

The Highland Council Resources Committee

Minutes of Meeting of the Resources Committee held in the Council Chamber, Council Headquarters, Glenurquhart Road, Inverness on Wednesday, 24 August 2016 at 10.30am.

Present:

Mr B Fernie	Mrs D Mackay
Mr A Mackinnon	Mr D Mackay
Dr D Alston	Mr T Maclennan
Miss J Campbell	Mrs I McCallum
Mrs H Carmichael	Mr J McGillivray
Mr A Christie	Mr F Parr
Dr I Cockburn	Mr T Prag
Mrs M Davidson	Ms M Smith
Ms J Douglas	Mr J Stone
Mr R Laird	Mr B Thomson
Mr B Lobban	

Non Members also Present:

Mr A Baxter	Mr A Henderson
Mr D Fallows	Mr D Millar
Mr G Farlow	Mrs M Paterson
Mr R Greene	

Officials in attendance:

Ms M Morris, Depute Chief Executive/Director of Corporate Development
Mr D Yule, Director of Finance
Mr A Gunn, Head of Revenues and Business Support, Finance Service
Mr E Foster, Head of Corporate Finance, Finance Service
Mrs S McKandie, Benefits & Welfare Manager, Finance Service
Ms V Nairn, Head of Digital Transformation, Corporate Development Service
Mr S Walsh, Head of People and Transformation, Corporate Development Service
Mr S Fraser, Head of Corporate Governance, Corporate Development Service
Mr M Bailey, Project Manager, Corporate Development Service
Mr J Shepherd, ICT Operations Manager, Corporate Development Service
Ms J Scotson, Business Change Manager, Corporate Development Service
Mr M MacDonald, HR Manager, Corporate Development Service, Corporate Development Service
Ms G Falconer, Occupational Health, Safety and Wellbeing Manager
Mr D MacKenzie, Trading Standards Manager, Corporate Development Service
Ms R Cleland, Corporate Communications Manager, Corporate Development Service
Miss J MacLennan, Democratic Services Manager, Corporate Development Service
Ms A Macrae, Committee Administrator, Corporate Development Service
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 the Committee.

Mr B Fernie in the Chair

Business

1. **Apology for Absence** **Leisgeulan**

An apology for absence was intimated on behalf of Mr C Fraser.

In accordance with Standing Order 18, the Committee **AGREED** to take items 29-33 first and then item 19.

29. **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 should be excluded from the meeting during discussion of the following items on the grounds that they involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraphs 6 and 9 of Part 1 of Schedule 7A of the Act.

CORPORATE DEVELOPMENT SERVICE **SEIRBHEIS AN LEASACHAIDH CHORPORRA**

30. **ICT Executive Board: Minutes of Meeting** **Bòrd-gnìomha ICT: Geàrr-chunntas Coinneimh**

There had been circulated to Members only Minutes of Meeting of the ICT Executive Board (Members) held on 17 August, 2016 which were **APPROVED**.

31. **Pathfinder North – Transition to Scottish Wide Area Network** **Pathfinder a Tuath – Gluasad gu Lìonra Sgìreil Thar-Alba**

There had been circulated to Members only Report No RES/67/16 dated 15 August 2016 by the Depute Chief Executive/Director of Corporate Development which provided an update on the current status of Pathfinder North, which was the six local authorities shared services partnership comprising Argyll & Bute Council, Comhairle nan Eilean Siar, Highland Council, Moray Council, Orkney Islands Council and Angus Council, and its membership within the Scottish Wide Area Network Partnership.

In this regard, it was confirmed that the previous update had been provided at the meeting on 25 May 2016.

The Committee **NOTED** both the progress with regard to the transition and the risks/management action being taken as detailed in the report.

32. **ICT Reprovision Contract Award** **Duais Cunraidh Ath-sholar ICT**

There had been circulated to Members only Report No RES/68/16 dated 24 August 2016 by the Depute Chief Executive/Director of Corporate Development which provided a Progress Report for the ICT Reprovision Programme and sought approval to enter into a contract with the successful tenderer for the provision of Core ICT Services.

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

DEVELOPMENT AND INFRASTRUCTURE LEASACHADH AGUS BUN-STRUCTAR

33. Land and Property Report Aithisg Fearainn agus Cuid-seilbh

There had been circulated to Members only Report No RES/69/16 dated 13 July 2016 by the Director of Development and Infrastructure in respect of a land and property transaction.

