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The Highland Council
No. 6 2018/2019

Minutes of Meeting of the Highland Council held in the Council Chamber, Council Headquarters, Glenurquhart Road, Inverness on Thursday, 13 December 2018 at 10.35am.

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

Present:

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

Also in Attendance:

Miss E Leitch, Youth Convener

In Attendance:

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

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

Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of Mr B Allan, Mrs H Carmichael and Mr G Cruickshank.

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

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

Item 5 – Mr A Christie (Financial)

Item 9 – Mr A Christie (Financial)

Item 16 – Mr G Adam, Mr R Bremner, Mrs I Campbell, Mrs C Caddick, Mr A Henderson, Mr R MacDonald, Mrs I Mackenzie, Mr C MacLeod, Mr H Morrison (all Financial) and Mr J Gordon (Financial and Non-Financial)

Item 17 – Mr L Fraser and Mr D Rixson (Non-Financial)

Item 18 – Mr A Christie (Financial)

Prior to the commencement of formal business the Convener drew attention to the talent, skills and dedication of all Highland Council staff. He highlighted the excellent work being undertaken, which was not only achieving significant financial savings but also leading the way nationally and reinforcing the Council's reputation across Scotland as a forward thinking and proactive local authority. The Convener listed a number of staff achievements/awards both at a national and UK level and detailed a number of collaborative initiatives being undertaken with partner organisations to deliver higher quality services for the Highlands. The Convener expressed appreciation and congratulated all staff for contributing to the success of the Council and this was supported by the Council.

In conclusion, on behalf of the Council, the Convener welcomed Ms Donna Manson, Chief Executive to her first meeting of the Council in her new role.

**3. Membership of the Council
Ballrachd na Comhairle**

Members were advised that, following the By-Election held on Thursday, 6 December 2018, Mr A MacInnes, Proterra, Achintraid, Kishorn, Nr Strathcarron, Wester Ross, IV54 8XB had been elected as a Member of Ward 5 (Wester Ross, Strathpeffer and Lochalsh).

In this regard, Mr MacInnes was welcomed to the Council and responded accordingly.

**4. Presentation on Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) – Director of Public Health
Taisbeanadh mu Eòlasan Leanabachd Mi-fhàbharach – Stiùiriche Slàinte Phoblach**

A presentation was undertaken by Dr Van Woerden, Director of Public Health on the Annual Report for 2018. Issues covered included the following:-

- the estimated prevalence of adverse childhood events in NHS Highland;
- resilience came from an ability to biologically and psychologically adapt to stress;
- toxic stress and its impact on children's ability to learn;
- the long term health impacts of ACEs;
- resilience could be improved later in life with support;

- a 'cluster' effect was sometimes observed where children were affected by a variety of ACEs;
- the role of the public and third sectors to develop 'trauma-informed' services, for example language use and making people feel safe, and the need for cultural changes;
- the importance of preventative work through investment in early years;
- the risks and benefits around routinely enquiring about childhood adversity; and
- the importance of creating resilient and compassionate communities.

During discussion, Members raised the following issues:-

- the report was welcomed by Members;
- attention was drawn to the value of changing language, for example asking 'what happened to you?' instead of 'what's wrong with you?', and referring to 'survivors' rather than 'victims';
- a useful seminar had been held the previous evening for Members on the subject, and reference was made to the important work that was already ongoing to tackle ACEs;
- there were more ACEs than the ten listed and all should be acknowledged in conversations;
- individual responsibility within communities for children who might be suffering or at risk was emphasised;
- it was clarified that the five year figures quoted in the report were likely to be the most recent five years for which data was available. Profiles of trends had been produced for the Community Planning Partnerships and could be provided to Members on request;
- the next Public Health Annual Report was likely to cover wider mortality and morbidity;
- in some communities public sector services had replaced family networks due to changing demographics;
- reference was made to the third sector at times being more flexible and responsive than the public sector;
- ACEs impacted on all areas of society and awareness raising was vital, as was achieving a correct balance between being open and inviting conversation without triggering traumatic memories;
- the length of the report might be off-putting to some and a single A4 document with key messages would be helpful for raising awareness;
- investment in tackling ACEs in the early years was also financially efficient as prevention of trauma could significantly reduce an individual's health problems in later life, as could breaking the cycle of poverty; and
- support was sought from Members for the twitter account @AceHighland and to continue to raise awareness and to promote the training of front line staff.

The Council **NOTED** the presentation.

5. **Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) Aware Council Eòlasan Leanabachd Mì-fhàbharach**

Declaration of Interest – Mr A Christie declared a financial interest in this item as a Board Member 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.

There had been circulated Report No HC/48/18 dated 5 December 2018 by the Interim Director of Care and Learning.

The Council **NOTED** the report and the work currently undertaken by Highland Council Care and Learning Service and how this contributed to becoming an ACE-Aware Council.

6. Confirmation of Minutes Daingneachadh a' Gheàrr-chunntais

There had been submitted for confirmation as a correct record the Minutes of the Special Meeting of the Council held on 23 October and of the Meeting held on 25 October 2018 as contained in the Volume which had been circulated separately - which were **APPROVED**.

