

Minutes of Meetings

To be submitted to the Council

on

10 May 2018

INDEX

PAGE

The Highland Council (Special Meeting)	7 March	2018	1-9
The Highland Council	8 March	2018	10-26
Nairnshire Committee	14 March	2018	27-31
*Care, Learning & Housing Committee	15 March	2018	32-42
Audit & Scrutiny Committee	28 March	2018	43-47
*Lochaber Area Committee	11 April	2018	48-58
Ross & Cromarty Committee	2 May	2018	To follow

**The Highland Council
No. 8 2017/2018**

Minutes of Special Meeting of the Highland Council held in the Council Chamber, Council Headquarters, Glenurquhart Road, Inverness on Wednesday, 7 March 2018 at 1.00pm.

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

Present:

Mr G Adam	Mr R MacDonald
Mr B Allan	Mrs D MacKay
Mr R Balfour	Mr D Mackay
Mrs J Barclay	Mr W MacKay (V/C)
Mr A Baxter	Mr G MacKenzie
Mr B Boyd	Mrs I MacKenzie
Mr R Bremner (V/C)	Mr S Mackie (T/C)
Mr I Brown	Mr A Mackinnon)
Mr J Bruce	Mrs A MacLean
Mrs C Caddick	Mr C MacLeod
Mrs I Campbell	Mr D MacLeod
Miss J Campbell	Mr D Macpherson
Mrs G Campbell-Sinclair	Mr R MacWilliam
Mrs H Carmichael	Mrs B McAllister
Mr A Christie	Mr J McGillivray (V/C)
Dr I Cockburn	Mr N McLean (V/C)
Mrs M Cockburn	Mr H Morrison (V/C)
Mr G Cruickshank	Ms L Munro
Ms K Currie	Mrs P Munro
Mrs M Davidson	Mrs M Paterson
Mr J Finlayson	Mr M Reiss
Mr M Finlayson	Mr A Rhind
Mr R Gale	Mrs F Robertson
Mr J Gordon	Mrs T Robertson
Mr K Gowans	Mr K Rosie
Mr A Graham	Mr G Ross
Mr J Gray	Mr P Saggars
Mr T Heggie	Mr A Sinclair
Mr A Henderson	Ms N Sinclair (V/C)
Mr A Jarvie	Mr C Smith
Ms E Knox	Mrs M Smith
Mr R Laird	Ms K Stephen
Mr B Lobban	Mr B Thompson (V/C)
Mr D Louden	Mrs C Wilson
Mrs L MacDonald	

In Attendance:

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

Mr B Lobban in the Chair

Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of Mr C Fraser, Mr L Fraser, Ms P Hadley and Mr I Ramon.

2. Declarations of Interest Foillseachaidhean Com-pàirt

The Council **NOTED** the declarations of interest as set out in Appendix 1 to these Minutes.

3. Capital Programme Program Calpa

There had been circulated Joint Report No. HC/2/18 dated 26 February 2018 by the Depute Chief Executive/Director of Corporate Resources and Director of Development & Infrastructure.

During a presentation of the report by the Depute Chief Executive/Director of Corporate Resources, thanks were conveyed to both Officers and Members for the work which had been undertaken over recent months in often very difficult circumstances.

In this regard, and in terms of the background to the Programme from 2015/16 to 2024/25, reference was made to previous agreement by the Council (as part of the revenue budget process) that there should be no increase in loan charges as this would make the Programme unaffordable and breach one of the key criteria of the Prudential Code. Also, to do otherwise would have placed significant pressure on future years' budgets in the current financial climate and required an even greater level of service savings which could have placed the Council in financial jeopardy.

As such, the proposed new Capital Programme was predicated on an annual affordability level of repayment and interest costs of £56.7m which equated to the current budget available for loans charges. In this regard, specific information was provided within Appendix 4 to the report on the estimated annual principal repayments and outstanding balances, along with the anticipated repayment profile of all outstanding principal profiled over the next 65 years.

It was also clarified that, in order to keep the total loans charges cost within the existing budget, it would be necessary to continue reducing the interest element of the loans charges and specific information in this regard had been contained in Appendix 5 to the report.

In conclusion, a summary of the risks and assumptions which underpinned the Capital Programme was provided, along with the associated implications.

Thereafter, and with specific reference to the condition of the Council's Assets, the Director of Development of Infrastructure and Director of Community Services provided detailed and specific information in regard to the school estate and roads network respectively.

At this point, the Budget Leader confirmed that he was pleased to present the Capital Programme which represented a multi-year approach (with maximum flexibility) and was both affordable and represented the best use of resources.

In light of the considerable challenges which currently faced the Council, not least in relation to schools and roads across the area, it was planned that the Programme

would be the subject of constant review and scrutiny and this would be monitored by an Administration Team.

In conveying thanks to the Depute Chief Executive/Director of Corporate Resources and his team for the considerable level of work which had been undertaken, the Budget Leader also confirmed that he would be moving the recommendations within the report (seconded by Mr J Gray) at the end of the debate.

During discussion, Members raised the following issues:-

- the report made reference to the disposal of assets over the following five year period (and associated capital receipts) and in this regard there was a need for further detail on current Asset Registers and specifically any compilation work which had been undertaken to date in terms of what the Council might expect to dispose of and receive. In response, it was confirmed that a comprehensive Asset Register was in place and was currently being reviewed with a view to targeting those assets which could generate most revenue for the Council;
- in relation to the Care and Learning programme which assumed a successful £50m bid for the next tranche of the Scottish Government Schools for the Future fund, further detail was required on the composition of any bid and what process was to be used in the ranking of schools. In response, it was confirmed that there was ongoing dialogue on this issue but no specific decisions had been taken on future projects. However, it was highlighted that the Council had to be in a position to act quickly in response to any future announcements from the Scottish Government in this respect;
- there was a need for assurances to be given in terms of the assumed inflation rate of 3% which had been applied to the Programme as it was feared that any variation in this rate might impact negatively on the cost of projects;
- in previous years there had been a presumption that where substantial assets were disposed of in a particular Ward, the Members from that Ward would have the opportunity to bid for funding from the associated capital receipt for their area and it was hoped that this arrangement would be continued in future;
- it was concerning that there was no mention of play parks in the report;
- the report was disappointing in terms of the number of key local projects which had already undergone an extensive period of consultation but had now been included on a generic line within the Programme, particularly Schools (with specific reference also being made to the current overall ratings for the condition and suitability of Highland Schools within the Scotland-wide position from the most recently published Scottish Government data);
- there was also concern about the condition of many key roads in the area and their revised place within the Programme;
- there was a need to review the current position in relation to the Chromebook programme and it was suggested that consultation should be undertaken with parents and pupils in this respect;
- there was real concern about the uncertainty surrounding the level of bid proposed/assumed in regard to the Schools for the Future fund and further clarification was needed on this as a matter of priority;
- it was hoped that the proposed establishment of a Capital Budget Board would be cross-party;
- there was considerable concern and disappointment in Ross-shire regarding the Schools which were now included on a generic line within the Programme and it had to be stated that the communities affected now felt very let down and betrayed;

- whilst accepting the need for the capital budget to be set at the stated figure, there was a need to give consideration to the loan financing charges becoming a smaller proportion of the revenue budget, not least to avoid leaving future generations with an unsustainable level of debt;
- standardisation of school building in future was welcomed as the way forward and it was suggested that a standard pro-forma in each case would be sufficient and would lead to lower project costs;
- there was a need to highlight the situation in Highland in relation to the number and location of schools in order to secure appropriate funding from the Scottish Government in this regard;
- delays in road repairs could lead to increased costs and again efforts to secure additional funding in future had to be supported;
- thanks should be conveyed to the Budget Team for the report which had been presented from within limited resources and under very difficult circumstances;
- capital expenditure needed to focus on vibrant communities, including opportunities for young people, support for the elderly and vulnerable and the provision of safe roads and bridges across the area, and as such the Council had to ensure that every pound spent counted towards this aim;
- there were real problems in regard to lack of resources and it was vital that the Council had a unified voice in terms of lobbying the Scottish Government for additional funding for the Highland area;
- it had to be highlighted that there was deep disappointment within communities across the Highlands in regard to specific projects which had been included within the Capital Plan (and had been the subject of extensive consultation) but were now contained within a generic line;
- whilst the Council had a collective responsibility to set the Capital budget, Members also had individual responsibilities for their respective Wards and there was a need to ensure that this situation (where projects had been moved from the Plan into generic lines) was not repeated in future;
- a review of the ongoing maintenance of schools and the promotion of funding bids had to be a priority and had to be started immediately;
- consideration should be given to empowering communities to repair their own local roads where this was feasible;
- further clarity was required in terms of the recommendation within the report that any capital projects which delivered net revenue savings could be approved by the relevant Strategic Committee without the need to review the wider Capital Plan;
- further detail on the timescales for bids/business cases in relation to the Scottish Futures Trust was also required;
- it was regrettable that work was being delayed in relation to flooding schemes and it was hoped that this could be reviewed and brought forward if possible if there was any future slippage within the Programme;
- the delivery of suitable schools had to be a priority for the Council, along with a review of the whole structure around developer contributions across the Highlands;
- a specific request should be made to the Scottish Government for additional funding in relation to the overspend on roads maintenance/repairs following the recent extreme weather in the area;
- there had to be a focus in future on raising funds/maximising income generation wherever possible in order to help with budgets;
- it was clear that the current budgetary position was not sustainable and in this respect it was important that objective reasons were presented in relation to the lobbying of the Scottish Government for additional funding;

- there was a need for clarification on the mobile library service which had been removed from some rural communities without prior notice or consultation;
- there had been reference within the report to the expected £50m from the Schools for the Future fund but there was a need for detail on what would happen if this was not in fact received;
- the accuracy of the ragging system in relation to schools had been queried as it was felt that some schools on the list were in fact in better condition than had been stated. However, it was imperative that urgent action was taken on those schools which were most in need, including St Clements School;
- there was currently a very serious situation across the Highland area in regard to potholes in roads and this needed to be addressed as a matter of urgency where possible;
- consideration should be given to making a request to the Scottish Government for the Council to take responsibility for some trunk roads in future as it was felt that this could be a better arrangement than at present in some cases;
- it should be investigated as to whether the Council was receiving adequate compensation for HGV traffic in some parts of the Highlands;
- it had been suggested by some constituents in different parts of the Highlands that the Scottish Government should consider means testing bus travel, winter allowance payments, prescriptions, etc in future;
- it would be important to approach future discussions with the Scottish Government with a unified voice and to make the right arguments to the right people. In this regard, there would be a need to also include CoSLA and other Local Authorities and to highlight the issue of sparsity in particular;
- it was considered that Appendix 1 represented the most important part of the report in that it provided justification for every line within the Capital Programme and this was an improvement on what had happened in previous years; and
- the spirit of collaboration from all political groups across the Council during the discussion on the Capital Programme was welcomed.

At this point in the meeting, a short adjournment was agreed in order to allow specific amendments from groups to be considered and discussed.

Following the adjournment, the following additions to the recommendations within the report were moved/seconded as detailed and accepted –

- that the Council should commit to a major lobbying campaign to bring in additional money for schools and roads and call on all MPs and MSPs to publicly commit to supporting the Council's case for investing in the Highlands (moved by Mr A Christie and seconded by the Leader of the Council) – with the proviso that it would be unreasonable to expect 2 of the Highland MSPs to publicly commit to anything which was a Cabinet responsibility;
- that the Council should prepare a strong, robust and ambitious bid to the Scottish Government for the next round of Scotland's schools for the future which recognised the unique challenges that the Highlands had within Scotland (moved by Mr A Christie and seconded by the Leader of the Council);
- that urgent cross-party discussions should be undertaken to determine whether alternative methods of project delivery could enable more of the school projects to be delivered rather than using traditional construction methods with the findings being brought back to the full Council (moved by Ms M Smith and seconded by Mr R Laird);

- that, in the interests of increased transparency of budget allocation and for the purposes of enhanced localism, a supplementary report should be prepared at or around the start of the new financial year to show explicitly the total capital funding proposed for projects taking place in the district served by each Area Committee, with a follow-up end of year summary detailing explicitly the actual spend in each Area, and that this process should be continued annually over the 5 year term of the new Capital Budget to show also the cumulative year-on-year actual spend incurred in each Area (moved by Mr J McGillivray and seconded by the Convener); and
- that, in recognising the significant damage to roads caused by the current adverse winter and particularly the strain that the cost of these repairs placed on the Council budget, the Administration should agree to work with all groups throughout the 2018/19 financial year to identify ongoing savings through better cost management and realisation of projects underspends in order to fund these vital road repairs (moved by Mr A Jarvie and seconded by Mr G Cruickshank).

The following addition to the first recommendation within the report was moved by Mr J McGillivray but failed to find a seconder – ‘with the qualification that, in view of the historic underfunding of Sutherland and the lack of any mention of future capital investment of any reasonable significance specifically for Sutherland over the term of the next 5 year Capital Programme, and for the period 2018-2023, the Sutherland County Committee, for the purpose of addressing neglected capital projects, be permitted to bid for such funds as arose from the re-specification of projects and from any cost efficiencies resulting from the application of new design and construction methodologies.

Thereafter, Mr A MacKinnon, seconded by Mr J Gray, **MOVED** the recommendations within the report – together with the additions which had been agreed as detailed.

Mr K Gowans, seconded by Dr I Cockburn, moved as an **AMENDMENT** that the Council should agree to conduct a review of the funding requirement for Mobile Libraries to address the immediate statutory requirement to deliver adequate library provision which ensured that the Council was compliant with all Government legislation throughout Highland.

On a vote being taken, the **MOTION** received 47 votes and the **AMENDMENT** received 21 votes, with no abstentions, and the **MOTION** was therefore **CARRIED**, the votes having been cast as follows:-

For the Motion:

Mr A MacKinnon, Mr J Gray, Mr R MacDonald, Mr D Macpherson, Mr R Balfour, Mrs M Paterson, Miss J Campbell, Mr G Ross, Mrs C Wilson, Mrs B McAllister, Mrs D MacKay, Mr G Adam, Mr A Jarvie, Mr G Cruickshank, Mr J Gordon, Mr H Morrison, Mr J Finlayson, Mr T Heggie, Mr M Finlayson, Ms L Munro, Mr A Graham, Mr R Gale, Ms K Stephen, Mr A Sinclair, Mr D MacLeod, Mr J Bruce, Mr D MacKay, Mr M Reiss, Mrs F Robertson, Mrs I Campbell, Mrs J Barclay, Mrs C Caddick, Mrs A MacLean, Mrs T Robertson, Mr C Smith, Mr P Saggars, Mrs I MacKenzie, Mr B Lobban, Mr A Henderson, Mrs H Carmichael, Mrs M Davidson, Mr A Baxter, Mr A Christie, Ms N Sinclair, Mr W MacKay, Mr B Thompson and Mr S Mackie.

