried;
- concern was expressed that systemic weed-killers were not being used and the Council Leader offered to investigate the use of "Roundup", noting that the Highland Council had the largest geographic local authority area in the UK;
- it was important that weed spraying was undertaken early in the season before seeding took place;
- it was important to aim for value for money for tenants from the Housing Revenue Account;
- reference was made to historical adoption fees that had been paid to the Transport, Environmental and Community Services Committee by the Housing Service for the maintenance of grounds of some newly built housing estates. Mr Kerr requested a list of all such areas of land, with their meterage. It was likely that some of these estates had since changed ownership and that some grass areas had now been built over;
- discussion took place on the quality of service both from contractors and in-house in various Areas;
- caution was urged with regard to extending grass-cutting contracts for 2017 at this stage;
- outsourcing had become fashionable over the previous 20 years for contracts that were considered difficult to manage but it was suggested that improved management might be preferable;
- reference was made to the poor condition of various housing estates across Highland;
- information was sought on the Council's ability to source adequate staff if services were taken in-house and whether they would be seasonal or permanent;
- the urgency around grounds maintenance, in particular verge maintenance, in relation to tourism was emphasised, with reference to the North Coast 500 route. Early engagement with ward colleagues was urged;
- reference was made to safety considerations when pedestrians, including school children, were unable to step onto verges due to excessive grass and weed growth;
- weather conditions in 2016 had resulted in a particularly successful growing season, exacerbating weed growth;
- while the report concerned grounds maintenance rather than verge maintenance, the Director clarified that there was a degree of crossover. In relation to verge maintenance, Members had agreed in 2014 to a

- budget reduction and the implementation of a verge cutting prioritisation project, which the Director offered to escalate;
- as tenants were required to maintain their gardens to an adequate standard, the Council should do the same with their grounds;
 - separate discussion was required on various issues relating to the Housing Revenue Account and aims for the future of the Housing service;
 - some smaller areas might find it easier to bring grass-cutting services in-house, while larger Areas such as Inverness and Ross & Cromarty had more complex arrangements in place and might require longer to make decisions on their requirements;
 - investment in appropriate modern machinery was required, either through capital spend or leasing;
 - in relation to contractors not picking up grass-cuttings, it was explained that this was not part of their current contract;
 - it was clarified that the service to be delivered by in-house staff on Skye and Lochalsh from 1 April 2017 was for grass cutting, not ‘amenities’; and
 - with regard to the proposal for the options appraisal to be presented to Community Services Committee in spring 2017, several Members suggested that November 2016 would be preferable and this was the subject of considerable discussion, with the Director pointing out that there was insufficient time to fully prepare the necessary information for Members to make an informed decision in November. A further suggestion involved a 2-tier reporting system, with some information such as options modelling, being provided in November and detail such as the dis-aggregation of budgets and local decision-making on grass cutting being presented in spring 2017 as part of a wider report.

The Committee, having adjourned from 12 noon to 12.15 pm to consider revised recommendations:-

- i. **APPROVED** the scope of the Options Appraisal as detailed in paragraph 3.3 of the report;
- ii. **APPROVED** the grass cutting service to be delivered by in-house staff on Skye and Lochalsh from 1 April 2017 within the existing budget available to Skye and Lochalsh at this time;
- iii. **NOTED** that a timetable for meetings with local Members to more closely define the scope would be developed and distributed to Ward Managers with a view to the options appraisal being presented to Community Services committee in spring 2017; and
- iv. **AGREED** to report back to the Community Services Committee on 3 November 2016 updating proposals for service delivery going forward with a commitment to close monitoring of any contractual arrangements in 2017/18 and, in addition, to consider if any other smaller areas could be delivered, similar to Skye and Lochalsh, from 2017/18.

5. Revenue Budget – Final Outturn 2015/16 and Monitoring 2016/17 Buidseat Teachd-a-steach – Fìor Shuidheachadh Deireannach 2015/16 agus Sgrùdadh 2016/17

There had been circulated Report No COM/24/16 dated 4 August 2016 by the Director of Community Services inviting Members to approve the revenue budget outturn position for the year ended 31 March 2016 and the revenue monitoring position for the period 1 April 2016 to 30 June 2016.

Members welcomed the improved quality and detail in the report as well as the accurate budgeting. The Chair thanked all staff for their work, with particular mention of the Harbour Manager and team, the Head of Housing and Building Maintenance and his team, and the previous Area Community Services Manager for his work resolving the finances of the Corran Ferry.