7. 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:-

Ross & Cromarty Committee, 1 November 2018
 * Lochaber Area Committee, 7 November 2018
 Environment, Development & Infrastructure Committee, 8 November 2018
 Badenoch & Strathspey Area Committee, 14 November 2018
 Sutherland County Committee, 15 November 2018
 Caithness Committee, 20 November 2018
 Corporate Resources Committee, 21 November 2018
 City of Inverness Area Committee, 22 November 2018
 Nairnshire Committee, 28 November 2018
 Audit & Scrutiny Committee, 29 November 2018
 Isle of Skye and Raasay Committee, 3 December 2018
 Care, Learning & Housing Committee, 6 December 2018

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

***Starred Item: Item 7: PP 335-338: Car Parking in Lochaber**

During discussion, and with specific reference to the recommendation in relation to the Car Parking in Lochaber, the Chair of the Committee explained that the reason for the decision (the recommendation to Council) at the Lochaber Committee meeting was that they had been advised that the target set was a notional budget, the decision to implement two hours free car parking was within the remit of the Area Committee, and that this was a matter for which Members had discretion. He explained that the reason he was proceeding this matter (although due to the lapse in time/implementation he was now proposing that this be six weeks free car parking for two hours effective from 14 December 2018 as opposed six weeks running up to Christmas Eve) was to ensure that budget decisions were implemented fairly and equally across the whole of the Highlands. He acknowledged the budget impact of this but stated that Lochaber had generated £156,000 in car parking revenue compared to the previous year and the recommendation was also recognition of this on behalf of the local community.

Other Members indicated their support of this recommendation on the principle of fairness in terms of implementation of the car parking charging policy across the whole of the Highlands. It was further highlighted that this was also a matter of localism and, although supportive of car parking charges, it was advocated that a proportion of the revenue generated should be retained locally.

However, the Chairman of Environment, Development and Infrastructure advised that the recommendation was not acceptable in view of the current financial pressures and the impact on the Community Services budget as result of the loss of income this would generate.

On a point of clarity, the Area Chair proposed the recommendation be financed in accordance with the decision made at the meeting of the Highland Council held on 28 June 2018 whereby it was agreed that, for 2018/19 only, any shortfall in area car parking income would be underwritten from the overall Community Services budget. However, it was indicated that free car parking was not a shortfall in income.

Thereafter, Mr A Baxter, seconded by Mr N MacLean, **MOVED** a **MOTION** that six weeks free car parking for two hours be introduced in Fort William's short stay car parks with effect from 14 December 2018.

As an **AMENDMENT**, Mr A Henderson, seconded by Mr M Reiss, moved that the Council agree to (as per the spirit of the Council Minute of 28 June 2018) allow free Christmas car parking in the listed car park from now until Christmas to be funded by local ward discretionary funds.

On a vote being taken, the **MOTION** received 45 votes and the **AMENDMENT** received 14 votes, with 7 abstentions, and the **MOTION** was therefore **CARRIED**, the votes having been cast as follows:-

For the Motion:

Mr G Adam, Mr R Balfour, Mr A Baxter, Mr B Boyd, Mr R Bremner, Mr I Brown, Mr J Bruce, Mrs G Campbell-Sinclair, Dr I Cockburn, Mrs M Cockburn, Ms K Currie, Mr C Fraser, Mr L Fraser, Mr J Gordon, Mr K Gowans, Ms P Hadley, Mr A Jarvie, Ms E Knox, Mr R Laird, Mr D Loudon, Mrs L MacDonald, Mr A MacInnes, Mr G MacKenzie, Mrs I MacKenzie, Mr N MacLean, Mr C MacLeod, Mr D MacLeod, Mr J McGillivray, Mr D Mackay, Mr S Mackie, Mr R MacWilliam, Ms P Munro, Mrs M Paterson, Mr I Ramon, Mr A Rhind, Mr D Rixson, Mrs F Robertson, Mr K Rosie, Mr P Saggars, Mr A Sinclair, Ms N Sinclair, Mr C Smith, Ms M Smith, Mr B Thompson and Mrs C Wilson.

For the Amendment:

Mrs C Caddick, Mr A Christie, Mrs M Davidson, Mr J Finlayson, Mr M Finlayson, Mr A Graham, Mr J Gray, Mr T Heggie, Mr A Henderson, Mr B Lobban, Mr W Mackay Mr A Mackinnon, Mr H Morrison and Mr M Reiss.

Abstentions:

Mrs J Barclay, Mrs I Campbell, Mr R Gale, Mr R MacDonald, Mrs A MacLean, Ms L Munro and Mrs T Robertson.

Decision

It was **AGREED** that six weeks free car parking for 2 hours be introduced in Fort William's short stay car parks with effect from 14 December 2018.

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

There had been circulated for information Minutes of Meeting of the Valuation Joint Board held on 13 September 2018 (approved by the Board on 20 November 2018) which were **NOTED**.

9. Health and Social Care Working Group
Buidheann-obrach Slàinte agus Cùrain Shòisealta

Declaration of Interest – Mr A Christie declared a financial interest in this item as a Board Member 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.