For the Amendment:

Mr K Gowans, Dr I Cockburn, Ms P Munro, Mr K Rosie, Mr C MacLeod, Mr I Brown, Mr R MacWilliam, Ms K Currie, Ms E Knox, Mrs G Campbell-Sinclair, Mr B Allan, Mr D Loudon, Mrs M Cockburn, Mrs L MacDonald, Mr G MacKenzie, Mr B Boyd, Ms M Smith, Mr R Laird, Mr R Bremner, Mr J McGillivray and Mr N McLean.

Decision

The Council **AGREED:-**

- (i) the Capital programme as detailed in Appendix 1 to the report with an estimated year-by-year cash flow profile as detailed in Appendix 2;
- (ii) to commit to a major lobbying campaign to bring in additional money for schools and roads and to call on all MPs and MSPs to publicly commit to supporting this case for investing in the Highlands – with the proviso that it would be unreasonable to expect 2 of the Highland MSPs to publicly commit to anything which was a Cabinet responsibility;
- (iii) to prepare a strong, robust and ambitious bid to the Scottish Government for the next round of Scotland's schools for the future which recognised the unique challenges that the Highlands had within Scotland;
- (iv) the transfer of any capital receipts received over the period of the Programme to the capital receipts reserve to be drawn down flexibly over the period as detailed in Section 8.8;
- (v) to the principle, as outlined in Section 8.11, that any capital projects that delivered net revenue savings could be approved by the relevant Strategic Committee without the need to review the wider Capital Plan;
- (vi) that urgent cross-party discussions should be undertaken to determine whether alternative methods of project delivery could enable more of the schools projects to be delivered rather than using traditional construction methods with the findings being brought back to the full Council;
- (vii) that, in the interests of increased transparency of budget allocation, and for the purposes of enhanced localism, a supplementary report be prepared at or around the start of the new financial year to show explicitly the total capital funding proposed for projects taking place in the district served by each Area Committee – with a follow up end of year summary detailing explicitly the actual spend in each area – and that this process be continued annually over the 5 year term of the new Capital Budget to show also the cumulative year on year actual spend incurred in each area; and
- (viii) in recognising the significant damage to roads caused by the current adverse winter, and particularly the strain that the cost of these repairs placed on the Council budget, to work with all political groups throughout the 2018/19 financial year to identify ongoing savings through better cost management and realisation of project underspends in order to fund these vital road repairs.

At this point, the Leader of the Council expressed her thanks to the Budget Team and in particular the Budget Leader for the considerable work which had been undertaken in relation to the Capital Programme and not least the many public meetings which had been attended across the Highlands. In this regard, a significant number of projects had now been agreed which would be of vital importance to the Highland economy, with specific reference being made to those projects which had been agreed for the Merkinch area.

However, there was a need to do more and an urgent and major lobbying campaign for more investment in the Highlands from both the UK and Scottish Governments would now be instigated and this would be assisted by detailed portfolios which would be drawn up by Service Directors and their teams.

Along with the need to capitalise on any future funding from the Scottish Futures Trust whenever and wherever possible, there was also a need to work more closely with CoSLA, to continue to press for action on loan re-scheduling, to consider issues

in relation to the distribution of the Barnett formula, to continue the campaign for better roads and to work with and learn from the public and communities across the Highlands.

The meeting ended at 5.00pm.

Declarations of Interest – Item 2

The following Members declared **non-financial** interests in relation to 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 their involvement in the discussion and voting (on the basis that they would leave the room should there be any detailed discussion on the specific item in which they had declared an interest):-

Mr A Jarvie – Director of High Life Highland

Ms L Munro – Director of High Life Highland

Mr D MacKay – Director of Caithness Citizens Advice Bureau

Mr T Heggie – Director of High Life Highland

Mr G MacKenzie - Family member a pupil at St Clement's School

Mr D Macpherson - Director of High Life Highland

Mrs M Cockburn – Director of Inverness, Nairn, Badenoch & Strathspey Citizens Advice Bureau

Mr N McLean – connection to Soldier's Rock/Stromeferry Bypass

The following Members declared **financial interests** in relation to this item and confirmed that if there was any specific discussion in relation to specific lines within the budget proposals on the following issues (in which they had either a personal or family connection) they would leave the room:-

Mr I Brown – employee of NHS Highland

Mr A Christie – Non Executive Board Member of NHS Highland

Mr K Gowans – family member employed by High Life Highland

10
The Highland Council
No. 9 2017/2018

Minutes of Meeting of the Highland Council held in the Council Chamber, Council Headquarters, Glenurquhart Road, Inverness on Thursday, 8 March 2018 at 10.35am.

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

Present:

Mr G Adam	Mr D Louden
Mr B Allan	Mrs L MacDonald
Mr R Balfour	Mr R MacDonald
Mrs J Barclay	Mrs D Mackay
Mr A Baxter	Mr D Mackay
Mr B Boyd	Mr W MacKay (V/C)
Mr R Bremner	Mr G MacKenzie
Mr I Brown	Mrs I MacKenzie
Mr J Bruce	Mr S Mackie
Mrs C Caddick	Ms A MacLean
Miss J Campbell	Mr C MacLeod
Mrs I Campbell	Mr D MacLeod
Mrs G Campbell-Sinclair	Mr D Macpherson
Mrs H Carmichael	Mr R MacWilliam
Mr A Christie	Mrs B McAllister
Dr I Cockburn	Mr J McGillivray (V/C)
Mrs M Cockburn	Mr H Morrison
Mr G Cruickshank	Ms L Munro
Ms K Currie	Ms P Munro
Mrs M Davidson	Mrs M Paterson
Mr J Finlayson	Mr I Ramon
Mr M Finlayson	Mr M Reiss
Mr L Fraser	Mr A Rhind
Mr R Gale	Mrs F Robertson
Mr J Gordon	Mrs T Robertson
Mr K Gowans	Mr K Rosie
Mr A Graham	Mr G Ross
Mr J Gray	Mr P Saggars
Mr T Heggie	Mr A Sinclair
Mr A Henderson	Ms N Sinclair (V/C)
Mr A Jarvie	Mr C Smith
Ms E Knox	Ms M Smith
Mr R Laird	Mrs K Stephen
Mr B Lobban	Mr B Thompson (V/C)

In Attendance:

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

Mr B Lobban in the Chair

Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of Mr C Fraser, Ms P Hadley, Mr A MacKinnon, Mr N McLean and Mrs C Wilson.

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

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

Item 10(i) – Mr S Mackie (Non-financial)

Item 15 – Mr A Christie (Financial) and Mrs D MacKay (Dispensation)

Item 16 – Mr A Christie (Financial), Mrs D MacKay (Dispensation) and Mr R Balfour and Mrs M Cockburn (both Non-financial)

Item 17 – Mr D Macpherson, Mr D Loudon and Mr G Adam (all Non-financial)

Prior to commencement of the formal business, warm tributes were paid to the late Provost Allan Sellar and also to the late Councillor Angus Gordon who had provided long and valued service in relation to Council duties and would be much missed by everyone who had known them.

In this regard, the condolences of the Council were conveyed to their families and friends.

The Council also recognised and acknowledged International Women's Day.

3. **Presentation – Highlands and Islands Enterprise (HIE)** **Taisbeanadh – Iomairt na Gàidhealtachd's nan Eilean**

It was **NOTED** that Professor Lorne Crerar, Chair of Highlands & Islands Enterprise, and Ms Charlotte Wright, Chief Executive, were in attendance at the meeting in order to undertake a presentation on HIE's priorities and projects in the Highland Council area.

In this regard, and during the presentation, the aims of HIE and its collaborative relationship with the Council were highlighted, along with current priorities and future plans and challenges.

Reference was also made to the recent enterprise and skills review by the Scottish Government and the Council was thanked for its vocal support during the review process. Examples were also provided of collaborative efforts between HIE and the Council and references made to the greater impacts which could be achieved through collaborative and strategic working.

It was noted that HIE was sub-divided into teams, three of which were in the Highland Council area, and in this respect an overview was provided of HIE's remit, budgets, employees, client accounts, growth sectors, property and infrastructure, the role of the recently formed Strategic Board and national aspirations.

Attention was also drawn to the four priorities of accelerating business growth, strengthening communities, supporting growth sectors and developing regional attractiveness.

In summary, it was confirmed that specific issues currently being tackled in the Highlands at present included broadband, city-region deal developments, Liberty British Aluminium in Lochaber and Talent Attraction and Skills Retention.

During discussion, Members raised the following issues:-

- there was a need to convey thanks to HIE in relation to the previous work undertaken on additional living costs and poverty in rural areas;
- further details of information on negotiations which had been undertaken with the UK Government on plans to replace the various European funding sources after

Brexit would be helpful, particularly as it was estimated that 40% of Highland businesses relied on European Union workforce. In this respect, it was noted that this had been discussed with the UK Government's Scottish Secretary and with the Scottish Government's Minister for UK Negotiations on Scotland's Place in Europe, as well as with business representatives, particularly from the tourism and food & drink industries;

- information was sought and provided on the role of HIE in community empowerment, particularly in relation to involving young people, such as through supporting graduate placement schemes;
- there was an expectation that there would be increased involvement and closer partnership working between the Council and HIE in future, particularly at a local level. In this respect, specific reference was made to the digital agenda/wider superfast broadband coverage in rural areas prior to the 2021 target date and talent retention/workforce planning;
- information was sought and received on HIE's involvement in Scotland's Growth Strategy, with specific reference to inclusivity of rural areas;
- it was noted that discussions were ongoing in relation to future work at Nigg and Kishorn;
- there was concern in relation to SEPA issues at Gairloch and it was noted that this would be followed up outwith the meeting;
- it was hoped that further work could be undertaken to promote the North Coast 500 route, including improved signage;
- there was also concern regarding the economic impact of the downgrading of any health services in rural areas and it was noted that this would be among the issues considered at a forthcoming meeting between HIE and NHS Highland and would be the basis of a significant wider community planning issue; and
- it was highlighted that communication was critical between HIE and the Council's Business Gateway service in future.

Decision

Having thanked Professor Crerar and Ms Wright for their attendance at the meeting, the Council otherwise **NOTED** the terms of the presentation as detailed.

4. 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 14 December 2017 and of the Special Meeting held on 15 February 2018 as contained in the Volume which had been circulated separately – which were **APPROVED**.

5. 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:-

Lochaber Committee, 17 January
 People Committee, 25 January
 Ross & Cromarty Committee, 31 January
 Environment, Development & Infrastructure Committee, 1 February
 Pensions Committee/Pensions Board, 8 February
 Badenoch & Strathspey Area Committee, 13 February

Caithness Committee, 21 February
 City of Inverness Area Committee, 22 February
 Sutherland County Committee, 27 February
 Corporate Resources Committee, 28 February
 Isle of Skye & Raasay Committee, 5 March

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

Badenoch & Strathspey Area Committee, 13 February

***Starred Item: Item 8: PP. 521-522: A9 Dualling – Dalraddy to Slochd**

It was **AGREED** to adopt a policy of introducing 20mph speed limits in main built up areas throughout Badenoch & Strathspey in consultation with local communities.

City of Inverness Area Committee, 22 February

***Starred Item: Item 7: PP 534-535: Roads Maintenance Programme 2018/19**

It was **AGREED** to review the allocation formula for Roads Maintenance to better reflect infrastructure design, usage and actual maintenance costs.

Corporate Resources Committee, 28 February

***Starred Item: Item 18: P.16: Community Asset Transfer Process**

It was **AGREED** that the Scheme of Delegation should be updated to reflect the Community Asset Transfer process.

6. 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 24 November 2017 (approved by the Board on 18 January 2018) which were **NOTED**.

7. Committee Structure Structar na Comtaidh

The Council **AGREED** the following –

The ‘People’ Committee to now become the ‘Care, Learning and Housing’ Committee.

8. Membership of Committees, etc Ballrachd na Comhairle

Pensions Board

Members were reminded that currently Ms L Munro and Mr G Cruickshank were the Council representatives on the Pensions Board.

In this regard, the Board had now requested that a named Substitute Member also be appointed in order to provide extra flexibility and with a view to future succession

planning. This Member – who could not be a Member of the Pensions Committee - would have to undertake the specific training requirements associated with the role.

The Council **AGREED** to appoint Mrs M Paterson as the Substitute Member to the Pensions Board as detailed.

Poverty and Inequalities Working Group

The Council **AGREED** to include Mr R Gale on the Poverty and Inequalities Working Group as the representative from the Liberal Democrat Group.

9. Question Time Am Ceiste

The following Questions had been received by the Head of Corporate Governance in terms of Standing Order 42 –

(i) Mr C Smith

To the Leader of the Council

“What engagements have you and your Administration had with Her Majesty’s Government and the Devolved Scottish Administration since the last full Council?”

The response had been circulated.

In terms of a supplementary question, Mr Smith queried as to what had been discussed and whether there had been any outcomes from the recent official meeting at the Treasury and also whether a blog could be provided on the Council Website as part of the Leader’s list of engagements.

In response, the Leader confirmed that consideration would be given to the provision of a blog in future and that a productive meeting had been held at the Treasury and it was hoped that further progress could be made in due course.

(ii) Mr R Laird

To the Leader of the Council

“What discussions have the Council had with NHS Highland over the future of the Health & Social Care Partnership?”

The response had been circulated.

In terms of a supplementary question, Mr Laird queried as to when recommendations arising from the review of the Health & Social Care Partnership would be submitted to the full Council.

In response, the Leader confirmed that very productive discussions had been undertaken between the Council and NHS Highland and that Officers would be submitting a report to both her and the Chair of the Care, Learning and Housing Committee at the end of the month. Thereafter, consideration would be given as to when to take a report to the Council.

(iii) Mrs L MacDonald**To the Leader of the Council**

“Could you please give me details of how communities have been involved in the decision making process of the Redesign Board as outlined in Section 3 of the remit of the Redesign Board?”

The response had been circulated.

In terms of a supplementary question, Mrs MacDonald queried as to whether, in light of the fact that there had been no public consultation on the introduction of car parking charges in some communities (and this would now require further consideration by the Redesign Board at a Workshop in the following week), the Leader agreed that the introduction of such charges had been premature.