During discussion, the following points were made:-

- the work of the Harbour Manager in relation to the sale of marine fuel was praised, with emphasis on the importance of responding to market fluctuations. For this reason, it was suggested that marine fuel procurement and sales should remain the responsibility of the Harbour Manager;
- in response to a query from Mr Philips about the items flagged as red in Appendix 4, the Director explained that these related to predictions for achievement of savings targets and further detail would be provided to Mr Philips outwith the meeting;
- the Finance Manager clarified that the Common Good Fund recharges referred to in the report had been missed at an earlier date due to an administrative error;
- it was welcomed that tenant rent and repair arrears were being tackled;
- the lack of permanent housing meant that too many people were staying in long-term temporary accommodation, some with complex needs that required further staff training or possible NHS involvement;
- assurance was sought, and received, that the service reviews for centralising stores would not disadvantage local suppliers;
- more should be done to tackle the use of the Struy (B9176 north of Alness) by lorries that were causing damage to bridges;
- explanation was sought and received for the relatively small underspend on the winter maintenance budget given the mild winter;
- flood alleviation underspends should be used to fund small low costs projects if possible;
- explanation was sought, and received, on the proposed increases in the budget for burials and cremations and for the prediction of death calculations; and
- there would be a loss of car parking income from a property beside Rose Street Car Park, Inverness, now that planning permission had been granted for a change of use for that building.

Thereafter, the Committee **APPROVED**:-

- i. the revenue budget final outturn position for the year ended 31 March 2016; and
- ii. the report and the attached monitoring statements which showed the revenue position for the period 1 April 2016 to 30 June 2016 and the actions which had been put in place to manage the budget over the remainder of the financial year.

6. Capital Expenditure – Final Outturn 2015/16 and First Quarter Monitoring 2016/17
Caiteachas Calpa – Fìor Shuidheachadh Deireannach 2015/16 agus Sgrùdadh 2016/17

There had been circulated Report No COM/25/16 dated 2 August 2016 by the Director of Community Services inviting Members to approve the capital

expenditure outturn position for the year ended 31 March 2016 and the monitoring position for the period 1 April 2016 to 30 June 2016.

During discussion, Members made the following comments:-

- the renovations in Princes Street, Thurso were welcomed and represented value for money given the historic importance of the building. The architect of the re-design was congratulated;
- in response to a request from Members, information on the £866,434 of one-off property purchases would be circulated;
- Roadex had confirmed that there could be issues with certain types of road surface dressings at certain latitudes and a “value for money” report, reviewing the approach to surface dressing taking into account factors such as climate and materials, would be submitted to a future meeting;
- in response to concern about the £8m underspend in energy efficiency projects, it was explained that this related to high contingency costs having been budgeted and that some of the underspend would be carried forward to tackle properties that had been missed. This would be covered in the Scottish Housing Quality Standard report in November 2016;
- the high full-time occupancy rate of the Travelling People’s site in Inverness was of concern; and
- explanation was sought, and received, for the underspend on vehicle and plant purchases.

The Committee:-

- i. **APPROVED** the capital expenditure outturn position for the year ended 31 March 2016;
- ii. **APPROVED** the capital expenditure monitoring position for the period 1 April 2016 to 30 June 2016;
- iii. **AGREED** that a “value for money” report reviewing the approach to surface dressing, taking into account factors such as climate and materials, be submitted to a future meeting; and
- iv. **AGREED** that information on the £866,434 of one-off property purchases (HR860) be circulated to all Members.

7. Community Services Service Plan 2016-2017 Seirbheisean Coimhearsnachd Plana Seirbheis 2016-2017

There had been circulated Report No COM/26/16 dated 1 August 2016 by the Director of Community Services introducing the 2016-17 Service Plan for Community Services and detailing how the Service would contribute to the delivery of the Council’s Programme, Highland First.

In introducing the report, the Vice Chair highlighted the changes in operation of the service due to pressures including government austerity and the effect of voluntary severance. In this regard, he explained that key factors for service users were reliability and transparency of operations and stressed the importance of communication with customers. In conclusion, he expressed confidence that the Director, the Management Team and all Community Services staff had in the Service Plan, the guidelines for intuition and continuity of this frontline service and encouraged support for the Service Plan.

The Chair then drew Members attention to the useful organisation structure in the Service Plan and also to the £20.3m budget for Loan Charges. He stressed

the importance of continuing to lobby the Scottish Government for funding to help reduce the housing debt.

During discussion, Members made the following comments:-

- it was requested that the third Enabling Action in relation to the Programme Commitment for Piers and Harbours (H226) be expanded to include the additional wording "...and identify other relevant opportunities for economic development in maritime communities"; and
- suggestions were sought of more effective methods to actively lobby the UK and Scottish Government to write off the Council's historic housing debt.