There had been circulated Minutes of Meeting of the Health and Social Care Working Group held on 28 November 2018 which were **APPROVED** subject to the seventh paragraph on Page 29 being deleted and replaced with the following:-

“There was NHS funding available for representatives of other communities to visit Boleskine Community Care or Black Isle Carers.”

10. Membership of Committees, etc
Ballarachd Chomataidhean, msaa

The Council was advised that, following the By-Election for Ward 5, the political make-up of the Council was now as follows:-

Independent – 27/SNP – 20/Scottish Conservatives – 11/Liberal Democrat – 9/Labour – 3/Green Party – 1/Sutherland Independent – 1/Non-Aligned – 2

The formula in respect of the number of places on Strategic Committees was now 10/7/4/3/1.

The Council was advised that, following the resignation of Mr A Baxter as the Chair of Care, Learning and Housing Committee, it was proposed that Mr J Finlayson be appointed as Chair of the committee and this was duly **AGREED**.

The Council also:-

- i. **APPROVED** the revised Committee Membership tables subject to the following additions:-
 - a. Care, Learning and Housing Committee – Mr R Bremner to replace Ms P Munro and Mrs M Paterson to replace Mr A Baxter;
 - b. Environment, Development and Infrastructure Committee – Mr K Rosie to replace Ms M Smith and Mrs A MacLean to replace Mr R Gale;
 - c. Corporate Resources Committee – Mr A MacInnes to replace Mr K Rosie; and
- ii. **AGREED** the following:-
 - a. South Planning Applications Committee (Sub – Ward 12) – Mrs H Carmichael to replace Ms E Knox;
 - b. Highland Historic Buildings Trust - Mr A Henderson to replace Mrs M Paterson; and
 - c. NHS Highland Health and Social Care Committee – Mrs I Campbell.

11. COSLA Executive Board Membership
Ballrachd Bòrd-gnìomha COSLA

The Council **AGREED** the following revisions to the COSLA Executive Board membership:-

Health and Social Care Board – Mrs I Campbell to replace Ms K Stephen.

12. Question Time

Am Ceiste

The following Questions had been received by the Head of Corporate Governance in terms of Standing Order 11–.

(i) Mr J McGillivray

To the Leader of the Council

‘As reported to the Resources Committee the total outstanding debt at 31 March 2014 was £743,000,000 and the loan charges incurred over the year were £33,400,000. At 31 March 2018, as reported to the Corporate Resources Committee, the total outstanding debt was £1,080,000,000 (an increase of 45.35%) and the loan charges incurred over the year amounted to £36,000,000 (an increase of 9.09%). It is clear that total debt has increased significantly over the last five years, and the corresponding low level of loan charges suggest capital repayments have been kept to a minimum.

Would the Leader of the Administration agree that this trend is deeply concerning on the grounds that:

- (i) these significant loan charges result in a top slicing of income by significant amounts that could otherwise be released for the benefit of the Highlands as a whole;
- (ii) the accumulation of significant levels of debt will fall to future generations to repay; and
- (iii) and what proposals are being considered to reduce the overall debt burden which Highland Council currently bears?’

The response had been circulated.

There was no supplementary question.

(ii) Mr A Jarvie

To the Leader of the Council

‘How exactly do you plan for the public views gathered through this consultation period to be incorporated into setting the budget next year?’

The response had been circulated.

In terms of a supplementary question, Mr Jarvie queried how public views would be ranked and incorporated into the budget and at what point would public demand override the need for savings from a specific budget item.

In response, the Leader responded that meetings would resume in January 2019 and Members would be able to suggest rankings of public views. Appendix 2 of Item 15 (Your Voice: Budget Engagement and Financial Update) gave a clear indication of what the public had suggested.

(iii) Mr A Jarvie

To the Leader of the Council

'The Inner Moray Firth Local Development Plan marks out allocations IN43 and 50 for 401 houses. With planning permission routinely granting 25% over allocation, this will most likely be at least 500 houses.

The Council's own methodology would predict 120 extra primary children for 400 houses, yet over 10 years the roll forecast for the affected schools shows a net increase of only 19 children. We risk having over 100 children who we have not been accounted for in schools which are already past 100% capacity.

Why do the roll forecasts continually fall short of reality and how does the IMFLDP allocations not seem to match up with roll forecasts?'

The response had been circulated.

In terms of a supplementary question, Mr Jarvie queried, with the knowledge of the additional housing, why the roll projections for Milton of Leys Primary had decreased.

In response, the Leader confirmed that details of the calculation for Milton of Leys Primary would be sought from officers and shared with Mr Jarvie.

(iv) Mr K Gowans

To the Leader of the Council

'Over a period of several months several parents and parent councils have raised concerns regarding what they perceive as anomalies in their Flexible Childcare invoices and statements. Many of these reports cite instances where invoices/statements are issued many months in arrears and are very difficult to understand. Parents have also claimed that Highland Council customer service representatives do not appear to be familiar with the systems.

This has resulted in lack of confidence in the system amongst parents who are paying for the services and the number of overpaid by significant amounts but met with resistance when he tried to claim the overpayments back from Highland Council.

Do you feel that the Flexible Childcare accounting and reporting systems used by Highland Council are in need of an urgent review?'