In response, the Leader confirmed that this did not represent a supplementary question as it had little bearing on the original question and a response would not therefore be provided.

(iv) Ms K Currie**To the Leader of the Council**

“What steps have you taken to mitigate the impact that your recent budget will have on people with protected characteristics which are defined in the 2010 Equality Act?”

The response had been circulated.

In terms of a supplementary question, and in relation to St Clement’s School and the discussion which had been undertaken during the budget meeting on the previous day, Ms Currie queried as to whether action would be taken as a matter of urgency to ensure that the Council was meeting public sector obligations in line with the Equalities Act.

In response, and in noting the assurances which had already been given in regard to the school building, the Leader confirmed that discussions would also be undertaken as a matter of priority (with parents, staff and the wider community) on the model of education to be delivered at this school over the next decade.

(v) Ms K Currie**To the Chair of the Environment, Development & Infrastructure Committee**

“What discussions did the Council have with the Kyle of Sutherland Development Trust over the imposition of car parking charges revealed in the budget savings at the Falls of Shin?”

The response had been circulated.

In terms of a supplementary question, Ms Currie queried as to whether a commitment could be given that consultation with Local Members would be undertaken as a priority in future to ensure that a situation such as that involving the Falls of Shin car park (where Local Members had not been aware of the situation) would not be repeated.

In response, the Chair of the Environment, Development & Infrastructure Committee confirmed that a commitment could be given that Local Members would be consulted in future to avoid a repeat of this situation.

10. Notices of Motion Brathan Glusaid

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

Declaration of Interest – Mr S Mackie declared a non-financial interest in this item (i) on the grounds of being a member and former Chair of the Caithness Bus Action Group 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.

(i)“Council believes that the current review of Highland bus timetables by [Stagecoach](#) PLC will have a detrimental effect on both citizens and communities; notes with interest the Scottish Government's forthcoming Transport Bill which seeks to address many of the current problems in the commercial bus sector; and resolves to conduct feasibility work on the options for enhancing Highland bus services, including franchising and the creation of a publicly-owned bus operator, if and when such powers become available to local authorities.”

Signed: R MacWilliam D Louden M Smith

During discussion, Members raised the following issues:-

- it had to be noted that the current review being undertaken by Stagecoach was having an adverse effect on a number of communities, including residents and commuters on a daily basis;
- the time was therefore right to open dialogue on the future of local public transport services, especially buses, as it was clear that the current arrangements were not working well;
- it would be important for the Council to be pre-emptive as opposed to reactive in relation to the forthcoming Scottish Government Transport Bill which would seek to address many of the current problems in the commercial bus sector;
- there was a need to recognise the valuable work undertaken by Council Officers to date which had resulted in a short term solution being put in place but ultimately there was a need for decisions to be made in regard to the medium and long term;
- it was clear that the need for public transport would increase in the future and this had to be at the forefront of discussions about the level of service required;
- the provision of adequate bus services were imperative in rural areas and also for the young, the elderly and those people who were socially isolated;
- there was also a need for consideration to be given to appropriate ticketing options for regular users;
- it would be helpful to have further detail in the near future on the proposals which were to come forward as part of the Transport Bill in order to be able to consider future options, not least in terms of the unique geography and circumstances in the Highland area;
- whilst supporting the aims of the Notice, it was suggested that there should also be additional reference included as follows – to conduct feasibility work on the options for enhancing Highland bus services ‘at the soonest

opportunity by the Redesign Board once the details and outcomes of the Bill were known'; and

- in terms of empowering communities, and not least in order to enable local solutions for local problems to be realised, it was important to involve all participants in this issue wherever possible, including HiTrans, the Traffic Commissioner, taxi representatives, travel providers and passengers from across the Highland area.

Thereafter, Mr R MacWilliam, seconded by Mr D Louden, **MOVED** the terms of the Notice of Motion as detailed.

As an **AMENDMENT**, Mr A Henderson, seconded by Mr J Gray, moved that the last part of the Notice should be amended to read as follows – 'and resolves to conduct feasibility work on the options for enhancing Highland bus services at the soonest opportunity by the Redesign Board once the details and outcomes of the Bill are known, including franchising and the creation of a publicly-owned bus operator, if and when such powers become available to local authorities'.

On a vote being taken, the **MOTION** received 20 votes and the **AMENDMENT** received 40 votes, with no abstentions, and the **AMENDMENT** was therefore **CARRIED**, the votes cast having been as follows:-

For the Motion:

Mr R MacWilliam, Mr D Louden, Mr R Bremner, Mrs P Munro, Mr K Rosie, Mr K Gowans, Mr C MacLeod, Mrs M Paterson, Miss J Campbell, Ms K Currie, Ms E Knox, Mrs M Cockburn, Mr B Allan, Mrs L MacDonald, Mr B Boyd, Mrs G Campbell-Sinclair, Dr I Cockburn, Mr G MacKenzie, Ms M Smith and Mr R Laird.

For the Amendment:

Mr A Henderson, Mr D Macpherson, Mr R Balfour, Mr L Fraser, Mr G Ross, Mr T Heggie, Mrs B McAllister, Mrs D MacKay, Ms K Stephen, Mr A Jarvie, Mr G Cruickshank, Mr J Gordon, Mr H Morrison, Ms L Munro, Mr G Adam, Mr R Gale, Mr A Graham, Mr A Sinclair, Mr J Bruce, Mr I Ramon, Mr R MacDonald, Mr D MacKay, Mrs F Robertson, Mrs I Campbell, Mrs J Barclay, Mrs T Robertson, Mrs A MacLean, Mrs C Caddick, Mr C Smith, Mr S Mackie, Mrs I MacKenzie, Mr P Saggars, Mr B Lobban, Mrs H Carmichael, Mrs M Davidson, Mr M Reiss, Mr A Baxter, Mr A Christie, Ms N Sinclair and Mr B Thompson.

Decision

The Council **AGREED** that the current review of Highland bus timetables by [Stagecoach](#) PLC would have a detrimental effect on both citizens and communities, noted with interest the Scottish Government's forthcoming Transport Bill which sought to address many of the current problems in the commercial bus sector and resolved to conduct feasibility work on the options for enhancing Highland bus services at the soonest opportunity by the Redesign Board once the details and outcomes of the Bill were known.

(ii) "Quarterly Accounts – the Highland Council instructs the Director of Corporate Resources to produce accurate accrual-adjusted quarterly accounts in order to improve ongoing scrutiny of the Council's finances".

Signed: D Louden R Bremner

At this point, Mr Louden and Mr Bremner confirmed that, after having spoken to other Members, they were content to amend the wording of the Motion as follows –

'the Highland Council *requests* the Director of Corporate Resources to produce *up-to-date* accrual-adjusted quarterly accounts in order to improve ongoing scrutiny of the Council's finances'.

During discussion, Members raised the following issues:-

- there was a need to highlight that the wording in the Notice of Motion was not intended to criticise the Depute Chief Executive/Director of Corporate Resources or his staff in any way but an attempt to help both the Service and the Council;
- in this regard, thanks were conveyed to the Director and his Officers for the information which had been supplied in the lead up to the determination of the budget by the Council;
- what was being sought was more detailed information on variances/budget codes (in order to identify potential areas for savings at an earlier stage during the year) and the opportunity to review current processes;
- there was a need to both recognise and acknowledge the professional expertise of Officers in the presentation of proposals for consideration by Members and in this regard Audit Scotland had previously stated that Highland Council had sound financial management in place;
- detailed financial reports were already presented to Strategic Committees and it was felt that this was sufficient;
- if the proposed change to the accounting arrangements was implemented, it would lead to a substantial increase in workload for the Service concerned at a time when staffing levels had been reduced; and
- it should be noted that there would be further information in due course from the Administration in terms of how and when zero based budgeting would be introduced and the resources required.

Thereafter, Mr D Louden, seconded by Mr R Bremner, **MOVED** the terms of the amended Notice of Motion as detailed.

As an **AMENDMENT**, Mr M Reiss, seconded by Mr A Baxter, moved that the Council should not agree to the request to produce up-to-date accrual related quarterly accounts on the basis that the Council had full confidence in the information provided by the Finance Team.

On a vote being taken, the **MOTION** received 19 votes and the **AMENDMENT** received 35 votes, with 7 abstentions, and the **MOTION** was therefore **CARRIED**, the votes cast having been as follows:-

For the Motion:

Mr D Louden, Mr R Bremner, Mrs P Munro, Mr K Rosie, Mr K Gowans, Mr C MacLeod, Mr R MacWilliam, Ms K Currie, Ms E Knox, Mrs M Cockburn, Mr B Allan, Mrs L MacDonald, Mr D MacLeod, Mr B Boyd, Mrs G Campbell-Sinclair, Dr I Cockburn, Mr G MacKenzie, Ms M Smith and Mr R Laird.

For the Amendment:

Mr M Reiss, Mr A Baxter, Mr D Macpherson, Mr R Balfour, Mrs M Paterson, Miss J Campbell, Mr L Fraser, Mr G Ross, Mr T Heggie, Mrs B McAllister, Mrs D MacKay, Ms K Stephen, Mr J Gordon, Mr H Morrison, Ms L Munro, Mr G Adam, Mr R Gale, Mr A Graham, Mr R MacDonald, Mrs F Robertson, Mrs I Campbell, Mrs J Barclay, Mrs T Robertson, Mrs A MacLean, Mrs C Caddick, Mr C Smith, Mr P Saggars, Mr B Lobban, Mr A Henderson, Mrs H Carmichael, Mrs M Davidson, Mr A Christie, Mr J Gray, Ms N Sinclair and Mr B Thompson.

Abstentions:

Mr A Jarvie, Mr G Cruickshank, Mr A Sinclair, Mr J Bruce, Mr I Ramon, Mr S Mackie and Mrs I MacKenzie.

Decision

The Council **AGREED** not to take any action on the request to produce up-to-date accrual related quarterly accounts on the basis that there was full confidence in the information currently provided by the Finance Team.

11. **Redesign of Highland Council – Update and Review Recommendations** **Ath-dhealbhadh Chomhairle na Gaidhealtachd – Aithisg Adhartais**

There had been circulated Report No. HC/3/18 dated 27 February 2018 by the Chief Executive.

In this regard, there had also been circulated Minutes of Meetings of the Redesign Board held on 19 December 2017 and 27 February 2018.

During discussion, it was agreed that thanks should be conveyed to the Board for the considerable and significant work which had been undertaken to date, and specifically to the Chair of the Board and the Head of Policy & Reform in this regard.

Decision

The Council **NOTED**:-

- the improvements staff identified in the Lean reviews reported in this period for billing in wrap around care for early years and childcare and in fly-tipping;
- that the Lean programme was continuing with more staff ideas being considered for projects, more staff to be trained in the methods to use, new ways of appreciating staff efforts to be developed and that an annual evaluation report was planned for a future Council meeting;
- that the Board's recommendations on music tuition had been agreed by the People Committee and were now being implemented;
- that the Board's recommendations on investing in solar PV on the Council's estate had been reported to the Corporate Resources Committee in February 2018 with a view to income generation;
- that the Board's grey fleet review recommendations would reduce cost, carbon emissions and corporate risk. These could be achieved by reducing the need to travel and making it easier to access alternatives to grey fleet (greater use of pool cars, car clubs and pool bike schemes where appropriate) with an estimated saving of £500k annually. These actions could be delegated to Officers with the Depute Chief Executive/Director of Corporate Resources responsible for implementation with the plan set out in Appendix 1;
- that the Board recommended in-sourcing some procured legal services with actions delegated to Officers as set out in Paragraph 4.14 which would be at least cost neutral and expected to avoid further cost and reduce expenditure;
- that Members with ideas for reviews could contact the Chair of the Board or Head of Policy and Reform; and
- that other types of reviews focused on savings would need to be developed given the savings target agreed for the Redesign Board in 2018/19.

It was also **AGREED** that staff travel policies should be reviewed to support the implementation of the grey fleet review. Changes to the travel policy identified from the review would be delegated to the Corporate Resources Committee.

The Council further **AGREED** the Board's recommendations to in-source some procured legal services as follows:-

(a) to reduce dependency on and the cost of commissioned legal services, a Solicitor post is established at a cost of £45,000 (including on-costs) with the full time post recruited to either on a full time or part time basis which would at a minimum be cost neutral, to focus on employment and some procurement and litigation activity; and

(b) to establish a Paralegal Apprenticeship post at a cost of £32,000 (including on-costs) once qualified. This would strengthen conveyancing capacity to deliver financial savings and additional income for the Council.

The Council also **AGREED** the Minutes of Meetings of the Redesign Board held on 19 December 2017 and 27 February 2018 as circulated.

12. Treasury Management Strategy Report Aithisg Ro-innleach Rianachd Ionmhais

There had been circulated Report No. HC/4/18 dated 28 February 2018 by the Depute Chief Executive/Director of Corporate Resources.

Decision

The Council **APPROVED** the Treasury Management Strategy Statement and Investment Statement for 2018/19 and the Prudential Indicators as detailed in Appendix 1 to the report.

13. Islands (Scotland) Bill 2018 – Update Report Bile nan Eilean (Alba) 2018 – Aithisg Urachaidh

There had been circulated Report No. HC/5/18 dated 22 February 2018 by the Chief Executive.

During discussion, and following a summary of progress to date, Members raised the following issues:-

- it was suggested that the third recommendation within the report should be amended to read as follows – “The Council is also asked to agree to lobby and contribute to the work of the Rural Economy and Connectivity Committee to seek amendments to the Islands Bill to ensure that support for Local Government arising from the new legislation will be provided for by the Scottish Government both financially and otherwise”;
- on the basis that the Council was no longer a formal member of KIMO, there was still a need to recognise the importance of ongoing involvement in regard to the issue of Emergency Towing Vessels and specifically their location in the area;
- there was a need for the Council to understand and to learn lessons from the Island Councils who had enjoyed considerable success over previous years in terms of effective and productive consultation and lobbying of both the UK and Scottish Governments on a range of issues;
- with reference to the redesign of health care in Skye and Raasay in particular, it had to be noted by NHS Highland that the intention was for impact

assessments to become a normal procedural step in decision making processes (in the manner of the equality impact assessment) and it was hoped that this would have a positive impact in this regard; and

- it was confirmed that the issues raised would be highlighted at the forthcoming COHI meeting and that there would be constant vigilance at all times in the future to ensure that the Highland area was not disadvantaged in any way.