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

2. Declarations of Interest Foillseachaidhean Com-pàirt

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

- Item 14: Mr A Christie (non-financial)
- Item 15: Mr A Christie and Ms J Douglas (both non-financial)
- Item 16: Mr A Christie (non-financial)
- Item 19a: Mr A Christie (non-financial)
- Item 21: Mr A Christie (non-financial)

3. Good News Stories Naidheachdan Matha

It was **NOTED** that there was no new information to report at this time.

4. Recess Powers Cumhachdan Fosaidh

It was **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 Resources Committee.

FINANCE SERVICE SEIRBHEIS AN IONMHAIS

19. Capital Discretionary Fund Maoin Calpa fo Ùghdarras

(a) Criteria for Considering Applications Slatan-tomhais airson Beachdachadh air Iarrtasan

Declaration of Interest – Mr A Christie, as General Manager of Inverness, Badenoch and Strathspey Citizens Advice Bureau declared non-financial interest in this item, 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 RES/55/16 dated 16 August 2016 by the Director of Finance which sought approval to establish a set of criteria by which all applications for financial support from the Capital Discretionary Fund can be considered by the Council.

During discussion, Members raised the following issues:-

- a request was made that consideration be given to the addition of clawback clauses to the general principles set out in Section 2 of the report in respect of future projects where appropriate so that if a building/asset which had benefited from a financial contribution from the Fund was sold on within a specified timescale, then the Council had an opportunity to derive some financial benefit;
- it was clarified that if a grant award was not drawn down within the time limited period of three years then a report would be brought back to the Committee outlining the individual circumstances of the project with Members being invited to consider whether it would be appropriate to grant an extension;
- clarification was sought and provided that in terms of the proposed maximum limit for grant awards it would be for the Committee to determine each application on its individual merits; and
- the fact that the number of applications funding was increasing as communities became more aware of the Fund was welcomed.

The Committee **AGREED** the key principles as outlined in Section 2 of the report and that consideration be given to the addition of a principle relating to clawback clauses in the event that a building/ asset which had benefited from a financial contribution from the Fund was sold on.

**(b) Applications for Financial Support
Iarrtasan airson Cuideachadh Ionmhasail**

There had been circulated Report No RES/56/16 dated 16 August 2016 by the Director of Finance which asked Members to consider a number of applications for financial support from the Capital Discretionary Fund. The report also recommended that if the Committee was minded to support the application for Mallaig and District Swimming Pool that the funding be restricted to £250,000.

During discussion, a number of comments were made in support of the application by the Mallaig and District Swimming Pool project during which it was noted that this was a Council owned building leased to a charitable company and that the requested grant award of £0.275m would help to deliver a project of around £1m which would transform the facility into a 'community hub' for the benefit of the community, local schools and visitors. In addition, the project was also designed to deliver a more energy efficient facility and would remove the current risk of the plant failing which would cause the facility to close. Details were also provided in regard to the significant ongoing activity in terms of fundraising being undertaken in respect of the project.

In regard to the above, reference was made to the importance of the Capital Discretionary Fund not being underspent and that in addition to the criteria for considering grant awards, it was also important for the Committee to consider applications in terms of how helpful they were to

communities. It was suggested that on this basis each of the applications set out in the report should be approved.

Further discussion followed in relation to the maximum grant limit set out in the criteria for considering applications during which the point was made that the application in respect of Mallaig and District Swimming Pool had been submitted before the key principles had been agreed.

The Committee **APPROVED** the following applications conditional on full project funding packages being in place for each application:-

Evanton Community Trust - £18,000
Highland Museum of Childhood - £15,000
Mallaig and District Swimming Pool - £275,000

**(c) Elsie Normington Foundation – The Haven Centre – Application to Capital Discretionary Budget, 2016/17 and review of Option to Purchase Land
Caidreachas Elsie Normington**

Declaration of Interest – Mr A Christie declared a non-financial interest in this item as a Trustee of this application was an acquaintance and left the meeting for the determination of this item.