The response had been circulated.

In terms of a supplementary question, Mr Gowans queried when a report would be brought to Council to advise Members of the findings of the review and the recommendations, given that this was an ongoing item and a matter of some urgency.

In response, the Leader confirmed that there was an issue but it was being dealt with and it was for the Chairman of Care, Learning and Housing to decide if an item should be brought to Committee.

(v) Mr K Gowans

To the Leader of the Council

'During the last Council, it was originally estimated that £43 million would be required to alleviate the unplanned roll pressures faced by the Inverness schools. Roll pressures that are largely due in part to inadequate analysis of demographics, unsustainable

development, lack of infrastructure and inadequate levels of developer contributions, especially for education.

Approximately two years ago officers revealed to the Care, Learning and Housing Committee the original estimate of £43 million was unrealistic and was then estimated to be £200 million. Clearly, such an unexpected budget pressure impacts on all areas of Highland Council.

Inexplicably, no reports have been presented to either Full Council or Care Learning and Housing Committee, or the City of Inverness Area Committee on this substantive issue for well over a year. Yet Inverness Members have been invited to attend private Members' briefings to advise them of the measures proposed to mitigate these roll pressures.

Given the time lapse, inflation, interest rate increases etc., and the absence of reporting to Members, can you advise all Members of this Council if this figure of £200 million has been reviewed since it was last reported to the Council and if so, what is the new figure?'

The response had been circulated.

In terms of a supplementary question, Mr Gowans queried, given that it was a pan-Highland issue and of immense importance, why there had not been reports or updates for Members to either the Full Council or the Care, Learning and Housing Committee for almost two years and asked when it was anticipated that a report would be brought to the Full Council to update Members.

In response, the Leader advised Mr Gowans that he should request a report from the Chair of Care, Learning and Housing but make clear whether this was in relation to Inverness or pan-Highland.

(vi) Mr D Loudon

To the Chair of Corporate Resources Committee

'Now that there has been an announcement of £1bn for the Scottish Futures Trust, could the Chair of Corporate Resources, guarantee that the Council will progress the preparation of "shovel ready" projects timeously to enable us to bid into the new fund?'

The response had been circulated.

In terms of a supplementary question, as the site selection for the Tain 3-18 campus would be reported to the next meeting of the Care, Learning and Housing Committee, Mr Loudon queried if site investigations would proceed without delay once approved.

In response, the Chair of Corporate Resources Committee confirmed that work was ongoing preparing all sites in relation to the school. A stakeholder meeting was to take place the following week to which he would endeavour to report to.

(vii) Mr D Loudon

To the Chair of Environment, Development and Infrastructure Committee

'What steps has the Council taken to ensure that fish landed at our harbours will have the correct paperwork for ease of access to the continent after Brexit?'

The response had been circulated.

In terms of a supplementary question, Mr Louden queried what the potential loss of revenue to harbour and landing dues and fuel sales was from deep sea and inshore boats from a hard Brexit.

In response, the Chair of Environment, Development and Infrastructure Committee confirmed that information would be sought from the Council's Harbour Manager and provided accordingly.

(viii) Mr D MacLeod

To the Leader of the Council

'What was the outcome of her talks held with the Transport Minister, Mr Michael Matheson, on 29 November 2018 to discuss a permanent solution to the Stromeferry Bypass issue?

And to ask what specific measures both the Scottish Government and the Highland Council have agreed to pursue in respect of finding a permanent solution following these talks?'

The response had been circulated.

In terms of a supplementary question, Mr MacLeod queried if the Leader was confident funding would be forthcoming from the Scottish Futures Trust and if the Council was preparing a bid. He also queried if the Minister had addressed the question of the overdue Strategic Transport Review of the Trunk Roads Network, a responsibility placed on them by the Roads (Scotland) Act 1984.

In response, the Leader confirmed that there was potential for funding from the Scottish Future Trust and in this regard a meeting was to take place with the Chairs of Environment, Development and Infrastructure and Corporate Resources to which Local Members would also be invited to. The Strategic Transport Review was not due until 2020 but the Minister was content that Stromeferry would form part of it if the Council wanted to put it forward.

(ix) Ms M Smith

To the Chair of Environment, Development and Infrastructure Committee

'There are proposals in Ross and Cromarty to charge for some car parking in different areas. This is on the premise that the relevant community will receive a large percentage of the income generated from the car park charges. This was agreed in a previous committee and now needs to be confirmed as to the exact percentage split. Please provide me with the figure that the Administration is proposing?'

The response had been circulated.

In terms of a supplementary question, Ms Smith queried if the percentage split was from any additional income generated from new car park charges or if it was in relation to any income above the target set.

In response, the Chair of Environment, Development and Infrastructure Committee confirmed that, in the future, it was the intention to set a target deliberately low so there was a fair chance a good percentage would be left in the community.

(x) Ms M Smith

To the Chair of Corporate Resources Committee

‘Could I have a list of the vacancies the Council currently holds with an indication of the length of time they have been vacant?’

The response had been circulated.

In terms of a supplementary question, Ms Smith queried, out of the 84 posts which Services had indicated were required, how many the Executive Leadership Team had approved.