Decision

The Council **NOTED** the progress of the Bill and welcomed the numerous positive changes being proposed in the Stage 1 report.

It was also **AGREED** to lobby the Rural Economy and Connectivity Committee and Highlands and Islands MSPs to oppose the proposal to make the creation of local authority level plans a statutory requirement.

In addition, it was further **AGREED** to lobby and contribute to the work of the Rural Economy and Connectivity Committee to seek amendments to the Islands Bill to ensure that support for Local Government arising from the new legislation would be provided for by the Scottish Government both financially and otherwise.

14. Response to Scottish Government Consultation on Electoral Reform Freagairt do Cho-chomhairle Riaghaltas na h-Alba air Ath-leasachadh Taghaidh

There had been circulated Report No. HC/6/18 dated 22 February 2018 by the Chief Executive.

During discussion, it was suggested that, rather than submitting a Council response, it should be left to individual Groups and Members to submit a response separately if they so wished.

Decision

It was **AGREED** that individual Groups or Members could respond separately to the Scottish Government Consultation on Electoral Reform (as opposed to a response coming from the Council).

15. The Highland Partnership Integration Scheme: Revision in line with the Carers (Scotland) Act 2016 Sgeama Amalachaidh Com-pairteachas na Gaidhealtachd: Ath-sgrudadh a reir Achd an Luchd-curaim (Alba) 2016

Declarations of Interest

Mr A Christie declared a financial interest in this item as a Non-Executive Director of NHS 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.

Mrs D MacKay declared a financial interest in this item as Non-Executive Directors of NHS Highland but, on the basis of having a dispensation and having applied the test outlined in Paragraphs 5.2 and 5.3 of the Councillors' Code of Conduct, confirmed that her interest did not preclude her from taking part in the discussion.

There had been circulated Joint Report No. HC/7/18 dated 12 February 2018 by the Director of Care & Learning, Highland Council and the Director of Adult Care, NHS Highland.

Decision

The Council **AGREED** that the revised Highland Integration Scheme should be submitted for approval by Scottish Ministers.

16. Local and National Statutory Performance Indicators (SPIs) 2016/17 Comharran Coileanaidh Reachdail Ionadail agus Naiseanta 2016/17

Declarations of Interest

Mr A Christie declared a financial interest in this item as a Non-Executive Director of NHS 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.

Mrs D MacKay declared a financial interest in this item as Non-Executive Directors of NHS Highland but, on the basis of having a dispensation and having applied the test outlined in Paragraphs 5.2 and 5.3 of the Councillors' Code of Conduct, confirmed that her interest did not preclude her from taking part in the discussion.

Mr R Balfour and Mrs M Cockburn declared non-financial interests in this item as Directors of the Inverness, Nairn, Badenoch & Strathspey Citizens Advice Bureau but, having applied the test outlined in Paragraphs 5.2 and 5.3 of the Councillors' Code of Conduct, concluded that their interests did not preclude them from taking part in the discussion.

There had been circulated Report No. HC/8/18 dated 26 February 2018 by the Chief Executive.

During a summary of the report, the Chief Executive provided an overview from a corporate perspective during which it was confirmed that overall 77% of SPIs had improved by 5% or more or performance had been maintained compared to 75% in the previous year. Also, for the 75 indicators which were nationally benchmarked, there were 11 in the top quartile and 14 in the bottom quartile.

Key messages arising from the data included that improvements (cost reduction) were seen in many of the local and benchmark cost indicators although it was noted that budget decisions had been a significant driver for these changes. However, benchmark indicators such as the cost of roads maintenance focused on the lowest spend being ranked the highest nationally and the result was that additional investment was perceived negatively as the result was an increase in unit cost.

Overall, more detailed analysis was needed by Services to understand the factors that linked performance and resource and to identify opportunities where redesign, LEAN and benchmarking could support learning and improvement activity. This would in turn provide greater clarity on the impact of Council budget decisions.

The data also provided an important corporate overview for the Council of performance which would support informed choices and decision making, drive improvement where appropriate and strengthen public accountability. Effective use

of performance data in the current challenging operating environment would also support the Council to redesign in the future.

Thereafter, the Director of Care and Learning highlighted three key success areas, namely that the number of children offending in the Highland had continued to decrease, there had been an increase in the number of looked after children being placed in Kinship Care and there had been an increased number of direct payments for self-directed care within Adult Social Care.

Reference was also made to the increase in Adult Social Care costs (which was partly a result of the commitment to paying the living wage to all staff) and the increase in 'permanence planning' indicators (which was largely due to a small number of complex cases in regard to the time between a child being accommodated by the Local Authority to being placed into a permanent situation).

During discussion, Members raised the following issues:-

- the improved format of the report was welcomed and particularly the inclusion of narrative to explain trends and background information;
- information was sought and received on teacher recruitment initiatives, including probationers and supply teachers and the need to alter contracts to meet the needs of rural schools. The burden of 'out of hours' work by teachers was also highlighted and appreciation for their efforts expressed;
- clarification was sought and received on the suite of criteria for SIMD, the Scottish Government's official tool for identifying small area concentrations of multiple deprivation in Scotland, with measures including a national Working Group and joint working between the Highland and Aberdeenshire Councils. It was acknowledged that these figures could fluctuate due to relatively low cohorts or as a result of historical events for which the effects were only noticed many years later;
- pupil attainment was a key issue and should also take into consideration all pupils (and not just the most able). Whilst there was concern about the need for investment in many school buildings, it had to be highlighted that what actually happened within the school was equally as important;
- there was a need for further detail on the permitted level of carry-forward on devolved school budgets;
- it was stressed that some indicators were more significant than others in terms of being 'life-changing', such as the well-being of young people, care of the elderly and tackling homelessness. Also, some areas of low performance were for positive reasons, such as the commitment to paying the living wage which had increased costs;
- the increase in the numbers of looked after children being placed in Kinship Care was welcomed and it was hoped that more detailed information on this, including comparison with other Scottish Local Authorities, could be presented to the Care, Learning and Housing Committee;
- it was hoped that the over-reporting of participation at Inverness Leisure in the previous year had been rectified; and
- it should be noted that the Pupil Equity Fund was intended for (and should be used for) equipment rather than for additional support needs staffing.

The Director of Community Services explained that of the thirty four Indicators for his Service, twenty nine had shown an improvement of more than 5%.

In this respect, various headline indicators were highlighted, including roads, traffic lights, waste, street cleaning, environmental health and various housing issues

(including the SHQS programme and repairs) and it was confirmed that that many of these indicators were also scrutinised at Local Committee meetings.

During discussion, Members raised the following issues:

- there was a need to convey thanks to all Community Services staff for their hard work and diligence during the extremely poor weather of the previous weeks;
- in response to a query in relation to homelessness, it was explained that it was not always possible to house homeless people locally. However, this and other homelessness issues would be the subject of a report to the next Environment, Development and Infrastructure Committee meeting; and
- recent examples of joint working between housing staff and local communities was highlighted and welcomed.

The Director of Development and Infrastructure summarised the thirteen indicators for his Service, eight of which had shown an improvement and five of which were static.

In this regard, various aspects of the report, including issues around building standards and planning (such as the move towards full cost recovery, the challenges of the Highland geography and the assistance that had been provided to businesses through the Business Gateway) were highlighted.

During discussion, Members raised the following issues:

- there was a need to highlight that members of the public had to contact the Planning department in advance of commencing projects which might require permission, with information being sought and provided on sanctions and enforcement for unauthorised works;
- the importance of wealth-creation services, such as Business Gateway, was emphasised;
- in regard to concerns which had been expressed that the high fees for large scale business applications might prove prohibitive and place undue pressure on Councillors to approve applications, it was explained that the planning fees were often relatively small compared to the overall costs of such projects. Also, the staff costs involved in processing applications (which were often significant) required to be recovered; and
- there was concern in relation to building works being left unfinished for long periods of time in certain locations and becoming unsightly.

The Depute Chief Executive/Director of Corporate Resources summarised his section of the report and pointed out that the indicators reported were still subject to audit. Achieving consistency across nationally agreed indicators was challenging but Local Authorities could be grouped into similar ‘families’ to help facilitate a like-for-like comparison.

Also, the outcomes of some indicators were the direct result of budget decisions where a disproportionate level of savings had been made in certain Services, such as Human Resources.

Reference was also made to the fact that Highland had come first in Scotland for benefit processing and this was welcomed, although it was noted that there was scope for improved efficiency in other areas.

Decision

The Council **NOTED** the performance of SPIs for 2016/17 as detailed and where

relevant their national benchmark position.

The Council also **NOTED** that Service Plans would be presented to the first round of Strategic Committee meetings in 2018/19 and that Members should expect the opportunity to scrutinise plans in response to the information contained in the report at that time.

**17. Highland Opportunity (Investments) Limited
Cothrom dhan Gahidhealtachd (Tasgaidhean) Earranta**

Declarations of Interest - Mr D Macpherson and Mr G Adam declared non-financial interests in this item as Directors of Highland Opportunity (Investments Limited) 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.

The Council was advised that there were currently 2 vacant places on Highland Opportunity (Investments) Limited – a company which created and sustained employment in the Highlands through investment in businesses and community enterprises. There were six meetings held during the year and the role of Directors was to consider individual investment proposals and decide on their merit and set out the strategic policy of the company.

It was considered desirable for Directors to have appropriate business orientated experience and in this regard the Role Profile and Skills Set had also been circulated.

Decision

The Council **AGREED** to appoint Mrs C Caddick and Mr D MacKay to Highland Opportunity (Investments) Limited as detailed.

**18. Establishment of Waste Strategy Member Group
Steidheachadh Buidheann Bhall Ro-innleachd Sgudail**

Members were advised that the previous Council – at a meeting in March 2017 – had agreed to recommend to this Council that a cross-party Member Group should be established to enable oversight of key actions in relation to the Council's Waste Strategy.

On that basis, it was now proposed that this short life Group – comprising 9 Members of the Council (4/3/1/1) – should now be set up and the first meeting arranged in the next few weeks.

Decision

The Council **AGREED** the establishment of the Waste Strategy Member Group as detailed.

**19. Standing Orders - Alteration
Òrdughan Seasmhach – Atharrachadh**

Members were advised that it was intended to submit a report to the next scheduled full Council meeting on Thursday, 10 May to allow consideration/clarification in relation to specific aspects of the current Standing Orders, including arrangements

for Special Meetings of the Council and the submission of Questions and Notices of Motion (including the formal acceptance of email signatories).

Decision

The Council **AGREED** that a report should be submitted to the next meeting on Standing Orders as detailed.

It was also **AGREED** that a full (annual) review of Standing Orders should be undertaken thereafter and that Group Leaders should be invited to oversee any changes prior to their submission to the full Council meeting in September.

20. Timetable of Meetings Clàr-ama Choinneamhan

The Council **AGREED** the following changes to the timetable of meetings -

People Committee – to now be held on 22 August (instead of 29 August)

Corporate Resources Committee – to now be held on 29 August (instead of 22 August)

Lochaber Committee – to now be held on 30 August (instead of 15 August)

21. 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 14 December 2017 was available in the Members' Library and on the Council's Website.

The meeting ended at 4.00pm.

The Highland Council

Minutes of Meeting of the **Nairnshire Committee** held in the Chamber, The Court House, High Street, Nairn on Wednesday 14 March 2018 at 10.30 am.

Present:

Mr L Fraser
Mr T Heggie

Mrs L MacDonald
Mr P Saggars

In attendance:

Ms L Cowie, Ward Manager, Nairn and Badenoch and Strathspey
Mr R Porteous, Roads Operations Manager, Community Services
Mr R MacLeod, Principal Housing Officer, Community Services
Mr S Taylor, Administrative Assistant, Chief Executive's Office

Also in attendance:

Ms J MacDonald, Head Teacher, Nairn Academy (Item 3)
Sergeant V Tough, Police Scotland (Item 4)

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 T Heggie in the Chair

Preliminaries

Prior to the commencement of the formal business, the Chair advised that the press would be allowed to record the meeting since it was a committee meeting held in public and was not webcast.

Business

1. Apologies for Absence Leisgeulan

There were no apologies for absence.

2. Declaration of Interest Foillseachaidhean Com-pàirt

The Committee **NOTED** the following Declaration of Interest:-

Item 6 – Mr L Fraser (non-financial)

3. Presentation – Head Teacher – Nairn Academy Taisbeanadh – Ceannard – Acadamaidh Inbhir Narann

Ms Julie MacDonald, Head Teacher, Nairn Academy gave a presentation to the Committee on Nairn Academy's Curriculum for Excellence and how it was developing its learners pathways to maximise pupil achievement and attainment.

She outlined that the four key aspects of Curriculum for Excellence were developing pupils into confident individuals; effective contributors; responsible citizens and successful learners and she emphasised the importance of providing pupils with the opportunity to develop these skills through experience. In comparing Nairn Academy with Highland and National statistics, it was highlighted that a high percentage of pupils leaving Nairn Academy were moving into a positive destination such as volunteer work, higher and further education, employment and training. She highlighted that the curricular pathways for pupils was split into Broad General Education for S1-S3 and Senior Phase for S4-S6 and that all subjects encompassed literacy, numeracy, health and wellbeing, skills for learning, life and work as the key areas. In concluding her presentation, she highlighted that Nairn Academy was seeking to offer a curriculum that was attractive to pupils and competitive with other schools in the area.

In response to a number of questions, Members were advised that:-

- The recent career and learner pathway event had been successful in establishing contacts with local companies who could provide work experience for school leavers;
- Inverness Chamber of Commerce could provide assistance in finding contacts for pupils seeking work experience;
- Discussion had taken place regarding the provision of Gaelic education within Nairn Academy and that whilst there could be scope to provide this through IT, this was not considered by parents to be best way of delivering this subject to pupils;
- It was acknowledged that IT provision within the school had become tired and the importance of providing staff and pupils with good internet connectivity within the school was emphasised;
- Whilst a Wipro technician had been allocated to the school, this was on a shared basis depending on priority with other schools in Inverness;
- Video conferencing facilities were available within the school; however, this could be unreliable due to a lack of connectivity;
- Lockers were available to pupils;
- The opportunity for the school to be involved with the Christmas lights switch-on on 23 November was welcomed; and
- In acknowledging the issues identified in relation to the condition of the school building and the effect that this had on internet connectivity, it was highlighted that repairs could be problematic due to the potential presence of asbestos in some roof areas.