There had been circulated Joint Report No RES/57/16 dated 12 August 2016 by the Director of Finance and the Director of Care and Learning which provided an update on the Elsie Normington Foundation (ENF) (a Charitable organisation created to provide support for children and young adults with learning disabilities in the Highlands by providing a purpose built centre, along with respite facilities for their parents) and set out the current position of the project, the support provided by the Council to date and invited Members to agree to the Council providing a Letter of Comfort in respect of the potential provision of a grant from the Capital Discretionary Fund toward the building construction costs.

During discussion, Members raised the following issues:-

- the project and the benefits it would deliver were welcomed and it was suggested that a clear commitment be given that the Council would provide funding of £0.250m towards the project subject to all other funding being in place and that the form of words contained in the recommendations set out in the report be strengthened in this regard;
- clarity was required in the event that the project was not delivered after a period of three years in terms of whether a decision would be required on whether to extend that period or whether the alternative proposal for Council housing on the site would proceed; and
- there was a need to be clear about the implications of committing this funding at this stage in terms of the availability of funds for other projects which might come forward in future.

Thereafter, the Committee **AGREED**, subject to funds being available and to Officers being satisfied within 3 years of the date of the letter that the Business Plan referred to within the report had been sufficiently updated to show that the Project to build the Centre would be fully funded in the event that the application was successful:-

- i. to renew the consent to an option agreement being concluded between the Council and the Elsie Normington Foundation no later than 23 October 2016 to permit the Foundation to be able to raise finance to develop the site referred to above for a specialised play and respite centre for disabled children, subject to the condition that the agreement once concluded be valid for a maximum period of three years, otherwise on additional terms and conditions to be agreed by the Director of Development and Infrastructure and the Head of Corporate Governance; and
- ii. to delegate power to the Director of Finance to issue a letter to detail the support given by the Council to date and confirming that the Council agrees in principle to a grant of £0.250m from the Capital Discretionary Fund, subject to all other funding being in place.

FINANCIAL MONITORING SGRÙDADH IONMHASAIL

5. Corporate Revenue Monitoring to 30 June 2016 Aithisg Sgrùdaidh Teachd-a-steach Corporra gu 30 Ògmhios 2016

There had been circulated Report No RES/40/16 dated 12 August 2016 by the Director of Finance which presented the financial position of the revenue budgets of the General Fund and Housing Revenue Account (HRA) for the period from 1 April to 30 June 2016 and the estimated position for the 2016/17 financial year.

It also presented an update on the status of savings removed from the budget in the year.

During discussion, improvement in staff absences was welcomed but it was highlighted that this did not always equate to cash savings and a request was made for further information on the costs being incurred to cover staff absences. In addition, a further explanation was provided in regard to the ranking method applied to the corporate savings targets but concern was expressed that savings which had been ranked red as they had been deemed undeliverable were being replaced with alternatives and the need for Member involvement in this process was stressed.

Thereafter, the Committee **NOTED** the financial position of the General Fund and HRA revenue budgets at 30 June 2016 and to note the estimated year end forecast and the status of budgeted savings in the year and **AGREED** that more detailed information be provided in respect of the costs incurred to cover staff absences.

6. Corporate Capital Monitoring to 30 June 2016 Aithisg Sgrùdaidh a' Chalpa Chorporra gu 30 Ògmhios 2016

There had been circulated Report No RES/41/16 dated 15 August 2016 by the Director of Finance which provided an overview of expenditure on the General Fund and Housing Revenue Account (HRA) capital programmes for the period from 1 April to 30 June 2016 and the estimated position for the 2016/17 financial year.

The report also provided an overview of the status of all major capital projects with a value over £4m.

During discussion, concern was expressed that the Care and Learning Service had not followed the appropriate governance arrangements in respect of decision-making/approval to accelerate spend to mitigate project slippage and as a result the service programme would now be overspent and an explanation for this was sought.

Overall, the Committee welcomed the ambitious capital programme and felt that on the whole programme slippage and over programming were balancing out but concerns were raised, and assurances sought, that the Council had the capacity and resources to deliver the plan.

Thereafter, the Committee **NOTED** the financial position of the General Fund and HRA Capital Programmes and the status of the Council's Major Capital Projects as at 30 June 2016 and **AGREED** that an explanation be circulated to the Committee as to why the Care and Learning Service did not follow the appropriate governance arrangements that were in place in respect of decision-making/approval to accelerate spend to mitigate project slippage.