In response, the Chair of Corporate Resources Committee confirmed that details would be provided to Ms Smith but that the Services being delivered were not affected by the holding of these posts.

(xi) Mr R MacWilliam

To the Leader of the Council

‘Has the Leader had a reply to her letter to Scottish Ministers on the completion date of the £3billion A9 dualling project?’

The response had been circulated.

In terms of a supplementary question, Mr MacWilliam queried if the Leader accepted that the Scottish Government was committed to dualling the A9 by 2025.

In response, the Leader confirmed that a letter had been received from the Scottish Minister confirming this and would be shared with Mr MacWilliam. However, this was contrary to the views of the communities, users and construction engineers of the road.

(xii) Mr R MacWilliam

To the Leader of the Council

‘Does the Leader anticipate maximising the Highland Council allocation of Scottish Government affordable housing programme funds for 2018/19?’

The response had been circulated.

In terms of a supplementary question, Mr MacWilliam queried what measures the Leader had to ensure the support was in place so officers could fully deliver the Strategic Housing Investment Plan.

In response, the Leader confirmed that she was confident that there would be no under-performing on housing development. The Team were renowned for accessing external additional monies but should they require additional human resources their request would be made known to the Chief Executive.

(xiii) Ms P Munro

To the Leader of the Council

'It is noted that the current waiting list for school age children to be referred to Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) is now in the region of two years. It is crucial that our vulnerable young people are able to get a diagnosis at the earliest opportunity. Therefore, can I please have assurances that the Leader will immediately address the unacceptable delays for referrals to this and other mental health services within our school system?'

The response had been circulated.

In terms of a supplementary question, Ms Munro queried why there were instances where schools had had no contact with Primary Mental Health Workers and if she could meet with the Leader to discuss specific cases.

In response, the Leader confirmed that a meeting would be arranged but, in such instances, Head Teachers should contact the Chief Executive so that these gaps in provision could be identified and addressed.

13. Notices of Motion Brathan Glusaid

The following Notices of Motion have been received in accordance with Standing Order 12:-

(i) 'Regional Workforce Recruitment Strategy: Highland Council recognises that the Highland economy and public services are reliant on inward migration for recruitment; proposes the formation of a joint working group with HIE, NHS Highland and representatives of Highland industry to develop a regional workforce recruitment strategy to avert a crisis in recruitment in the event of ending free movement for EU nationals as a result of Brexit.'

Signed: Mr R MacWilliam Mrs M Cockburn

During discussion, Members raised the following issues:-

- recruitment in the Highlands was an on-going problem across most sectors of the economy and was likely to deteriorate further, depending on the outcome of Brexit, and Highland Council needed to take a firm position;
- at the Council's Brexit seminar, Members had heard experts' concerns, particularly about the agriculture sector and small businesses and their ability to attract the necessary number of workers;
- although Highland was a good place to live, it lacked employment opportunities and public agencies needed to do a better job of promoting the area;
- a range of skills was required. Accordingly, the Brexit Working Group needed to convene early in 2019 to pull together all the key agencies with a view to formulating a plan to attract the necessary workforce;
- a message that the "Highlands was open for business" needed to be communicated to all stakeholders. Highland had a low population with a huge land mass and a collective approach was required. A small investment at this time could have significant benefits;
- the matter had been raised at a recent meeting of the Convention of the Highlands and Islands. A shared service approach would work well i.e. a recruitment division covering all Highland public agencies which could also highlight the benefits of living in Highland in a concerted way. It could also address some of the other collective issues about relocating to Highland such as housing in remote areas and providing a suitable family environment; and

- the Scottish Government had a responsibility to stem the flow of those leaving Scotland.

Decision

The Council **AGREED** the terms of the Notice of Motion as detailed.

(ii) 'ACE Aware Child Bereavement Services: That Highland Council recognises that childhood bereavement is an adverse childhood experience (ACE); notes with alarm that 67% of school exclusions are attributable to young people who have lost a parent or sibling and that research suggests multiple poor outcomes in later life for bereaved children; believes that Highland Council as an 'ACE-aware' Council has a duty to engage with all support services to improve outcomes for all children, and will prioritise bereavement services for children as part of a wider review of service improvements for those who have suffered bereavement.'

Signed: Mr R MacWilliam Ms K Currie

During discussion, Members raised the following issues:-

- a previous question regarding support services in place within the Council to address moments of chaos arising from bereavement had helped to inform the Council's Mental Health Plan;
- the statistics in the ACE's study about those who had suffered bereavement were alarming and much needed to be done to improve outcomes. Children affected by bereavement should be prioritised and the necessary measures put in place;
- 67% of school exclusions were of children who had suffered parental or sibling bereavement. Accordingly, it was important to examine what was currently being provided in terms of support and how it could be improved;
- bereavement affected everyone at some point and it was a common misconception that it was a private matter. Instead it was important to have a support structure in place to provide professional guidance;
- as Corporate Parents it was important for Members to have insight, empathy and a good form of perspective to ensure these children had an equality of relationships;
- while concurring with the sentiments expressed it was contended that the individual be prioritised rather than concentrating primarily on a service i.e. providing the right services to the right individual regardless of whether they were an adult or child, depending on their needs; and
- at a recent Mental Health Summit, Crocus, who provided bereavement support to children and young people in the Highland, had highlighted the disadvantages many young people who had suffered bereavement faced later in life and, when considering budgets, it was important to bear in mind the importance of their work.