In discussion, the following points were raised:-

- Different subjects in education could bring out various aspects of pupil's character and that there were opportunities for pupils to further develop their leadership skills through their education and through the "Make a Difference" programme;
- In welcoming the prioritisation of Nairn Academy within the Council's capital programme, it was emphasised that preparatory work was required to ensure that the school was in a position to take advantage of any opportunity that might become available for work to commence;
- The Parent Teacher Council had been proactive in promoting the case for the inclusion of Nairn Academy within the Council's Capital Programme and the

Chair, on behalf of the Committee, thanked them for their work, in particular their promotion of Gaelic as a subject; and

- In terms of curricular pathways, Nairn Academy compared positively with other schools both Highland-wide and nationally.

Having thanked Ms MacDonald, the Committee **NOTED** her presentation and the information given and that Ms MacDonald had offered a future presentation to the Committee accompanied by pupils from Nairn Academy.

4. Police Scotland – Area Performance Summary Poileas Alba – Geàrr-chunntas Dèanadais Sgìreil

There had been circulated Report No N/01/18 dated 28 February 2018 by the South Highland Area Commander providing a local summary update on progress with reference to the local priorities within the Highland 2014-2017 Policing Plan.

In discussion, the following points were raised:-

- Having expressed concern regarding drivers speeding on Tradespark Road, reassurance was sought, and received that following a recent speed counter survey undertaken by the Council, Roads Policing could allocate the appropriate resources required within the area;
- The speed counter survey undertaken on Tradespark Road had identified a regular occurrence of speeding at 5.00 pm;
- Whilst it had been proposed that signs be installed to warn drivers of pedestrians on Tradespark Road, feedback from the community following testing had identified that this was not enough to lower the speed limit to 20 mph;
- The Force was commended for its work in raising awareness of online and telephone scammers, in particular with elderly victims; and
- In relation to an issue of anti-social behaviour caused by a specific group of young people in Nairn, the Force was commended for looking at the issue seriously.

Having thanked Sergeant Tough for his report, the Committee **NOTED** and scrutinised the progress report against the objectives set within the Highland and Islands Local Policing Plan 2017-20 Year 1, attached as Appendix A to the report, for the period covering 1 April - 31 December 2017.

5. Nairn Common Good Fund – Budget Setting for 2018/19 and Quarter 3 2017/18 Monitoring Report Maoin Math Coitcheann Inbhir Narann – Aithisg Sgrùdaidh Cairteil 3 agus Suidheachadh Buidseit 2018/19

There had been circulated joint Report No N/02/18 dated 28 February 2018 by the Director of Corporate Resources and the Inverness City Manager.

The Ward Manager outlined the proposed budget as set in Appendix 1 to the report and provided information as to the anticipated revenue income and expenditure for 2018/19. It was highlighted that the proposed budget included provision for project planning for the proposed Links Development Plan. The Committee was reminded that it had previously approved investment of cash reserves and was advised that one of the key aims of this investment was to grow funds to a level sufficient to provide an annual Common Good 'Grant Funding Scheme'.

The Committee:-

- i. **AGREED** the Nairn Common Good Fund budget for 2018/19 detailed at Appendix 1 to the report;
- ii. **NOTED** the reference to a potential 'Grant Funding Scheme' and that a report on the application process and criteria will be presented to Committee when this proposal becomes viable; and
- iii. **NOTED** the position of the Nairn Common Good Fund as shown in the Quarter 3 Revenue Monitoring Statement against Budget at Appendix 2 to the report.

**6. Housing Performance Report – 1 April to 31 December 2017
Aithisg Coileanaidh Taigheadais – 1 Giblean gu 31 Dubhlachd 2017**

Declaration of Interest: Mr L Fraser declared a non-financial interest in this item as a Sub-Contractor for the Housing Service in Nairn 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 his involvement in the discussion.

There had been circulated report No N/03/18 dated 27 February 2018 by the Director of Community Services.

During discussion, the following comments were made:-

- The allocation of housing to people with a local connection was welcomed and showed that staff could take into consideration the prioritisation of local people when allocating housing;
- In highlighting problems experienced in a number of households regarding the availability and storage of bio-mass pellets during the recent winter weather, reassurance was sought, and received, that discussion had taken place with national suppliers of bio-mass pellets to emphasise that the Highlands should be prioritised during periods of cold winter weather;
- The inclusion of 15 social housing properties and 8 mid-market properties within Phase 4 of the Lochloy development was welcomed; and
- A recent report entitled "Stimulating Housing Development in the Highlands and Islands" had highlighted that more and more young people in the area were living with their parents as they were not in a position to be able to afford to purchase or rent their own accommodation.

The Chair on behalf of the Committee commended the local Housing team and thereafter **NOTED** and scrutinised the information provided on housing performance for the period 1 April to 31 December 2017.

**7. Nairn Roads Maintenance Programme 2018/19
Prògraman Càradh Rathaidean Inbhir Narann 2018/19**

There had been circulated report No N/04/18 dated 26 February 2018 by the Director of Community Services.

During discussion, confirmation was sought, and received regarding the following:-

- The opportunity to seek further contributions from the wind farm development at Cairn Duhie to use for road surface improvements had been explored; however, it was unlikely that there would be a further opportunity to seek more funding;
- The Whitebridge at Cawdor had been included within the Council's capital programme; and
- The Roads Operations team could look at the potential of providing road markings and lining at Queens Park.

Thereafter, the Committee **AGREED** the 2018/19 Roads Maintenance Programme for the Nairn area.

8. Minutes of Previous Meeting Geàrr-chunntas

There had been circulated Minutes of Meeting of the Nairnshire Committee held on 7 December 2017, which had been approved by the Council on 14 December 2017.

Arising from the minute, the Chair expressed regret that in relation to item 3, the development of a dance studio at Nairn Leisure Centre would not proceed in the immediate future.

Thereafter the Committee **NOTED** the Minutes.

The meeting concluded at 11.55 am.

The Highland Council

Minutes of Meeting of the **Care, Learning and Housing Committee** held in the Council Chamber, Council Headquarters, Glenurquhart Road, Inverness on Thursday 15 March 2018 at 10.05 am.

Present:

Mrs I Campbell	Mr G MacKenzie
Mr A Christie	Mr D Macpherson
Mrs M Cockburn	Mr R MacWilliam
Ms K Currie	Mrs B McAllister
Mrs M C Davidson	Mrs P Munro
Mr J Finlayson (In the Chair)	Mrs F Robertson
Mr A Graham	Mr G Ross
Mr T Heggie	Mr A Sinclair (by video conferencing)
Mr A Jarvie	Ms N Sinclair (by video conferencing)
Ms E Knox	Mr C Smith
Mr R MacDonald (by video conferencing)	Ms K Stephen (Vice Chair)

Religious Representatives:

Ms S Lamont
Mr A MacLean

Non-Members also present:

Mr R Bremner (by video conferencing)	Ms L Munro
Mr J Gray	Mrs M Paterson
Mr A Henderson	Mrs T Robertson
Mr D Mackay	

In attendance:

Mr B Alexander, Director of Care and Learning
Mr W Gilfillan, Director of Community Services
Mrs B Cairns, Head of Additional Support Services, Care and Learning Service
Ms S Campbell, Head of Children's Services, Care and Learning Service
Mr B Porter, Head of Resources, Care and Learning Service
Mr J Steven, Head of Education, Care and Learning Service
Mr D Goldie, Head of Housing and Building Maintenance, Community Services
Mr M Mitchell, Finance Manager, Finance Service
Ms J McGonagle, Principal Accountant, Care and Learning Service
Ms F Shearer, Education Quality Improvement Manager - South Area, Care and Learning Service
Ms M Wylie, Highland Third Sector Interface
Ms S Blyth, Highland Parent Council Partnership
Miss J Maclennan, Principal Administrator, Chief Executive's Office
Miss M Murray, Committee Administrator, Chief Executive's Office

Also in attendance:

Staff and Pupils, Raigmore and Inshes Primary Schools

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 J Finlayson in the Chair

Business

**1. Apologies for Absence
Leisgeulan**

Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of Mr A Baxter, Mr B Boyd, Mr W MacKay, Mrs I MacKenzie, Mr K Weidner and Ms M Roberts.

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

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

- Item 3 – Mrs I Campbell (non-financial)
- Item 4a – Mr A Christie (non-financial)
- Item 6 – Mr A Christie (non-financial)
- Item 7 – Mr A Christie (non-financial)
- Item 8 – Mr A Graham (financial)
- Item 9 – Mr A Christie (non-financial)
- Item 11 – Ms N Sinclair (non-financial)
- Item 14ii – Mr A Christie (non-financial)

**3. Outstanding Achievements
Coileanaidhean Air Leth**

Declaration of Interest: Mrs I Campbell declared a non-financial interest in this item as a relative was involved with Lochalsh Junior Pipe Band but, having applied the test outlined in Paragraphs 5.2 and 5.3 of the Councillors' Code of Conduct, concluded that her interest did not preclude her involvement in the discussion.

There had been tabled a list of outstanding achievements by people and groups.

During discussion, during which Lochalsh Junior Pipe Band's success at the Scottish Schools Pipe Band Championships was highlighted, it was suggested the list of successes before Members demonstrated all the good work taking place in Highland schools.

The Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the outstanding achievements; and
- ii. **AGREED** that the Director of Care and Learning write to all those involved in recognition of their success.

4. Presentation: ICT in Learning Taisbeanadh: ICT ann an Ionnsachadh

There had been circulated Report No PEO/15/18 dated 6 March 2018 by the Director of Care and Learning.

The report introduced a presentation by staff and pupils from Raigmore and Inshes Primary School where the benefit that Chrome books brought to their learning environment was explained. The pupils demonstrated the Apps and websites they used and how these had helped to improve literacy, spelling, numeracy, make learning fun and to work independently. In particular, they had learnt how to stay safe online and to handle difficult situations. Looking to future developments, the pupils, as Digital Leaders, were looking at parent workshops and how to encourage and train staff and other pupils. At the close of their presentation, a clip showing what their fellow pupils also enjoyed about Chrome Books was provided.

Members congratulated the children on their excellent presentation and the following points were discussed:-

- in relation to Chrome book battery life, chargers were available in school;
- suggestions for improvements in future roll-out of Chrome books were sought; and
- during the early days of the introduction of the Chrome books, children experienced both excitement and nervousness. Examples were provided of the improvement in skills and confidence since their introduction, especially for children with dyslexia.

During discussion of the report, the following issues were raised:-

- assurance was sought, and provided, that good communication between Care and Learning and ICT Services would be maintained;
- assurance was sought that network cabling issues at Ben Wyvis Primary School would be resolved during the Easter break, a decision that had been taken in consultation with the school. A summary was provided of the roll-out of Chrome books within various Associated School Groups (ASGs) and of delays that had been experienced with the network programme, which were being resolved;
- individual concerns about the Wipro contract and its impact on the Chrome Book roll-out would be addressed through ongoing joint working; and
- it was suggested that the earlier children learnt on a Chrome book, the better, and support was voiced for early distribution to primary schools. The ASG approach was explained i.e. that both primary and secondary schools in a group would receive the new technology at the same time to ensure consistency.

The Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the presentation;
- ii. **NOTED** the strategic direction in enhancing Digital Learning & Teaching; and
- iii. scrutinised and **NOTED** the progress made in the delivery of the authority responsibilities.

In terms of Standing Order 17.2, and as a result of a request for cashflow assistance, only received within the past 24 hours, the Chair had agreed that the undernoted report be circulated as an urgent additional item of business.

4a. Strontian Primary School Project – Request for Cash Advance

Mr A Christie declared a non-financial interest in this item as a Director of the Highland Small Communities Housing Trust 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 his involvement in the discussion.

There had been circulated Report No CLH/01/18 dated 14 March 2017 by the Director of Care and Learning.

During discussion, Members welcomed the concept behind the community-led project, which would sustain what was a very small community in a fragile isolated rural area, and suggested that consideration be given to replicating it elsewhere. It was further suggested that a progress report be presented to a future meeting, including information on whether timescales were being met and how, once it was established, the school was improving the community. In addition, information was sought as to whether there were any practical steps that could be taken to expedite the signing of the necessary agreements.

Thereafter, the Committee **AGREED:-**

- i. to a cash advance of £135,000 to Strontian Community School Building Limited, to support cash flow and ongoing progress with the community led project to build a new school; and
- ii. that a progress report be presented to a future meeting of the Committee.

5. Homelessness and Temporary Accommodation Dìth Dachaigh agus Àite-fuirich Sealach

There had been circulated Report No PEO/16/18 dated 2 March 2018 by the Director of Community Services.

During discussion, the following issues were raised:-

- in response to a request for information on achievements, it was explained that the Council had a strong homelessness service with committed staff, very few incidences of rough sleeping and a good record of dealing with people in crisis situations;
- information was sought, and provided, on other sources of accommodation that were being investigated;
- challenges included the chronic housing shortage and long waiting lists and the proposed seminar for Members on the "Housing First" model approach to homelessness was welcomed;
- observing that homelessness was one of the worst things that could happen to anyone, radical solutions were urged. Attention was drawn to the different challenges facing the Council's homelessness service, with urban issues in Inverness, such as the chronic shortage of accommodation, and different remote and rural challenges in other areas, such as Caithness. It was important the Council worked with all partners, such as the NHS and the third sector, and it

was suggested that the Scottish Government could use Inverness as an example to provide funds to convert derelict properties or construct new ones;

- the Scottish Government's Homelessness report should be circulated to Members of the Committee;
- the Leader thanked the Scottish Housing Minister for the collaborative work he was doing with the Council; and
- attention was drawn to the Members' seminar planned for the afternoon of 21 March 2018 on mental health which was likely to include homelessness issues.

The Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** developing national policy on homelessness;
- ii. **AGREED** that the Scottish Government's Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Action Group Interim Report be circulated to Members of the Committee for information; and
- iii. **AGREED** that a Members' Seminar be arranged to explore the "Housing First" model approach to homelessness.

6. Performance Report – Children's Services Aithisg Choileanaidh – Seirbheisean Chloinne

Declaration of Interest: Mr A Christie declared a non-financial interest in this item as a Non-Executive Director of NHS 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 his involvement in the discussion.

There had been circulated Report No PEO/17/18 dated 2 March 2018 by the Director of Care and Learning.