**7. Finance Service Final Outturn and Revenue Monitoring to 30 June 2016
Toradh Deireannach Seirbheis an Ionmhais 2015/16 agus Aithisg Sgrùdaidh Teachd-a-steach gu 30 Ògmhios 2016**

There had been circulated Report No RES/42/16 dated 12 August 2016 by the Director of Finance which commented on the final outturn for the Revenue Budget for the year to 31 March 2016 and the Revenue Monitoring position for the period to 30 June 2016.

The Committee **NOTED** the Finance Budget outturn position for 2015/16 and agree the monitoring report to the end of June 2016.

**8. Corporate Development Service Final Outturn 2015/16 and Revenue Monitoring to 30 June 2016
Toradh Deireannach Seirbheis an Leasachaidh Chorpóra 2015/16 agus Sgrùdadh Teachd-a-steach gu 30 Ògmhios 2016**

There had been circulated Report No RES/43/16 dated 16 August 2016 by the Depute Chief Executive/Director of Corporate Development which commented on the final out-turn position for the Corporate Development Service revenue budget for 2015/16 and provided information on the revenue monitoring position for the Service for the period 1 April 2016 to 30 June 2016.

The Committee **NOTED** the final outturn for the Corporate Development Service revenue budget for 2015/16 and the revenue monitoring report for the period 1 April 2016 to 30 June 2016.

**9. Corporate Development Service Final Outturn 2015/16 and Capital Budget Monitoring to 30 June 2016
Toradh Deireannach Seirbheis an Leasachaidh Chorpóra 2015/16 agus Sgrùdadh Buidseat Calpa gu 30 Ògmhios 2016**

There had been circulated Report No RES/44/16 dated 16 August 2016 by the Depute Chief Executive/Director of Corporate Development which set out the

final out-turn position for the Corporate Development Service's capital budget for the period 1 April 2015 to 31 March 2016 and the position for the Corporate Development Service's 2016/17 capital budget for the period to 30 June 2016.

The Committee **NOTED** the final out-turn position for the Corporate Development Service's capital budget for the period 1 April 2015 to 31 March 2016 and the capital monitoring position for the period 1 April 2016 to 30 June 2016.

10. Chief Executive's Office and Members Final Outturn 2015/16 and Revenue Expenditure Monitoring to 30 June 2016
Toradh Deireannach Oifis an Àrd-Oifigeir agus nam Ball 2015/16 agus Sgrùdadh Caiteachas Teachd-a-steach gu 30 Ògmhios 2016

There had been circulated Report No RES/45/16 dated 15 August 2016 by the Chief Executive which commented on the final out-turn position for the Chief Executive's Office revenue budget for 2015/16 and provides information on the revenue monitoring position for the Chief Executive's Office for the period 1 April 2016 to 30 June 2016.

The Committee **NOTED** the final outturn for the Chief Executive's Office revenue budget for 2015/16 and the revenue monitoring report for the period 1 April 2013 to 30 June 2016.

11. Chief Executive's Office Capital Budget Final Outturn 2015/16 and Budget Monitoring to 30 June 2016
Toradh Deireannach Oifis an Àrd-Oifigeir agus nam Ball 2015/16 agus Sgrùdadh Calpa gu 30 Ògmhios 2016

There had been circulated Report No RES/46/16 dated 15 August 2016 by the Chief Executive which set out the final out-turn position for the Chief Executive's Office capital budget for the period 1 April 2015 to 31 March 2016 and the position for the Chief Executive's Office 2016-17 capital budget for the period to 30 June 2016.

The Committee **NOTED** the final out-turn position for the Chief Executive's Office capital budget for the period 1 April 2015 to 31 March 2016 and the capital monitoring position for the period 1 April 2016 to 30 June 2016.

FINANCE SERVICE
SEIRBHEIS AN IONMHAIS

12. Procurement – Shared Services Proposal with Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire Councils
Solarachadh – Moladh airson Seirbheisean Co-roinnte le Comhairlean Baile Obar Dheathain agus Siorrachd Obar Dheathain

There had been circulated Report No RES/47/16 dated 16 August 2016 by the Director of Finance which allowed Members to consider the proposal for a shared Commercial and Procurement Service and to agree to this in principle, pending the agreement of the other two Councils.