Decision

The Council **AGREED** the terms of the Notice of Motion as detailed – subject to a change to the wording in the penultimate sentence, to replace the word 'prioritise' with 'promote'.

(iii) 'Highland Council supports proposals currently being developed by NHS Highland and local stakeholders to ensure refurbishment and redesign of Caithness General Hospital and the creation of health care hubs in Wick and Thurso, recognising that these measures retain existing local services whilst offering a sustainable model to further develop and enhance local provision. Caithness Members will continue to work with NHS Highland and stakeholders to provide more local clinics, reduce unnecessary travel and address ongoing concerns regarding maternity services.'

Signed: Mr K Rosie Mr R Bremner Ms N Sinclair Mr M Reiss

During discussion, Members raised the following issues:-

- opportunities outweighed challenges in Caithness and new business investment in the west of Caithness and North Sutherland had taken place in the recent months. However, this was in the face of the rundown of the nuclear industry and the difficulties in regard to health and social care in the Spring of 2017;
- a health redesign process had been ongoing for some time and had been a main issue during elections. Calls were made for the Scottish Government to invest in the redesign proposals;
- there was enthusiasm within communities and in the previous 18 months there had been the emergence of development trusts and community organisations setting about establishing amenities that were financially viable, sustainable and of real benefit to all in Caithness;
- provision needed to be focused on people's general health and wellbeing. In cooperation with the Caithness Community Partnership (CCP), there was an opportunity to provide meaningful localism and to fulfil a collaborative and solution focused partnership. There was huge potential within the CCP, a forum which had business expertise, multi-agency, third sector and public participation and the ability to empower communities. Accordingly, agreement was sought for the redesign proposals and for Caithness Councillors to fund the CCP with future ward discretionary funding;
- in Spring 2017 there had been various rumours regarding the future of Adult Health and Social Care in Caithness including the closure of the Town and County and Dunbar Hospitals or reducing their status. These rumours had resulted in public protests and consequently NHS Highland had given a commitment to review provision. Following detailed consultation, a submission was now being made to the Scottish Government for support for an investment programme of £30m for health services in Caithness, a much needed economic boost;
- services needed to be redesigned as a result of changes in medical practices since the hospitals had been built. In addition, Caithness General Hospital was to be refurbished;
- the hubs in Wick and Thurso had been fully discussed during the consultation to determine what proposals would best suit. As a result, it had been decided that services in the east and west of Caithness would be retained locally and, with a number of changes, services improved;
- NHS Highland was looking at how to tackle the various issues regarding the delivery of health services in rural areas. This included recruitment and upskilling and discussions were taking place with UHI and the Northern Highland College. The aim was to reduce the need to travel whilst providing accessibility to health services;
- whilst challenges remained, considerable progress had been made as a result of the hard work of many and appreciation was expressed to all those involved;
- there was still work to be done. There were still too many patients travelling to Raigmore Hospital for 10 minute appointments and therefore it was important to repatriate as many clinics as possible. Video consultations had helped but it was only one part of the solution and not suitable for all;
- the new model of maternity services still carried risks;
- predictions were that the population would decrease by 14% in the next 20 years and action needed to be taken to reverse this. Caithness had excellent schools, connectivity, a beautiful natural environment and, importantly, its superb hospitals and the redesign underway would enhance their reputation; and

- prevention and addressing the root causes of poverty were essential if the health and life chances of those living in Caithness were to be improved. Excellent work had taken place in areas of multiple deprivation but a holistic overview was needed and it was suggested that a multi-agency Poverty Summit be held.

Decision

The Council **AGREED** the terms of the Notice of Motion as detailed.

(iv) 'Highland Council will seek to identify and address local and regional transport needs to enable input on the national transport strategy.'

Signed: Mr K Rosie Mr R Bremner

During discussion, Members raised the following issues:-

- the current National Transport Strategy set out three Key Strategic Outcomes as the guiding principles at national, regional and local level when developing strategy and prioritising resources, namely (a) improved journey times and connections (to tackle congestion and lack of integration and connections in transport); (b) reduced emissions (to tackle climate change, air quality, health improvement); and (c) improved quality, accessibility and affordability (to give choice of public transport, better quality services and value for money or alternative to car);
- comparison was made to the Faroe Islands which, in the 1960s, had a similar population level to Caithness. In 2017 the Faroe Islands population exceeded 50,000 whilst Caithness had dropped below 30,000. This was because the Faroese had provided transport connectivity to 13 of their 18 Islands in the form of subterranean tunnels. There was now also a subterranean roundabout, their own International airline and 4G connectivity across each of the Islands, extending 200 miles out to sea, and they were working towards providing 5G connectivity on the same basis. Caithness needed to be just as aspirational;
- Caithness had a range of transport providers and resources such as NHS Highland, Highland Council, the third sector and commercial organisations and, following on from informal discussions with transport providers, there was an opportunity to work collaboratively to identify and address local issues;
- improvements to the train journey time from Wick to Inverness were called for, together with the devolution of the network rail service and a reduction in the journey target time of 3 hours. With the increasing volume of car and heavy haulage traffic on the road network an improved train service would help to reduce carbon emissions;
- reference was made to the Lochaber Transport pilot and it was hoped similar could be realised in Caithness. By adopting the NHS Highland consultation model for the recent health and social care redesign process it was hoped, when applying it to transport, that a truly integrated and sustainable transport system could be achieved both at a regional and local level;
- connecting hubs, in this case Wick, Thurso and Inverness and beyond, would help build the economy;
- being clear of the factors impinging of the ability to deliver good structure and connectivity whilst having minimal impact on the environment was important. This was an aim of HITRANS together with maximising the use of integrated transport schemes;
- SUSTRANS had provided many new community link routes in Inverness and the surrounding area but 50% funding was required to source that;