During discussion, Members raised the following issues:-

- concern was expressed that there was insufficient external scrutiny of certain schools, with some not having had an Education Scotland inspection for over ten years, and it was explained that Education Scotland intended for the frequency of inspections to be increased. The Northern Alliance was also examining means of improving quality assurance across the region through collaborative working;
- concerns regarding the technical issues relating to child health surveillance data should be raised with NHS National Services Scotland;
- the reduced percentage of child BMI recording that was being undertaken in schools was partly as a result of school nurse capacity issues and ongoing national recruitment challenges. It was suggested that other means of obtaining data be investigated;
- concern was expressed that information on households with children who were living in temporary accommodation was only collected annually and consideration should be given to collating this on a monthly basis. A joint report by Housing and Care & Learning officers on what was being done to address this issue was proposed;
- assurance was sought, and received, that the earlier spike of 6% in the number of children being the subject of a second child protection order in a twelve month period had now reduced back to the average of 3.6%; and
- the relatively low uptake on Lifestyle Surveys among children was disappointing. It was clarified that the survey was often in competition with other school

activities including exams. The Scottish Government aimed to standardise such surveys to facilitate national comparisons.

The Committee:-

- i. scrutinised and **NOTED** the performance information;
- ii. **NOTED** the information provided on quality improvement;
- iii. **NOTED** the commentary on statutory performance indicators;
- iv. **NOTED** the commentary on the Northern Alliance draft Improvement Plan;
- v. **AGREED** that concerns regarding the technical issues relating to child health surveillance data be raised with NHS National Services Scotland;
- vi. **AGREED** that a joint report by Housing and Care and Learning officers be presented to a future meeting of the Committee on what was being done to address the number of households with children in temporary accommodation; and
- vii. **AGREED** that, given the capacity issues in the school nursing service, alternative ways of measuring children's Body Mass Index continue to be explored.

7. **NHS Highland Assurance Report** **Aithisg Bharantais NHS na Gàidhealtachd**

Declaration of Interest: Mr A Christie declared a non-financial interest in this item as a Non-Executive Director of NHS 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 his involvement in the discussion.

There had been circulated Report No PEO/18/18 dated 2 March 2018 by the Director of Care and Learning.

During discussion, concern was expressed regarding succession planning and the skills/experience deficit when staff moved on. Particular reference was made to Speech and Language Therapy, and Members emphasised the need to focus on supporting recruitment and shadowing staff prior to retirement, and to ensure the necessary adverts were in place to coincide with trainees graduating.

The Committee otherwise:-

- i. scrutinised and **NOTED** the data and issues raised in the report; and
- ii. **NOTED** that comments would be incorporated into a report to NHS Highland as part of the agreed governance arrangements.

8. **Review of Statutory Consultation Exercise on the proposal to establish a catchment area for Bun-sgoil Ghàidhlig Phort-Rìgh, and to simultaneously establish formal catchments for the provision of Gàidhlig Medium Education within Portree Associated School Group** **Sgìre Sgoile Foghlam tron Ghàidhlig Buidheann Sgoiltean Co-cheangailte Phort Rìgh**

Declaration of Interest: Mr A Graham declared a financial interest in this item on the grounds of being an employee of Bord Na Gaidhlig and left the Chamber during discussion of the item.

There had been circulated Report No PEO/19/18 dated 6 March 2018 by the Director of Care and Learning. The appendices had been circulated separately as Booklet A.

During discussion, Members commented that the creation of Gaelic Medium Education (GME) catchments was a symptom of the success of GME on Skye, and that the consultation process appeared to have been constructive throughout. It having been queried whether Local Members had any guidance that could be applied in other parts of Highland, the Chair explained that Skye was in a unique position as there were a number of schools with GME provision so, with the exception of Raasay, the travelling involved was not particularly onerous.

- * The Committee **AGREED TO RECOMMEND** to the Council the creation of new Gaelic Medium catchments for Portree Associated School Group as outlined in the map on the original consultation report.

9. Business Case for Placement Services Highland Cùis Gnothachais airson Sheirbheisean Suidheachaidh na Gàidhealtachd

Declaration of Interest: Mr A Christie declared a non-financial interest in this item as a Non-Executive Director of NHS 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 his involvement in the discussion.

There had been circulated Report No PEO/20/18 dated 5 March 2018 by the Director of Care and Learning.

During discussion, the following issues were raised:-

- Members welcomed the proposed approach, which brought together strands of work that had been discussed for a number of years, and commended the enthusiasm of the staff involved;
- in terms of the proposed outcomes and deliverables, it would be helpful to include something relating to how to improve the attainment of Looked After Children and deliver better outcomes for them;
- out of authority placements did not always deliver better outcomes and, particularly where the child still had links with family, were expensive, time-consuming and difficult to manage;
- key to the proposal was the need to change hearts and minds, and long-standing practice, which it was acknowledged would not be easy;
- the need to utilise Elected Members' community contacts was emphasised;
- the proposal was hugely significant in terms of trying to achieve better outcomes for Highland's most vulnerable children and keep their sense of roots and belonging intact;
- Members asked to be kept informed as work progressed;
- it was challenging to address complex needs but Highland had an excellent track record in delivering children's services and confidence was expressed in the proposal; and
- information was sought, and provided, on the commissioning of Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services for Looked After Children and whether early intervention, the importance of which was emphasised, fell within the scope of the proposal.

Thereafter, the Committee **AGREED**:-

- i. the Business Case, in principle, as a key element of Phase One of the Programme; and
- ii. the establishment of a project team to commence Phase Two.

10. Management of Schools Stiùireadh Sgoiltean

There had been circulated Report No PEO/21/18 dated 2 March 2018 by the Director of Care and Learning.

During discussion, the following issues were raised:-

- in relation to Tain Royal Academy and Dingwall Academy Associated School Groups (ASG) in particular, concern was expressed that the consultation process had unsettled communities and created an impression of distrust towards the Council. Issues had included parents receiving insufficient notice of meetings and Local Members not being invited to meetings;
- with regard to the matrix model described in section 5.5 of the report, some Members suggested that, given the Council's knowledge and experience, it should be possible to inform how to progress within an ASG without the need for a matrix. Other Members commented that it was essential and should have been implemented from the start of the process. Parents were often unfamiliar with school management/structures and, to engage with them in a meaningful way, it was necessary to be clear about which options were feasible and which were not. It was also necessary to be prepared to be challenged;
- some Members expressed concern that there was no timescale in the report. Other Members, whilst recognising that it might cause some unsettlement, welcomed the pause in proceedings as an opportunity to learn from previous processes and improve engagement going forward;
- communication was key and it was hoped that lessons had been learned from the initial phases. Local Members were often the first line of contact when there were issues in a community and an assurance was sought that they would be the first to be informed as and when decisions were made;
- the proposal that St Joseph's and Bishop Eden Primary Schools should not be included in the discussions regarding Inverness High School ASG was welcomed. In addition, it was suggested that the challenges associated with Inverness High School ASG were predominantly educational and social;
- it was important not to engage with primary and secondary schools in silos but to look at each ASG holistically to make the best use of the available resources and create sustainability;
- education and the role of Head Teachers had changed beyond recognition and it was necessary to think differently and move away from outdated models;
- it was essential to value teachers and support those who were willing to step up and take on a management role;
- it was important to thank those who had been involved in the process to date for their contribution, apologise for any upset that had been caused, and inform them of the next steps;
- it was requested that, wherever possible, uncertainty be removed to avoid unnecessary worry amongst parents;

- Highland was leading the way in Scotland in terms of looking at different ways of managing the school estate to sustain educational provision against a backdrop of reducing budgets, recruitment challenges and falling school rolls in some areas;
- as indicated in the report, it was recognised that undertaking detailed planning in ten ASGs at the same time had been over-ambitious;
- in terms of engaging with communities, it was necessary to adopt a collegiate approach, similar to that which had been taken to address the issues in Mallaig ASG;
- teachers knew the practical issues associated with their schools and the value of their insight and opinion was emphasised. It was important to engage with them in an honest and open manner and to seek their proposals for change;
- the management of schools programme ought to be highlighted in job adverts;
- concern was expressed that campus models could be expensive to run; and
- in the next phase, it was important that teachers and Head Teachers advocated the management of schools programme.

The Chair having summarised the issues raised, the Committee **AGREED**:-

- i. the next steps, as set out in section 5 of the report; and
- ii. that there be communication with those who had been involved in the process to date, both to thank them for their contribution and to inform them of the next steps.

11. Early Learning and Childcare Update

Cunntas às Ùr mu Thràth-ionnsachadh agus Cùram-chloinne

Declaration of Interest: Ms N Sinclair declared a non-financial interest in this item as her daughter attended Newton Park Nursery but, having applied the test outlined in Paragraphs 5.2 and 5.3 of the Councillors' Code of Conduct, concluded that her interest did not preclude here involvement in the discussion.

There had been circulated Report No PEO/22/18 dated 5 March 2018 by the Director of Care and Learning.

During discussion, the following issues were raised:-

- it would be useful for some Members to have an explanation as to how the revised projections for capital and revenue costs for delivering 1140 hours of funded Early Learning and Childcare in Highland were arrived at;
- the costings initially prepared were well in excess of what the Scottish Government had identified and, as a result, Local Authorities had been asked to revisit their projections. Concern was expressed that this would cause delays and that in some locations where building work was required. Accordingly, assurances were sought that Highland would be in a position to meet the target of 1140 by 2020;
- concern was expressed that UHI's course providing training for the role of Childcare Manager would, from this year, be on a part-time basis, resulting in a lengthy process before individuals would qualify and it was hoped that representations would be made to UHI expressing concern. In response, it was confirmed that UHI were part of the Strategic Group looking at workforce

expansion and the colleges had confirmed that there were various routes to qualifications which would meet future needs; and

- concern was expressed that income targets, to fully fund the posts of Childcare Managers, was not being met and that their duties and responsibilities were to be reviewed and evaluated. Assurances were sought, and received, that no Childcare Manager posts were under threat.

The Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the revised plans for delivering 1140 hours by 2020;
- ii. **NOTED** the latest position on the additional graduate posts; and
- iii. **AGREED** the review of the childcare manager role.

12. Self-Directed Support (Children) – 6 Month Update Briefing Taic Fèin-Stiùirichte (Clann) – Brath às Ùr 6 Miosan

There had been circulated Report No PEO/23/18 dated 5 March 2018 by the Director of Care and Learning.

The Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the update; and
- ii. **APPROVED** the recommended actions in section 5 of the report.

13. Community Learning and Development Plan 2018-2021 Plana Ionnsachadh agus Leasachadh Coimhearsnachd 2018-2021

There had been circulated Report No PEO/24/18 dated 1 March 2018 by the Director of Care and Learning.

The Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the legal requirement to produce a Highland Community Learning and Development Plan 2018-2021;
- ii. **AGREED** that the Community Planning Partnership be consulted on the draft Plan; and
- iii. **AGREED** that the Care, Learning and Housing Committee consider and finalise the new Highland Community Learning and Development Plan at its meeting scheduled for 29 August 2018.

14. Minutes Geàrr-chunntas

Declaration of Interest: Mr A Christie declared a non-financial interest in this item as a Non-Executive Director of NHS 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 his involvement in the discussion.

The Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the Minutes of the Highland Child Protection Committee – 7 December 2017;

- ii. **APPROVED** the Minutes of the Adult Services Development and Scrutiny Sub-Committee – 7 February 2018; and
- iii. **APPROVED** the Minutes of the Poverty and Inequalities Working Group – 13 February 2017, with the exception of the preliminaries, it having been confirmed that, at full Council on 8 March 2018, Mr R Gale had been appointed to the Group as the representative from the Liberal Democrat Group in place of Mr A Christie.

The meeting concluded at 12.50 pm.

The Highland Council

Minutes of Meeting of the **Audit and Scrutiny Committee** held in the Council Chamber, Council Headquarters, Glenurquhart Road, Inverness on Wednesday, 28 March 2018 at 10.30am.

Present:

Mr R Laird	Mrs M Davidson
Mr P Saggars	Mr C Fraser
Mr G Adam	Mr L Fraser
Mr R Balfour	Mr T Heggie
Mrs J Barclay	Mr D Louden
Mr B Boyd	Mrs L MacDonald (Substitute)
Mr R Bremner (on VC)	Mr D MacKay
Mr J Bruce	Mr S Mackie
Ms C Caddick (Substitute)	Mr D Macpherson
Miss J Campbell	Mrs B McAllister
Mrs H Carmichael	Mrs M Paterson
Mr G Cruickshank	Ms K Stephen

Non-Members also present:

Mr K Gowans	Mr B Lobban
Mr A Jarvie	Mr A Rhind

Officials in Attendance:

Mr D Yule, Depute Chief Executive/Director of Corporate Resources
 Mr B Porter, Head of Resources, Care and Learning
 Ms S Barrie, Programme Manager (Property)
 Ms N Wallace, Environment Manager
 Ms E Johnston, Corporate Audit & Performance Manager
 Dr S Carr, Corporate Performance Manager
 Miss J MacLennan, Democratic Services Manager
 Ms C Maragh, Committee Administrator

Also in attendance:

Ms J Brown, Director, Public Sector Assurance, Grant Thornton
 Mr J Boyd, Senior Manager, Grant Thornton

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

Mr R Laird in the Chair

1. Apologies for Absence Leisgeulan

Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of Mr A Christie, Mr G MacKenzie and Ms M Smith.

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

There were no declarations of interest at the meeting.

3. **Good News Stories** **Naidheachdan Matha**

It was noted that Mr Josh Gallimore (Trainee Auditor), following successful completion of his final exams, had become a Chartered Internal Auditor (CMIIA) with the Chartered Institute of Internal Auditors and had since been appointed to the post of Assistant Auditor.

Following the formal presentation of the Certificate by the Chair, the Committee otherwise **NOTED** the position and conveyed their congratulations to Mr Gallimore accordingly.

4. **Internal Audit Reviews and Progress Report – 15 November 2017 - 16 March 2018** **Ath-bhreithneachaidhean In-sgrùdaidh agus Aithisg Adhartais**

There had been circulated Report No AS/1/18 dated 19 March 2018 by the Corporate Audit Manager which provided details of the final reports issued since the date of the last meeting, work in progress and other information relevant to the operation of the Internal Audit Section.

In this regard, and with specific reference to corporate fraud activity and investigations, it was confirmed that the main activity during the quarter had been investigating the allegation of misuse of staff resources, plant, materials and equipment.

Also, following receipt of a report which had been considered by Dundee City Council's Scrutiny Committee, a review of the IT controls surrounding the payments to creditors had been undertaken and this had provided assurance that the Highland Council's controls were more robust (although there was still some scope for improvement and this would be addressed in a future report).