During discussion, the Chair confirmed that this was a great opportunity for the Council to make significant financial savings over coming years. He also indicated that it was his view that the Council would continue as a member of

Scotland Excel which would be beneficial and that there was a need to fully utilise the services they provided.

Although the proposal was welcomed and the potential benefits recognised, assurances were sought and provided that this would not be a barrier for small local businesses which were often vital to rural communities.

Thereafter, the Committee **AGREED**:-

- i. to support the creation of a Shared Commercial and Procurement Service;
- ii. to fund investment of £0.49m per annum;
- iii. to transfer staff, subject to negotiation, to Aberdeen City Council; and
- iv. that a savings target of £1.36m be built into future budget projections (net of cost of investment).

13. Treasury Management Rianachd Ionmhais

(a) Summary of Transactions Geàrr-chunntas Ghnothaichean

There had been circulated Report No RES/48/16 dated 12 August 2016 by the Director of Finance which provided details on the Treasury Management transactions undertaken within the period which was submitted to the Committee in compliance with CIPFA's Code of Practice on Treasury Management and the Council's approved Financial Regulations.

The Committee **NOTED** the Treasury Management Summary of Transactions reports.

(b) Annual Treasury Management Report 2015/16 Aithisg Stiùiridh Bhliadhna an Ionmhais 2015/16

There had been circulated Report No RES/49/16 dated 12 August 2016 by the Director of Finance which presented the Annual Treasury Management Report for 2015/16 and highlighted the Council's treasury management activities undertaken, provided a commentary on the year, and compared activity to the expected activities contained in the annual Treasury Strategy Statement and Investment Statement which had been approved by the Council on 12 March 2015.

During discussion, it was confirmed that further updates would be provided for Members if necessary and specifically in the event of any bank charges being implemented in conjunction with future decreases in interest rates.

- * Thereafter, the Committee otherwise **AGREED** the Annual Treasury Report for 2015/16 which would be submitted to the Council for approval.

14. Finance Service Quarterly Performance Report Aithisg Dèanadais Ràitheil Seirbheis an Ionmhais

Declaration of Interest – Mr A Christie, as General Manager of Inverness, Badenoch and Strathspey Citizens Advice Bureau, declared a non-financial interest in this item 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 RES/50/16 dated 11 August 2016 by the Director of Finance which provided a summary of key and statutory performance indicators for the Finance Service as at 30 June 2016.

The Committee **NOTED** the statutory and key performance indicators as detailed in the report.

The meeting adjourned for lunch at 1.00pm and resumed at 1.40pm.

15. Welfare Reform Update Fios às Ùr mu Ath-leasachadh Shochairan

Declaration of Interest – Mr A Christie, as General Manager of Inverness, Badenoch and Strathspey Citizens Advice Bureau and Ms J Douglas, as a volunteer and member of the Steering Group for Badenoch and Strathspey Foodbank, declared non-financial interests in this item 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 had been circulated Joint Report No RES/51/16 dated 11 August 2016 by the Director of Finance and the Director of Community Services which provided comprehensive information on the current status of Universal Credit and other welfare initiatives. It also made available financial monitoring information, covering the Council's considerable involvement in this area of work.

During discussion, Members made the following comments:-

- more lobbying in relation to claimants being financially worse off through the loss of additional premiums or transitional protection which was not available in the Universal Credit Full Service needed to be undertaken;
- the Service was commended for using the simple electronic payment system PayPoint and single online application form which reduced the need for customers to re-apply for school clothing grants and in this regard support was expressed to increase the grant to £90 per application;
- thanks should be conveyed to the Service Point and Library staff for supporting customers to get online;
- the Care and Learning Service should give consideration to unisex school uniforms so that second-hand clothing could be used more widely;
- the Scottish Government motion setting out a range of proposed changes to social security using devolved powers would be a step towards addressing the increasing income gap in Scotland. However, the Scottish Government only had 15% control of social security spending and therefore the real power still remained with the UK Government;
- an example of a restaurant in Wigan supported by businesses to address food poverty where people paid as much or as little as they could was

suggested as a future project for which the Welfare Budget could provide funding;