The Committee **APPROVED** the draft service plan for 2016-17 subject to the inclusion of additional wording to the third Enabling Action, in relation to the Programme Commitment for Piers and Harbours (H226), as follows "...and identify other relevant opportunities for economic development in maritime communities".

**8. Community Services Performance Report – 1 April 2016 to 30 June 2016
Aithisg Coileanaidh nan Seirbheisean Coimhearsnachd - 1 Giblean 2016
gu 30 An t-Òg mhios 2016**

Declarations of Interest

Mr B Murphy declared a financial interest in this item on the grounds of being the provider of homeless accommodation and left the room.

There had been circulated Report No COM/27/16 dated 4 August 2016 by the Director of Community Services providing information on how Community Services performed in relation to performance indicators from 1 April 2016 to 30 June 2016 and which included performance targets for 2016/17.

During discussion, Members made the following comments:-

- the increase in the number of pothole instructions completed was a direct result of the success of the jetpatching programme;
- in relation to the disposal of long term empty properties in Wick, clarification was sought on whether alternative options had been considered including housing for refugees, if major investment was needed to take these properties up to standard and whether the income from the sale would go towards the general house building fund; and
- the reason for there being no local demand for the long term empty properties in Wick was not due to the cost of repair but due to the area. However, there was significant demand from working people in Caithness for non-council housing and therefore it was a good opportunity to assess the market demand and remove the figures from detrimentally affecting the overall performance of average re-letting times.

The Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the information provided on Community Services performance from 1 April 2016 to 30 June 2016;
- ii. **APPROVED** the performance targets for 2016/17, as set out in Appendix 1 of the report; and

- iii. **AGREED** that Nos 32, 34, 36 and 38 Kennedy Terrace, Wick be declared surplus and placed on the market for sale.

The Committee adjourned for lunch at 1.10 pm and resumed at 2.00 pm.

**9. Telematics for the Light Fleet
Telematics airson na Feachd Aotrom**

There had been circulated Report No COM/28/16 dated 26 July 2016 by the Director of Community Services outlining plans for the implementation of vehicle telematics across the light fleet by 31 March 2017.

The Committee **NOTED** the information provided.

**10. Internal Audit Reports
Aithisgean In-Sgrùdaidh**

There had been circulated Report No COM/29/16 dated 1 August 2016 by the Director of Community Services providing an overview of the Internal Audit reports:

- Administration of Fuel
- Grass Cutting Contract – Monitoring and contract Payment Arrangements (follow up)

relating to Community Services and previously considered by the Audit and Scrutiny Committee on 15 June 2016. The report provided an update with progress on the related management actions that were agreed at that Committee.

The Committee **NOTED**:-

- i. the findings of the 2015/16 Internal Audit report into the Administration of Fuel and Grass Cutting Contracts; and
- ii. progress with implementing improvements.

**11. Household Recycling Charter and Code of Practice
Cairt Sgudail Taigheadais agus Còd Cleachdaidh**

There had been circulated Report No COM/30/16 dated 4 August 2016 by the Director of Community Services informing Members that the Household Recycling Charter and accompanying Code of Practice set out proposals for Local Authorities in Scotland to adopt and then work towards a standardised and consistent collection system for waste and recycling. In this regard, Members were invited to approve adoption of the Charter and implementation of the Code of Practice and work towards the standards in the Code, provided the appropriate levels of funding were made available by the Scottish Government or its agents.

During discussion, Members made the following comments:-

- information was sought, and received, on the cost of a bin in relation to the cost of employing staff to separate the materials for recycling and whether there were any opportunities to make savings by the public splitting the materials in blue bins into further separate bins;

- blue bin schemes in blocks of flats had been unsuccessful and a solution to encourage recycling in these areas was sought;
- consideration should be given to community composting schemes;
- there would be an opportunity to provide feedback on a suite of policy changes which would be reported to either the November 2016 or first 2017 Committee meeting;
- it was important that tenants, specifically in blocks of flats, had the ability to participate in recycling; and
- assurance was sought that there was a plan in place, that preferable benefited the local economy, to deal with landfill waste following the ban in 2020.

The Committee:-

- i. **APPROVED** the signing of the Household Recycling Charter; and
- ii. **AGREED** to adopt the accompanying Code, subject to approval of the transition plan and securing the required funding to undertake the required changes.