It was also noted that the Corporate Audit Manager was a member of the team working on the redesign review of trade services and in addition was working with Police Scotland to host a course in Headquarters on 3-4 May 2018 on the subject of preventing serious and organised crime against the Council.

Finally, it was further noted that a LEAN review of the Internal Audit process was currently being undertaken.

The final reports were then presented as follows:-

- Care & Learning Service – PPP Schools Contracts – Review of Value for Money Arrangements (Substantial Assurance) – no issues raised at the meeting.
- Care & Learning Service – Out of Hours Social Work Service (Reasonable Assurance) – during discussion, further information was sought and received in

terms of the review of call handling (current and desired levels of service) and it was confirmed that this process was ongoing with NHS Highland and in the meantime the Out of Hours Team were continuing to cover all calls as normal.

Also, in relation to a query on the finding that there had not been a Mental Health Officer (MHO) on duty for 22 out of 237 shifts, it was confirmed that every member of staff was trained as an MHO in terms of the crucial importance of this role. However, on those limited occasions when it had not been possible for an MHO to be available, this role had been covered by other members of staff and to date this had not caused any issues.

- Development & Infrastructure Service – Investigation into Missing School Meals Income at a Primary School (Limited Assurance) – during discussion, the references in the report for reconciliations to be carried out more frequently in order to enable any issues to be identified and addressed promptly were welcomed.

Also, it was suggested that a report should be presented to a future meeting of the Corporate Resources Committee on possible alternatives to cash handling, including contactless systems, pre-payment cards, etc in order to improve on current arrangements and also to protect staff.

- Community Services – Delivery of the Scottish Housing Quality Standard Programme within the HRA Capital Programme (Substantial Assurance) – during discussion, it was noted that all Council houses currently met the SAP 2009 criteria as detailed in the report.
- Community Services – Review of the Control of Overtime within Community Services (Reasonable Assurance) – during discussion, and in response to a query, it was confirmed that there were no proposals to discontinue burials at weekends. There were also no proposals to close Recycling Centres at weekends as a cost saving.

Also, in regard to reviewing the format and layout of worksheets in order to match overtime to specific activities, it was confirmed that the target date for completion of this action had now been brought forward from 30 September 2018 to 1 April 2018.

- Development & Infrastructure Service – European Maritime and Fisheries Fund 2016/17 (Full Assurance) – no issues raised at the meeting.

Thereafter, the Committee otherwise **NOTED** the Final Reports as detailed, the current work of the Internal Audit Section and progress against the Plan and the performance information as provided in Section 5 of the report.

5. Audit & Performance Remit & Priorities and Internal Audit Plan 2018/19 Raon-ughdarrais & Priomhachasan Sgrudaidh & Coileanaidh agus Plana Bliadhna In-Sgrudaidh 2018/19

There had been circulated Report No. AS/2/18 dated 1 March 2018 by the Depute Chief Executive/Director of Corporate Resources and the Corporate Audit Manager.

During discussion, and in response to a query on target dates for the audits which had been listed in the report, it was confirmed that high level/critical audits were prioritised over the year and liaison undertaken with relevant staff in terms of timescales for other individual audits. Also, an update was provided on individual audits for each Committee meeting.

It was also suggested that the Chair should liaise with the Chair of the Care, Learning and Housing Committee in terms of allocating a higher priority if possible to the audit on the Provision of Early Learning and Childcare Services.

Thereafter, the Committee **NOTED** the remit and priorities of the Audit & Performance Team as detailed in the report and **APPROVED** the Internal Audit Plan for 2018/19.

It was also **AGREED** that the Chair would discuss the proposed audit of the Provision of Early Learning and Childcare Services with the Chair of the Care, Learning & Housing Committee with a view to changing the priority status of this particular audit if necessary and that the Committee would be updated accordingly following that discussion.

6. **Six Monthly Review of Corporate Risks Ath-Sgrudaidh air Cunnaran Corporra**

There had been circulated Report No. AS/3/18 dated 6 March 2018 by the Depute Chief Executive/Director of Corporate Resources.

The Committee **NOTED** the Corporate Risk Register provided at Appendix 1 and the risk profile at Appendix 2 and **APPROVED** the revised Corporate Risk Strategy which had been circulated as Appendix 3 to the report.

The Committee also **NOTED** that six monthly reviews of the Corporate Risk Register would continue to be reported each March and September and that an Officer Group had been established on Corporate Risk Management.

7. **External Audit Report Aithisgean Sgrudaidh bhon Taobh A-muigh**

There had been circulated External Audit report prepared by the Council's External Auditors (Grant Thornton) as follows:-

Highland Council – External Audit Plan for the financial year ending 31 March 2018.

During a summary of the report, the overarching principles of the audit, the audit approach and materiality, the risk based methodology and the wider scope audit were highlighted, along with information on the key audit deliverables and the audit team, fees and independence, fraud, respective responsibilities and communication of audit matters to those charged with governance.

During discussion, and with specific reference to the wider scope audit and in particular financial sustainability and management, it was confirmed that discussion would continue with the Council in this regard, including a review of the financial plans in place, budgetary processes, the control environment and internal controls.

Information was also sought and provided in relation to the current arrangements around the pension benefits payable and the valuation of land and buildings during which it was confirmed that there were not considered to be any underlying concerns.

Thereafter, the Committee otherwise **NOTED** the terms of the report as circulated.

The meeting ended at 11.16am.

The Highland Council

Minutes of Meeting of the **Lochaber Committee** held in the Duncansburgh Macintosh Church Hall, The Parade, Fort William on Wednesday, 11 April 2018 at 10.30 a.m.

Present:

Mr B Allan	Mr I Ramon
Mr A Baxter	Mr D Rixson
Mr A Henderson	Mr B Thompson
Mr N McLean	

In attendance:

Mrs D Ferguson, Senior Ward Manager (Ross, Skye and Lochaber)
 Mr F Nixon, Group Manager, Scottish Fire and Rescue Service
 Ms S MacLennan, Housing Manager (South), Community Services
 Mr L MacDonald, Repairs Manager (South), Community Services
 Mr T Stott, Principal Planner, Development & Infrastructure Service
 Mr P Wheelan, Planner, Development & Infrastructure Service
 Miss J MacLennan, Principal Administrator, Chief Executive's Service
 Mrs C MacIver, Committee Administrator, Chief Executive's 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 A Baxter - Chairman

Business

Preliminaries

Prior to commencement of business, the Chairman, on behalf of the Local Committee, congratulated Mr A Rixson his recent election to Ward 11 (Caol and Mallaig).

1. Apologies for Absence Leisgeulan

There were no apologies for absence.

2. Declarations of Interest Foillseachaidhean Com-pàirt

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

Item 4 – Mr D Rixson (non-financial)

Item 8 – Mr B Allan (financial)

Item 9 – Mr B Allan and Mr A Henderson (both financial) and Mr N Maclean and Mr D Rixson (both non-financial)

3. Scottish Fire and Rescue Service Local Committee Performance Report Aithisg Dèanadais Comataidh Ionadail Seirbheis Smàlaidh agus Teasairginn na h-Alba

There had been circulated Report No LA/6/18 by the Local Senior Officer for Highland.

The Group Manager, Scottish Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS) gave a presentation during which he summarised the report. He also took the opportunity to express the SFRS's appreciation to the crews who worked tirelessly to provide cover at stations and to local employers for releasing staff not only for incidents but also for training. In this regard he encouraged all present to raise the profile of recruitment activities to stations in Lochaber. Furthermore, following the Transformation presentation event earlier in the year, he thanked Members for their support. This was a positive investment for the Lochaber area and he was pleased to report that, in addition to the rescue boat which was to be launched later in the month, a Search and Rescue Team vehicle and equipment was now in place and crews were finalising their training on their use.

During discussion, Members made the following comments:-

- additional detail was sought, and provided, in regards to the partnership working taking place with other key agencies and the Safer Highland Anti-Social Behaviour Group to identify individuals who were consistent offenders of setting deliberate fires. There were known instances which had not only incurred costs to the Council but had endangered the lives of other tenants, necessitating their rehousing;
- station availability statistics were useful but to identify trends it would be useful if previous quarters could also be included, Furthermore, if there were significant changes, an explanation as to the reasons would be beneficial;
- while the Committee were supportive in principle of Service Transformation, some communities had concerns about the process and the SFRS were encouraged to engage with them to explain the proposed changes in more detail and to encourage their participation in the consultation process;
- following a recent fire in Ardgour, information was sought, and provided, as to the testing and inspection regime of fire hydrants. In this regard, a report of the incident concerned would be provided to Ward 21 (Fort William and Ardnamurchan) Members;
- the cause of road traffic collisions was questioned insofar as whether the design of the roads or the increase in the number of cars during the peak tourist season were contributory factors. In this connection, it would be useful to involve Transport Scotland in discussions on road safety;
- it was questioned if the Fort William fire station needed to be relocated to enable responders to reach the station quicker. In response, assurances were provided that this was not considered to be a significant risk;
- there was some confusion as to catchment areas for station recruitment and this needed to be addressed. Each applicant's circumstances were considered together with the station's profile with a view to gaps being filled as appropriate; and
- an outline of the SFRS's fire reduction strategy in relation to moorland burning was sought. In providing this, Members were also advised of joint working with agencies such as SNH and local groups and estates and the proactive approaches being considered such as counter burning.

Thereafter, the Committee:-

- i. **Scrutinised** and **NOTED** the Area Performance Report;
- ii. **AGREED** that information be provided to enable Members to gauge how station availability had changed over time; and
- iii. **AGREED** that Transport Scotland be invited to future Road Safety Initiative Multi Agency events.

4. Lochaber Local Priorities Prìomhachasan Loch Abar

Declaration of Interest: Mr D Rixson declared non-financial interests in this item as a Secretary/Trustee of Mallaig Heritage Centre and lifelong member of the West Highlands Museum but, having applied the test outlined in Paragraphs 5.2 and 5.3 of the Councillors' Code of Conduct, concluded that his interests did not preclude his involvement in discussion.

There had been circulated Report No LA/7/18 by the Head of Policy and Reform.

During discussion, Members made the following comments:-

- it was questioned, given changing circumstances, if there was still as aspiration to establish a Lochaber Common Good Fund. However, it could be used as a lobbying tool with Scottish Ministers and Rio Tinto Alcan and almost every other town in Highland benefited from Common Good funding. Consequently Fort William was disadvantaged when being in a position to provide facilities, art etc and it should therefore remain as an aspiration. Developments surrounding Liberty British Aluminium also had the potential to generate funds;
- the provision of a Multi-use Indoor Centre was in question as it no longer had the current active backing of the local sports association. However, clarity was sought from the Planning Service of possible consequences of removing it on historic Section 75 Agreements;
- the importance of highlighting that the STAG appraisal on the A82 was now underway was emphasised and accordingly the reference to the Highland Council's commissioning of it should be deleted;
- referring to Priority D, Rural and Coastal Recognition, the Small Isles should be identified by name as well as emphasising the importance of them to Lochaber;
- referring to Priority E, Marine Infrastructure, consideration should be given to expanding the bodies involved in the Partners section. Amongst those suggested were community trusts, development companies, Mallaig Harbour Authority and representatives from the marinas at Arisaig and the Small Isles; and
- it was suggested that, when reviewing priorities, reference be made to the rich heritage, history, culture, geology and landscape of Lochaber.

The Committee **AGREED**:-

- i. the actions and timescales proposed subject to the following changes:-
 - a. in Priority A, A82 Realignment, the reference in the timeline to the Council's commissioning of a report be removed;
 - b. in Priority D, Rural and Coastal Recognition, the Small Isles be identified by name and to emphasise the importance of them to Lochaber;
 - c. in Priority E, Marine Infrastructure, consideration be given to including, in the Partners section, community trusts, development companies such as Liberty Aluminium, Mallaig Harbour Authority and representatives from the marinas at Arisaig and the Small Isles; and
- ii. that consideration be given at the next Lochaber Committee how the area's heritage, history, culture, geology and landscape could be promoted.

5. **Housing Performance Report** **Aithisg Dèanadais Taigheadais**

There had been circulated Report No LA/8/18 by the Director of Community Services.

There was circulated Report No LA/8/18 by the Director of Community Services which provided information on how the Housing Section performed in relation to Scottish Housing Charter and other performances indicators up to 31 December, 2017.

In discussion, the following main points were raised:-

- there was a 12 week delay for the first payments to residents for universal credit and this had contributed to the increase in rent arrears. The Chair asked that the Council should alert Local MSP's and MPs of the unacceptable impact that this had on the residents in Lochaber;
- some residents had concerns about their new and existing heating systems. It was recognised that the Council needed to have resources to address the level of expenses for new heating systems for tenants, had spare bio-mass equipment and that all repairs could be carried out. Problems had been encountered with a fuel shortage in the supply of bio-mass pellets but measures had since been put in place to ensure that they could obtain sustainable supplies. Further discussions were to take place with tenants on what type of heating would be installed in properties and the costs associated;
- clarification was sought, and received, on whether missed repairs appointments were council or tenant issues; and
- reassurance was sought, and provided, that policies were in place for repairs required to bring properties up to lettable standards to be recharged to the tenant. A further report would be brought back to Committee to indicate the costs and repairs associated with the individual 3 properties outlined in the report.

The Committee **NOTED** the information provided on housing performance for the period 1 April 2017 to 31 December, 2017.

6. **Maintenance of Council Housing Estate** **Cumail Suas Oighreachd Taigheadais na Comhairle**

There had been circulated Report No. LA/9/18 by the Director of Community Services.

During discussion, Members made the following comments:-

- the difficulty residents had with engaging with the Council to maintain and improve housing estates was recognised. There were examples of good practice, however, where various partners had been brought together, namely, Claggan Residents' Association. Estate walks were regularly carried out to identify actions and each of the partners involved were responsible for addressing the actions highlighted. Apart from encouraging community involvement, this process had also seen a marked improvement in the environment. This highlighted the value of Estate Management Plans;
- the merits of increasing the supply of affordable housing, especially in Lochaber, were recognised. However, so not to do a disservice to existing residents, it was important to find extra investment, in addition to the Environmental Improvement Budget, to support existing tenants to address the long term neglect of estates;
- clarification was sought, and received, as to how an area was defined in terms of the "Rate you Estate" toolkit. In this regard, where there were only a few Council

houses situated in a much wider estate, assurances were sought that they were not excluded from adopting the toolkit;

- some issues covered in the toolkit were the responsibility of tenants i.e. dog fouling, gutter clearing. In relation to dog fouling, in response to a question, it was confirmed a robust approach was taken to deter this, particularly by community wardens, and details of the number of fines issued would be provided to Councillor McLean;
- many estates were in multi-agency ownership and this complicated matters;
- there had been significant resistance from tenants associations for monies from Council rents to be used for environmental improvements. However, a 5% share had eventually been agreed and this had resulted in significant improvements;
- it was suggested that coal bunkers and garden gates should be included in the toolkit; and
- it was suggested that those paying Council house rents in substandard estates be asked to pay an additional ½% to meet the costs of improvements and that consideration be given, in the next round of consultations with Council tenants, that this be included as an option.