- assurance was sought and received that there were sufficient resources to meet the needs of people who needed assistance to get online and use the online application form;
- the Welfare Support Team case study at Appendix 4 to the report highlighted the valued expertise of the Welfare Support advisers in ensuring people received the benefits to which they were entitled;
- attendance was encouraged at a Seminar on poverty, inequalities and debt management on 23 September;
- the Council was already providing the support that was asked for by the Food Stuff Group which provided tremendous support to the most vulnerable people in Inverness and if support was required it would be to ensure it was a one stop shop for vulnerable people and for the project to be replicated in other locations; and
- it was of major concern that people were becoming dependent on benefits instead of wages and this needed to be addressed with Companies in the low wage category.

The Committee **NOTED** the:-

- i. significant increase in the spend of school clothing grants from £199k in 2014/15 to £297k in 2015/16;
- ii. the successful uptake of electronic payment, via PayPoint and the availability of an online form in respect of school clothing grants;
- iii. findings of the research undertaken about the impact of low and falling incomes on households' abilities to manage their household bills;
- iv. Universal Credit (UC) Full Service rollout in Inverness Job Centre on 29 June 2016;
- v. ongoing impact that Universal Credit is having on rent arrears and the positive reduction in the average rent arrear per UC household;
- vi. majority of devolved social security powers will transfer on 5 September 2016; discretionary housing payments will transfer on 1 April 2017;
- vii. Council's submission to the Scottish Governments Consultation on social security legislation will be approved by the Welfare Reform Working Group and a copy of the response included in the November Resources Committee paper;
- viii. gross weekly and hourly pays in Highland are below the Scottish and Great Britain averages;
- ix. innovative Apply Once online application form for council entitlements.

The Committee **AGREED** to increase the school clothing grant from £81 to £90 per application from 2016/17 which would increase the total spend by £30k to £331k and would mean that the Welfare Budget was predicted to come in on budget.

16. Advice and Information Services: End of Year Monitoring Seirbheisean Comhairle agus Fiosrachaidh: Sgrùdadh Deireadh Bliadhna

Declaration of Interest – Mr A Christie, as General Manager of Inverness, Badenoch and Strathspey Citizens Advice Bureau, declared a non-financial interest in this item 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 RES/52/16 dated 11 August 2016 by the Director of Finance which provided Members with the end of year monitoring of council-funded advice and information services in Highland for 2015/16.

During a summary of the report, the Benefits and Welfare Manager provided revised figures which were that the total contacts with Citizens Advice Bureaux's in 2014/15 was 51,460, an increase of 2.3%, and the total contacts with both the Highland Council and Citizens Advice Bureaux in 2014/15 was 86,246, an increase of 0.3%.

During discussion, Members made the following comments:-

- there was a need for Highland Council and Citizens Advice Bureaux to review how debt advice was given whilst seeking to continue successful projects of proactively approaching vulnerable people and offering support; and
- it was a great success as a result of the Council's funding and expertise within one Highland bureau that the Child Action Poverty Group (CPAG) had updated the advice in their leaflet "Financial Help in the Early Years" and on their website.

The Committee **NOTED**:-

- i. the level of support provided to customers across Highland in 2015/16 and the pressures associated with delivering the intensive resource required to resolve complex cases;
- ii. the positive outcomes being achieved when supporting Highland residents to mitigate the effects of poverty;
- iii. the effective and often life-changing outcomes for residents as a result of the projects funded via the Welfare Fund; and
- iv. the continuation of external funding by the Scottish Legal Aid Board beyond the original project end date.

and **AGREED** to support:-

- i. the expression of Interest that had been submitted to the UK Money Advice Service's "What Works Fund?"; and
- ii. the opportunities which were being sought to secure additional external funding and for partnership working to enable enhanced services to be targeted in a manner that aligned with the preventative, anti-poverty and localism agenda.

17. Finance Service Plan 2016/17 Plana Seirbheis an Ionmhais 2016/17

There had been circulated Report No RES/53/16 dated 16 August 2016 by the Director of Finance which introduced the Finance Service Plan, updated for 2016/17 which identified the enabling actions and key performance results which will deliver 'Highland First', the Programme of the Highland Council published 13th August 2015. It also outlined the statutory and core functions of the Service including the Single Outcome Agreement.