- many in Highland needed a car to move around as they felt held to ransom by bus operators or trains not running on time. If people were to be encouraged to stay/live in rural areas then a suitable integrated transport system had to be provided; and
- Transport Scotland's focus on minimising journey times also needed to take into account resilience e.g. road closures as a result of accidents, landslides etc. There was a significant economic impact of road closures in Highland, as opposed to other areas in Scotland, given the potential for huge geographical diversions, resulting local economies grinding to a halt.

Decision

The Council **AGREED** the terms of the Notice of Motion as detailed.

14. Annual Review of The Council Programme Prògram na Comhairle

There had been circulated Report No. HC/49/18 dated 1 December 2018 by the Chief Executive.

Prior to debate, the Chief Executive highlighted the need for Members, staff and communities to work collectively. From a series of visits she had made throughout Highland it had been evident there was now a willingness to change how services were delivered and to build capacity. The Highlands had a rich heritage and an incredible environment and it was essential to sustain this whilst also having ambition as to what could be achieved.

The Leader of the Council emphasised the opportunity the review of the Council Programme presented, and the need to make bold statements and be ambitious about what Members wanted to achieve for Highland. She thanked Members for their input to date and explained that there would be a further opportunity at the proposed seminar in January, at which the performance measures that would accompany the Programme would be discussed. That would inform the draft Corporate Plan, which would also come before Members. She went on to refer to the feedback from the budget engagement process that had taken place over the past six weeks, and commended the ambition of Council staff and communities. The Programme showed ambition on many fronts and she highlighted, in particular, the need to improve infrastructure and to stabilise the populations in the North and West and help them grow. However, she wanted all Members to be ambitious and champion Highland, and she welcomed further input.

During discussion, Members raised the following issues:-

- there had been a change in recent months in terms of communities' awareness of and willingness to become involved in Council business and reference was made to a recent meeting with Community Council representatives and the positive engagement that had taken place in relation to local governance;
- in relation to this item and the next, it was necessary to do things differently and reset the old expectations between the Council, communities, Community Councils, Community Partnerships etc. In that regard, the importance of consultation, engagement, listening, empowerment, localism, trust, good communication and inclusivity was emphasised;
- in the areas of the UK where successful transformation had taken place there had been a concerted effort by everybody involved to showcase the good things that happened there, and the need for the local media to promote Highland in a positive light was emphasised;

- the Programme was not about party politics but achieving better outcomes for communities and showcasing Highland as the number one place in the UK to work, live and thrive;
- trying to identify a definitive list of priorities was a mistake as the services provided by the Council were so varied and delivered over such a wide geographical area that inevitably priorities changed depending on a multitude of factors;
- sustainability had to be a priority and that sometimes meant difficult decisions had to be made. Sustainability came in many forms and reference was made to the unintended consequences of energy saving measures in terms of poor air circulation, damp and mould. It was emphasised that it was necessary to take a holistic view, plan, consult, and base decisions on knowledge, experience, professional advice and the interests of constituents;
- the Council was fortunate in that it had some of the foremost officials in the public sector in Scotland, as well as a fantastic legacy of knowledge and expertise from former officers;
- whilst the Programme was admirable, concern was expressed as to how deliverable it was in a time of decreasing budgets;
- given that officers were already struggling to deliver services, Members questioned who was going to monitor the key outcomes and targets;
- communities were concerned with issues such as potholes, having sufficient teachers in schools, public toilets and good housing that was repaired on time and it would be difficult to engage with them in relation to the proposed Programme when other issues were not being addressed;
- whilst the need for targets was recognised it was important not to become too fixated on them and to focus on need;
- clarification was sought in relation to paragraph 7.1 of the report, which stated that the proposed seminar would be used to explore how the structure of the organisation, including political and governance structures both at strategic and area level, might need to change to support the delivery of performance measures;
- it was understood that the purpose of the Programme was to set out the priorities of the Council. This then fed into the Corporate Plan, which set out how performance would be measured, and the budget, which funded the stated priorities. In addition, caution was expressed regarding increasing the number of pledges from 30, in the previous Programme, to 51. The value of a commitment could only be judged if it was known how it was intended to achieve and monitor it, otherwise it was merely an aspiration. It was therefore suggested that the Programme be treated as a draft, that it be refined following the proposed seminar, and that a slimmed down iteration be considered at the same time as the Corporate Plan;
- concern was expressed that the Programme conflated service provision with wider aspirations in terms of the Council's role in improving Highland communities;
- affluent communities were enthusiastic about having a greater say in how the Council conducted its business. However, less affluent communities were more concerned with service provision and it was suggested that providing services to the best standard possible needed to be at the forefront of the Programme. Once that had been financed, consideration could be given to what could be done in addition;
- Members wished to see more about the decentralisation of Council services;
- reference was made to the significant number of people that commuted to Inverness from surrounding communities, thereby adding to the carbon footprint and traffic congestion, and it was suggested that it was necessary to encourage businesses to operate in smaller rural locations throughout Highland;
- thanks were expressed to the Leader of the Council for listening to Members' views, and the changes that had been made to the Programme were welcomed. However, there was no reference to Brexit and the associated challenges and opportunities, and the need to create policy to maximise those opportunities was emphasised;