12. Update on Waste Strategy Fios às Ùr mu Ro-innleachd Sgudail

There had been circulated Report No COM/31/16 dated 4 August 2016 by the Director of Community Services outlining the current situation regarding residual waste disposal and proposing the preparation of a final business case to enable Members to decide on the medium term option for residual waste treatment to ensure that the Council met its obligations in terms of the ban on the landfill of biodegradable municipal waste on 1 January 2021.

During discussion, Members made the following comments:-

- there was a need for negative attitudes towards Energy to Waste plants to change;
- the decision to leave the EU could have an influence on European policies and views were sought on whether the Council's position would be affected;
- consideration should be given to potential opportunities with commercial companies and joint working with other local authorities;
- confirmation was sought, and received, that the locations for the three Energy from Waste plants were the same as detailed in the previous Council's Waste Strategy;
- it was requested that the Chief Executive provide a statement as to why the Business Case for Energy from Waste facilities had not been developed further;
- there was a need to lobby the Scottish Government for other options for residual waste treatment, including transferring waste to other parts of the UK, in the event that an Energy to Waste plant was not available within the timescale and
- tribute was paid to Dr C Clark for his support during his time working for the Council.

The Committee:-

- i. **APPROVED** the preparation of a final business case to develop detailed proposals for residual waste treatment for all Highland at a plant(s) located in Highland; and
- ii. **NOTED** that the corporate saving of £2.8M attributable to Energy from Waste from 2018/19 was not achievable and alternative savings would have to be sought.

13. Environmental Health Operational Plan 2016/17 Plana Sgioba Slàinte Àrainneachd 2016/17

There had been circulated Report No COM/32/16 dated 1 August 2016 by the Director of Community Services providing the Environmental Health Operational Plan 2016/17.

During discussion, Members made the following comments:-

- in relation to dog fouling it was queried if Community Councillors could be used to challenge offenders. In response, while it was hoped to expand the team in Environmental Health to cover enforcement initiatives, this had not included community volunteers but could be investigated further;
- dog fouling could not be properly addressed unless adequate resources and staffing were diverted into tackling it. Imposing fines, and publicising that this had been done, would act as a deterrent;
- there was an increase in irresponsible dog ownership; and
- the value of the work done by Environmental Health was commended and it was hoped that it would be protected when further budget savings were being considered.

The Committee **APPROVED** the Environmental Health Operational Plan 2016/17, as detailed in Appendix 1 of the report.

14. Contaminated Land – Inspection and Development Control Talamh Truaillichte – Smachd Sgrùdaidh agus Leasachaidh

There had been circulated Report No COM/33/16 dated 26 July 2016 by the Director of Community Services inviting Members to agree an update to the Contaminated Land Inspection Strategy.

An update having been provided in relation to Kingsteps Quarry, Nairn, the Committee thereafter **AGREED** to amend the Contaminated Land Inspection Strategy to focus on the development control role as an effective means of meeting the Council's obligations as regards contaminated land, as detailed in Appendix 2 of the report.

15. Annual Monitoring Report: Housing Allocations Policy Aithisg Sgrùdaidh Bhliadhnail: Clàr Taigheadais na Gàidhealtachd

There had been circulated Report No COM/34/16 dated 4 August 2016 by the Director of Community Services providing annual monitoring information on the operation of the Highland Housing Register (HHR) allocations policy for 2015/2016 and highlighting key issues in relation to the supply and demand for social rented housing in Highland. The Report also identified areas for further policy review.

During discussion, Members made the following comments:-

- clarification was sought regarding a previous suggestion of allocation points to those who had been on the waiting list for some time. In response, the methodology used in balancing priorities was explained;
- due to housing benefit changes there was now greater demand for single bedroom properties and the Council had purchased a number of such. In some areas, this had led to difficulties where individuals with challenging behaviour had been housed alongside vulnerable/elderly/disabled people causing distress. It was important therefore that the Allocations Team adopted a sensitive approach and gave careful consideration to the background of individuals being allocated such properties to avoid exacerbating the problem;
- an explanation was sought, and received, as to how the mix of HHR Waiting and Transfer List was apportioned;
- the data contained in the table “Applicants by Ethnic Origin” counterbalanced the argument that eastern Europeans were allocated the bulk of Council houses with the vast majority of houses being given to people from Scotland; and
- while welcoming the information contained in the Chart “Housing Supply Demand and Numbers Housed”, further detailed information was sought for Inverness in place of the City as a whole.

The Committee:-

- NOTED** the information contained in the Annual Monitoring Report on housing allocations and that the policy was achieving its objectives in relation to meeting housing needs; and
- AGREED**, in relation to the data provided on Housing Supply Demand and Numbers Housed per area, further analysis be provided for Inverness in place of the City as a whole.