The Committee:-

- i. **APPROVED** the Rate your Estate toolkit being rolled out across Council housing estates in Lochaber; and
- ii. **AGREED** to further discussion with Lochaber Members to decide a timetable detailing priority estates.

7. Car Parking in Lochaber Parcadh Chàraichean ann an Loch Abar

There had been circulated Report No. LA/10/18 by the Director of Community Services.

During discussion, Members made the following comments:-

- reflecting discussions at Ward Business Meetings (WBM) and with Fort William High Street retailers, it was suggested that a £60 season parking ticket for Lochaber residents be introduced as an alternative to the £120 agreed by the Highland Council in February. The governance procedure required to amend this decision, relating solely to Lochaber, was outlined. However, the accuracy of the note of the WBM was questioned insofar as that this proposal had been accepted by all Members;
- further amendments to the schedule included 2 hours free parking in Viewforth Terrace and the Middle Street Car Parks from November-January, with effect from November 2018. Retailers had also requested 3 hour free parking in the town centre car parks from November-February but this would not be possible due to the amount of income that would be lost. However, it was hoped that 2 hours might be possible within the current revenue budget, allowing the position to be monitored and revisited in 2019/20;
- to meet the costs of these proposals charges could be increased in the long stay car parks and for business contracts;
- the season ticket price of £120 was set too high too soon;
- a Highland-wide £60 season ticket would result in income equitably but would take time to achieve;
- the revenue generated from a Highland-wide season ticket should be ring fenced for transport infrastructure, transport initiatives and to address the catalogue of

road repairs. For example, recent reports indicated that half of Highland's young people struggled to get to work as a result of poor public transport;

- Council staff in Lochaber had relocated offices with the understanding that free car parking would be available and the introduction of these proposals was a material change and one which would now detrimentally affect them, unlike colleagues elsewhere. Some staff needed a car to undertake their duties and if the season ticket proposal came into force it was suggested that they be given a week-day pass;
- car parking at Council Headquarters, Inverness was currently free and it was argued that charges should be introduced and that Councillors should not be able to reclaim this as part of their expenses;
- the model used in some Scottish cities where firms took on responsibility of providing reduced car parking for their employees was highlighted;
- Fort William was one of five areas in Highland which had car parking charges. Although car parking was proposed elsewhere there was no guarantee that this would be achieved and there was a danger therefore that Fort William would subsidise other parts of Highland. However, other Members pointed out that, at present, Fort William generated the second highest amount of income from charges and, if charging was introduced elsewhere, not only would it generate additional revenue but the income expected from Fort William could be reduced and charges revisited and refined over time;
- whilst the increase/introduction of car parking charges might not be popular, the decision had been taken in light of the budget pressures facing the Highland Council. In some areas car parking charges would be welcomed as a means of traffic management but, it was emphasised, the consultation process was still to take place. It would take time to deliver the introduction of charges and this had been recognised when the 5 year programme had been devised. Nevertheless, it was a process which needed to be achieved, otherwise other areas of the roads budget would be affected;
- the introduction of car parking charges might be beneficial for retailers in Fort William as the first 30 mins would be free, unlike at present. However, it was also argued that shoppers might also opt to shop in out-of-town retail parks so the effect of charges would require careful monitoring;
- the Redesign Board was currently looking at car parks and parking charges and how additional income might be generated. This process would be completed by the end of April with a view to an amended Policy being considered by the Environment, Development and Infrastructure Committee in May and, over the term of the 5 year programme, the aim was to achieve equity across Highland;
- it was argued that there was an imbalance between the charges tourists were being to pay compared to local people and the latter should not be disadvantaged. In summary, it was suggested that this had been designed to raise money from the residents of Fort William and it's businesses;
- modelling outputs demonstrating the yields the various charging options would generate were to have been provided to Members but this had not been forthcoming. Consequently some Members felt that the advice provided had been inconsistent and they had not been given sufficient information to arrive at a balanced and equitable conclusion;
- while also trying to develop the town centre, the introduction of charges would cause confusion. Some Members argued that there had been insufficient consultation with businesses and that the charges would put pressure on peripheral areas where there were currently no parking restrictions in place;
- the season ticket proposal had a detrimental effect on part-time workers who would only perhaps need to use it once or twice a week. In addition, medical staff and carers, those looking after the most vulnerable, were also to be charged

£50 for an essential user permit and it was argued that the proposed income this would generate should be found elsewhere. It was also pointed out that in many instances the costs of this permit would go back to NHS Highland or the Council itself, this resulting in money simply being circulated within the system; and

- while many of the arguments made against car parking charges were admirable it was suggested that the time for these to have been made was at the Council Budget meeting on 9 February. However, it was pointed out that there had been limited time for Members to look at the detail of the budget.

At this point the meeting adjourned at 12.45 p.m. and resumed at 1.05 p.m.

Thereafter, Mr A Baxter, seconded by Mr B Thompson, **MOVED:-**

- i. to recommend to the Council that the agreed £120 Lochaber Season Parking ticket was reduced to £60. The Lochaber Committee also expressed a wish to see Council address the inequity of Council staff receiving the benefit of free parking at Inverness Council HQ when Fort William based staff receive no such benefit;
- ii. the Schedule of parking fees for Lochaber were varied to introduce a two hour free parking period for the Viewforth Terrace and Middle Street Car Parks for November, December and January; and
- iii. both these should be achieved through increases to charges in long stay car parks and business contract parking.

Mr B Allan, seconded by Mr N McLean, moved as an **AMENDMENT:-**

- i. to eliminate the £50 annual charge to carers;
- ii. to eliminate the £120 annual charge to residents of Fort William;
- iii. and that this will be paid for, subject to modelling evidence, by the decisions already taken since the Council budget was approved which were:-
 - increase of £1 across each banding charge to visitors; and
 - the elimination of the seasonal relief on long stay car parks.

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

For the Motion:

Mr A Baxter, Mr A Henderson, Mr I Ramon, Mr D Rixson and Mr B Thompson

For the Amendment:

Mr B Allan and Mr N McLean

Decision

The Committee **AGREED:-**

- *
- i. **TO RECOMMEND** to the Council that the agreed £120 Lochaber Season Parking ticket was reduced to £60. The Lochaber Committee also expressed a wish to see Council address the inequity of Council staff receiving the benefit of free parking at Inverness Council HQ when Fort William based staff received no such benefit;
 - ii. the Schedule of parking fees for Lochaber were varied to introduce a two hour free parking period for the Viewforth Terrace and Middle Street Car Parks for November, December and January; and

- iii. both these should be achieved through increases to charges in long stay car parks and business contract parking.

8. Street Naming Ainmeachadh Sràide

Declaration of Interest - Mr B Allan declared a financial interest in this item as he was employed by Lochaber Housing Association who was proposing to develop housing at the former Lochside Primary School and advised that if there was any specific discussion regarding this he would leave the room.

There had been circulated Report No. LA/11/18 by the Head of Policy and Reform.

The Committee **HOMOLOGATED** the naming of two new streets as follows:-

- commercial site in Camaghael as Old Baling Plant; and
- residential development on the former Roman Catholic School site, Lochside, Caol as Old School Court.

9. West Highland and Islands Local Development Plan Plana Leasachaidh Ionadail na Gàidhealtachd an Iar agus nan Eilean

Declarations of Interest

For this item, the following Members declared:-

financial interests and advised that, if there was any specific discussion regarding their interest, they would leave the room:-

Mr B Allan - as an employee by Lochaber Housing Association who owned or had an interest in a number of sites for affordable housing

Mr A Henderson - as he had connections with individuals building on the Green Neutral Zone in Mallaig

and non-financial interests 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 their involvement in the discussion:-

Mr D Rixson – as a homeowner in close proximity to some sites referred to

Mr N McLean – as a land owner in Ballachulish.

There had been circulated Report No. LA/12/18 by the Director of Development and Infrastructure and which was augmented at the meeting by a presentation.

Members were reminded that the Plan had been issued for public consultation and over 300 comments have been received from over 100 respondents, around a third of these comments relating to Lochaber. It was now necessary to agree the finalised Council position to allow the Plan to be submitted to Scottish Government for Examination. A number of adjustments to the Plan were suggested, and detailed, together with boundary changes.

At this point, 2 p.m., the meeting adjourned for lunch and resumed at 2.30 p.m.

During discussion, Members made the following comments:-

- at Corpach Port, the caravan owner was looking to make better use of the land in his ownership. In particular, further encroachment of industrial uses was undesirable and the buffer zone should be maintained;
- housing might be a better use of the industrial zone and would act as a better buffer;
- in relation to the major developments proposed at Blar Mhor, it was confirmed a pre-application consultation would take place;
- confirmation was sought, and received, that all comments lodged during the consultation process would be forwarded to the Reporter. Additional comments could be made during the consultation on Fort William 2040 Vision which, when approved, would be submitted to the Reporter. This would avoid any delay with the Plan;
- while accepting minor extensions to the site's boundary, the rejection of the increase of housing capacity at Lundavra Road was welcomed. There was a major burn running through the site and there had been issues with excess flood water and, where possible, mitigating measures should be taken to alleviate this;
- in relation to development north and west of the reservoir at Mallaig and access concerns, it was pointed out that the proposed solution involving the creation of a new access road next to the existing private access should read Fank Brae and not "Annie's" as detailed in the report;
- referring to the South Ballachulish Site, BH02, Members were reminded of discussions which had taken place prior to the Local Government Elections in May 2017. There had been a significant change in the membership of the Local Committee since then and the view was that it was important to recognise the strong local opinion for this site not to be included within the Plan. However, the Committee did not want to see the Plan delayed so, rather than promote a formal Plan amendment, a note should be added to Appendix 1 to clarify for the Reporter's consideration that local Members no longer support the allocation;
- it was argued that the communities of Glenachulish and North Ballachulish should not be linked together as the natural boundary was the loch and the bridge. Glenachulish had more community links with South Ballachulish;
- it was hoped the views expressed by Nether Lochaber communities in relation to settlement areas around Onich, Inchree and Corran would be taken into account. Developments in these areas, in relation to preserving views from the A82, were covered by a Highland wide policy referring to "Views Over Open Water", the relevant extract of which would be circulated to the Committee and the Nether Lochaber Community Council. In this regard, recognising the proactive approach taken by the Nether Lochaber Community Council to planning applications, it was suggested that they could, when the new Planning Act was implemented, have an opportunity to develop a Local Place Plan (a community led land use plan) for their area;
- the Association of South Lochaber Community Councils had concerns that Scottish Water's North Ballachulish Waste Water Treatment Works was reaching capacity. Furthermore, there were inconsistencies between the figures obtained by the Highland Council and those obtained through a Freedom of Information request regarding residual spare capacity and it was suggested a note should be added to Appendix 1 to request that the Reporter seek further information from Scottish Water to demonstrate actual capacity to determine its ability to service proposed Plan allocations;
- clarification was sought, and provided, as to how development boundaries were arrived at and what criteria was used to determine "growing" settlements;
- Transport Scotland had requested removal of references to any specific transport intervention for Fort William but Members were of the opinion that this should remain;

and in relation to the Fort William 2040 Vision:-

- before the consultation was launched, details of the process be discussed with Members at a Ward Business Meeting;
- to encourage participation, Community Councils should be notified of the forthcoming consultation and a written response should be sent to the Partnership of Fort William and Area Community Councils providing an update on the Plan process. It was anticipated that the consultation process would be carried out over the summer with the outcome, subject to the length of consultation and number of comments received, being reported back to the Committee at its next meeting in August;
- there was an assumption that this document related solely to Fort William but the proposals were relevant to all Lochaber Community Councils and it was important therefore to actively engage with them;
- the status of the Fort William 2040 Vision was explained;
- the port had been earmarked as a deep-water port and LNG terminal but there were some community concerns about this. Assurances were given that the Committee could, if it so wished, remove reference to this prior to its approval;
- there should be reference to electrical charging infrastructure as part of a wider network servicing the central belt, Inverness and Fort William creating a west coast circuit; and
- to highlight the importance and potential of the rail network, the document should contain more visual and textual references.

The Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the issues raised in representations received on the Proposed Plan as they related to the Lochaber Committee area and **AGREED** the recommended Council response to these issues as set out in Appendix 1 of the report, subject to the factual amendments made during discussion and to the inclusion of notes:-
 - a) to clarify for the Reporter's consideration that local Members no longer support the allocation of South Ballachulish site BH02;
 - b) to request that the Reporter seek further information from Scottish Water to demonstrate the actual capacity of the North Ballachulish Waste water Treatment Works to determine its ability to service the Plan's allocations
- ii. **AGREED** to authorise officers to undertake the statutory procedures required to progress the Plan to Examination including the submission of Appendix 1 to Scottish Ministers;
- iii. **AGREED** to authorise the Director of Development and Infrastructure, in consultation with the Chair of the Local Committee, to make non-material changes to Appendix 1 prior to its submission to the Scottish Government;
- iv. **AGREED** the work carried out on the emerging Fort William 2040 vision enclosed at Appendix 2 of the report; and
- v. **AGREED** that consultation on the Fort William 2040 vision at Appendix 2 takes place with the outcomes being brought back to this Committee, ideally in August, for final approval
- vi. **AGREED** to write to the Partnership of Fort William & Area Community Councils to respond to the issues raised in its email of 10 April 2018 and to contact all Lochaber Community Councils advising them of the details of the Fort William 2040 consultation; and

- vii. **AGREED** that the approved 2040 Vision be submitted to the Reporter during the Examination process; and
- viii. **AGREED** that the Highland wide Local Development Plan policy referring to “Views Over Open Water” be circulated to the Committee and the Nether Lochaber Community Council.

10. Minutes
Geàrr-chunntas

There had been circulated and was **NOTED** the Minutes of Meeting of the Lochaber Committee held on 17 January 2018 which were approved by the Council on 8 March 2018.

The meeting ended at 3.25 p.m.