During discussion, Members sought and received confirmation that a report on the budget strategy would be presented to a future meeting of the Council to address the corporate risk that if a short and medium term budget strategy was

not reviewed and updated then the Council would not be able to set a balanced budget by February 2017.

The Committee **APPROVED** the Finance Service Plan updated for 2016-17.

**18. Internal Audit Report – Statutory Performance Indicators 2014/15
In-Sgrùdadh air Comharran Coileanaidh Reachdail 2014/15**

There had been circulated Report No RES/54/16 dated 10 August 2016 by the Director of Finance which updated the Committee on the outcome of the Internal Audit Report on Verification of Statutory Performance Indicators 2014-15 which was reported to Audit and Scrutiny Committee on 16 June 2016.

The Committee **NOTED** the findings of the Internal Audit report presented to the Audit and Scrutiny Committee on 16 June 2016 and the actions being taken to implement its findings.

**CORPORATE DEVELOPMENT SERVICE
SEIRBHEIS AN LEASACHAIDH CHORPORRA**

**20. Corporate Development Service Plan 2016/17
Plana Gnothachais Seirbheis an Leasachaidh Chorporra 2016/17**

There had been circulated Report No RES/58/16 dated 15 August 2016 by the Depute Chief Executive/Director of Corporate Development which outlined how the Service would lead and support commitments which would deliver 'Highland First', the Programme of the Highland Council, and service priorities which supported the Council in the delivery of change and transformation and progressing Localism.

The Committee **APPROVED** the proposed Service Plan for 2016/17 as circulated.

**21. Trading Standards 2016/17 Plan
Plana Obrachaidh Inbhean Malairt 2016/17**

Declaration of Interest – Mr A Christie, as General Manager of Inverness, Badenoch and Strathspey Citizens Advice Bureau, declared a non-financial interest in this item 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 RES/59/16 dated 10 August 2016 by the Depute Chief Executive/Director of Corporate Development which set out the factors which had been taken into account in setting the priorities for Trading Standards in the year ahead and highlighted the Trading Standards Plan for 2016/17.

During discussion, assurance was sought, and received, that following Voluntary Redundancy departures the Trading Standards team still had the necessary resources to deliver the considerable plan, specifically the skills to continue work relating to third party websites in the tourism industry.

Thereafter, the Committee **NOTED** the changes to the Trading Standards team as detailed in the report and the contents of the Trading Standards Plan for 2016/17 as circulated.

22. Transformational Savings Programme Prògram Shàbhalaidhean Cruth-atharrach

(a) Programme Status Inbhe Prògraim

There had been circulated Report No RES/60/16 dated 15 August 2016 by the Depute Chief Executive/Director of Corporate Development which provided an update on the current status of the Transformational Savings Programme (TSP) with an overview of business improvement work which was changing how the Council operated, along with a summary of the TSP financial position.

During discussion, clarification was sought on the implications of removing the Waste Disposal project from the Programme on the basis that it was not deliverable by the end of 2018/19. In this regard, it was confirmed that this project remained a key priority for the Council and would continue to be monitored and reported upon at the Community Services Committee, specifically in terms of a revised future budgetary strategy.

Thereafter, the Committee **NOTED** progress with delivery of the Programme and the actions being taken to ensure that savings were delivered, that the Waste Disposal project (total saving of £2.8m) was not deliverable by the end of 2018/19 and would be removed from the Programme (but still reported upon through the Community Services Committee) and that the following Shared Services projects (total savings value of £180k) were not deliverable and would also be removed from the Programme – Learning & Development, Health & Safety, Finance Computer Audit, Trading Standards, Legal & Democratic Services and Building Standards.

(b) Digital First Programme Prògram Digital First

There had been circulated Report No RES/61/16 dated 24 August 2016 by the Depute Chief Executive/Director of Corporate Development which provided an update on the progress of the Digital First Programme and the benefits realised to date. In this regard, it was confirmed that the aim of the Programme was for 40% of transactions with customers to be carried out online by April 2017, including payments, reports and applications carried out through the online forms available on the Highland Council website.

During discussion, Members welcomed the report and the progress being made as detailed.

In this regard assurances were sought and received that the Programme was on track to have 40% of transactions carried out online by April 2017 and the ability to use phone cameras to automatically upload photographs of evidence to support online application forms was welcomed.