16. **Update on Homeless Initiatives** **Fios às Ùr nan Iomairtean Dìth Dachaigh**

Declarations of Interest

Mr B Murphy declared a financial interest in this item on the grounds of being the provider of homeless accommodation and left the room.

There had been circulated Report No COM/35/16 dated 8 August 2016 by the Director of Community Services providing updates on initiatives which aimed to improve the lives of homeless people in Highland. It provided further details on costs and charges for temporary accommodation as agreed at Committee on 28 April 2016 and presented a policy on promoting positive behaviour in temporary accommodation, for approval.

During discussion, Members made the following comments:-

- allocating housing to those with chaotic lifestyles could have a detrimental impact on vulnerable neighbours. In recognising the need to value long term tenants, it was suggested that housing staff liaise with neighbours to alleviate anxieties but it was pointed out that, for reasons of confidentiality, this was not possible;
- whilst the aspirational approach of using HRA properties for temporary accommodation was commended, this would not suit all. Some

individuals needed hostel-type support where they were supervised as, for various reasons, they were unable to sustain tenancies in the long term. In this regard, it was suggested that consideration should be given to turning a block of flats or a large House of Multiple Occupation (HMO) into concierge-type accommodation, with adequate levels of staffing and supervision, for those with lifestyle challenges;

- many city centre properties would be suitable for supervised HMOs and it was unfair for some to suggest that criminal and anti-social behaviour in that area was committed by people in temporary accommodation;
- using HRA properties would safeguard those who were presenting as homeless for the first time, particularly vulnerable young people and women where shared living accommodation could expose them to alcohol/drug abuse, anti-social behaviour etc. In this regard, a plea was made to avoid concentrating too many scatter flats together as this could result in a HMO style environment being created;
- homelessness was a multi-agency responsibility;
- due to welfare reform changes, it was now unaffordable to use leased city-centre/bed-and-breakfast accommodation. However, using HRA properties instead reduced the mainstream housing stock available;
- housing officers were commended for their work which was often stressful and it was recognised that they needed to be properly supported in their role;
- with the move to have police based at the Town House, there would be a stronger presence on the High Street;
- the Council should work towards a 6-year programme to enable all homeless people to be accommodated in-house, recognising the high level of expenditure this currently incurred. Such an approach would allow flexibility, where problems arose, to move individuals about; and
- housing homeless people from other parts of Highland in Caithness was inappropriate as many often returned to their town of origin. This resulted in extra work for officers when these individuals required rehousing.

The Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the positive progress made on these initiatives;
- ii. **APPROVED** the following approach to temporary accommodation:
 - continue to increase the use of Council-owned properties as temporary homeless accommodation.
 - reduce the use of privately leased properties for temporary accommodation, focussing on leases where rents exceed Local Housing Allowance rates.
 - continue to reduce the use of framework rooms as temporary accommodation; and
- iii. **APPROVED** the approach to promoting positive behaviour in temporary accommodation as detailed in the report.

17. HRA Capital Plan 2017/18 Plana Calpa HRA 2017/18

There had been circulated Report No COM/36/16 dated 3 August 2016 by the Director of Community Services containing details of the overall level of HRA capital resources for 2017/18 based on the 5 year capital plan and recommendations for investment priorities and the distribution of HRA Capital Programme resources to Local Committees.

The Committee:-

- i. **APPROVED** the overall HRA Capital Budget of £26.024m for 2017/18;
- ii. **APPROVED** the investment priorities set out in section 2.2 of the report;
- iii. **APPROVED** the distribution of resources to Local Committee level;
- iv. **AGREED** that discussion be held with Local Members of the specific projects and local priorities with a report on the final details programme for 2017/18 being provided to the Community Services Committee on 3 November 2016; and
- v. **APPROVED** the revised Improvement Standards set out in Appendix 2 of the report.

19. Transport Programme Prògram Còmhdhalach

There had been circulated Report No COM/38/16 dated 18 August 2016 by the Director of Community Services presenting a recommendation for the award of a Community Transport Grant for the two year period 1 April – 31 March 2019.

The Committee **APPROVED** a Community Transport Grant of £13,000 to Partnerships for Wellbeing on behalf of Inverness Voluntary Transport Scheme.

20. Minutes Geàrr-chunntas

The Committee **APPROVED** circulated Minutes of the Harbours Management Board of 8 June 2016.

Arising from the minute, the Chair confirmed that work was progressing in relation to the redevelopment of facilities at Uig Harbour to accommodate the new larger ferry for the Uig-Tarbet-Lochmaddy triangle.

The meeting ended at 3.40 pm.