Information was also sought and received on common issues received from customer feedback and it was suggested that consideration should be given to developing an app which would improve communication by allowing the Council to send and receive information from customers, perhaps through examining expertise from schools who had won prizes for developing apps. It was also suggested that an automatic reply should be sent to Facebook users so that they could be confident that queries/messages had been received by the Council.

Thereafter, the Committee otherwise **NOTED** the progress which had been made and the benefits delivered to date by the Digital First project as detailed in the report.

23. ICT Projects Update **Cunntas as Ùr mu Phròiseactan ICT**

There had been circulated Report No RES/62/16 dated 5 August 2016 by the Depute Chief Executive/Director of Corporate Development which provided an update on the status of current ICT projects as required by the Council's Project Management Governance Policy.

The Committee **NOTED** the terms of the report as circulated, including the projects in Paragraph 3 with Red and Amber status, that Curriculum Guest Access was now being progressed through the Network Programme and could be removed from the report, the content of the table in Appendix 1 and that the re-baselined Members' ICT Service project had been updated from Red to Green status in Paragraph 4 of the report.

24. Unified Communications Project **Pròiseact Chonaltraidhean Aonaichte**

There had been circulated Report No RES/63/16 dated 3 August 2016 by the Depute Chief Executive/Director of Corporate Development which provided an update on the Unified Communications Project progress since the last report in November 2015.

The report also provided an update on the video conferencing element of the project, with particular reference to the delivery of new video conferencing solutions to Area Offices.

The Committee **NOTED** the update on the project, the change of approach for the Unified Communications work stream as reported in Section 2.2, the video conferencing work stream as reported in Section 2.3 and the current budget position as reported in Section 3 of the report.

25. Attendance Management **Rianachd Làthaireachd**

There had been circulated Report No RES/64/16 dated 24 August 2016 by the Depute Chief Executive/Director of Corporate Development which set out the actions being taken to improve attendance at work, support employees and reduce the cost of absence.

The Committee **NOTED** the actions being taken to improve attendance at work, support employees and reduce the cost of absence and the progress on delivering the action plan arising from the Member Scrutiny Working Group.

**26. Corporate Development Quarterly Statutory Performance Indicator, Quarterly and Annual Performance Report
Comharran Coileanaidh Reachdail Ràitheil an Leasachaidh Chorporra
Aithisg Bhliadhna Slàinte, Sàbhailteachd agus Sunnd Obrach**

There had been circulated Report No RES/65/16 dated 8 August 2016 by the Depute Chief Executive/Director of Corporate Development which provided quarterly Statutory Performance Indicators for Quarter 4 of 2015/16 and annual Statutory Performance Indicators for 2015/16.

The Committee **NOTED** the progress in relation to the Statutory Performance Indicators as detailed in the report.

**27. Occupational Health, Safety and Wellbeing Annual Report and Review of Corporate Occupational Health, Safety and Wellbeing Policy
Ùraich Poileasaidh Corporra Slàinte, Sàbhailteachd is Sunnd Obrach**

There had been circulated Report No RES/66/16 dated 12 August 2016 by the Depute Chief Executive/Director of Corporate Development which presented the Council's Occupational Health, Safety and Wellbeing performance, achievements and progress in 2015/16 and the plan for 2016/2017, including new proposals for health and safety performance indicators.

The revised Corporate Health, Safety and Wellbeing Policy had also been presented for approval.

The Committee **APPROVED** the Annual Report, Performance Indicators and revised Policy as circulated.

**MINUTES OF MEETINGS
GEÀRR-CHUNNTAS CHOINNEAMHAN**

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

The Committee **APPROVED** the following Minutes of Meetings:-

- i. Appeals Committee held on 23 May and 24 June 2016;
- ii. Head of Service Recruitment Panel held on 27 May and 31 May 2016;
- iii. Central Safety Committee held on 12 August 2016;
- iv. Employment Release Sub-Committee held on 14 June, 24 June and 9 August 2016;
- v. Staff Partnership Forum – Elected Members/Staff Side Group held on 1 June 2016; and
- vi. Non Domestic Rates Appeals Committee held on 30 June 2016.

The meeting ended at 3.20pm.