- whilst Members welcomed the increase in the number of young people who wanted to stay in Highland, the figure was still only 46% and it was lower outwith Inverness. The loss of young people from rural areas had to be targeted or it would escalate to the point that services would not be able to be sustained;
- the Programme was inspirational and full of optimism but was very much aspirational. Much of its delivery depended on local communities and the Council needed to work with community groups, remembering that they were volunteers, and be seen as an enabler rather than a barrier;
- the need to better include Gaelic in the context of the document was emphasised;
- if the Council was truly committed to localism it was necessary to empower communities financially and it was suggested that point 2 of the priorities in section 2 of the Programme should be strengthened accordingly;
- the Programme had become very fluid and it was necessary to bring it to a conclusion so that the Council had a clear vision going forward;
- it was necessary to distribute resources more evenly throughout Highland;
- reference was made to a recent publication by the Scottish Ecological Design Association which highlighted that around 55% of homes in Highland were affected by fuel poverty, an issue that had not been mentioned in the Programme. One of the main reasons for fuel poverty was the quality of house building, fuel bills often being three times what they ought to be to heat a modern home. It was a key issue and it was suggested that it should be front and centre of the Programme;
- since the 1970s, Highland had undergone transformational change and had benefitted from improved national and international transport links and digital connectivity. It was perceived as being an area that offered a high quality of life, and had been listed in a 2018 Scottish Government report as being the best place to live in Scotland. Tourism and service industries continued to be major economic drivers but that was not currently the case for the oil and gas industry. While overreliance on oil and gas had undermined the economy since the 1990s, the affect had been mitigated by the rise of life sciences and renewables. The unpredictability of non-traditional industries such as oil and gas, and the vulnerability of overreliance on multinationals were apparent. Traditional industries offered repetitive tasks that could be automated or a large employer could relocate and, in a relatively small city surrounded by a large rural hinterland, this presented a high level of risk. In a time of high unemployment where traditional skills could be outsourced or automated, creative skills remained highly sought after and valuable. It was clear that the medium to long term goal of the Council should be to develop a creative workforce as a key contributor to innovation and research, locally, nationally and internationally, and to help employers create opportunities that were entrepreneurial, indigenous, high quality and, above all, sustainable. This would attract high quality jobs to take advantage of the creative workforce that was likely to add real value to the prospects of the region. To do so, it was necessary to build a society that was creative, diverse and tolerant as part of a wider strategic vision that was shared across political, economic, social, and cultural agents, every one of which was a stakeholder. The essential task before Members was to unleash the energies, talent and potential of everyone to build a society that acknowledged and nurtured creativity, and to work together towards a creative economy in Highland;
- the natural environment was arguably Highland's biggest selling point and could not be underplayed. It was already generating a significant number of jobs and the trend was in the right direction. The tourist season was longer and was generating more and better paid jobs and it was necessary to do as much as possible to encourage that to continue. In addition, the benefits to children of outdoor education/activities and taking managed risks were emphasised; and
- the population in Caithness was predicted to drop by 14% over the next 20 years and reversing that trend would be a good measure of success.

In responding to the points raised, the Leader of the Council suggested that the recommendation in the report be modified and that Council note the draft Programme, which would be subject to further consideration.

In relation to whether it was necessary to include a statement about basic services, she suggested that that be considered at the proposed seminar. However, she reminded Members that the Council Programme would inform Service Plans which would set out how services would be provided. Monitoring and achievability also required further discussion. In that regard, she emphasised the need for meaningful outcomes and measures. In addition, she highlighted that Members would be monitoring the Programme and the Corporate Plan while officers would monitor Service Plans and report to the Chief Executive on a regular basis.

She went on to concur with the points raised in relation to Gaelic, localism, fuel poverty and the environment and highlighted that decentralising services and improving the amount of local spend had been included in the Programme. She sought Members' assistance in reducing the number of pledges and, in relation to poverty, emphasised that it was threaded throughout Highland and it was necessary to address it all. Finally, she explained that the Chief Executive would be undertaking further work on the potential restructuring of the Council and the matter would be discussed at the proposed seminar in January.

Decision

The Council:-

- i. **NOTED** the draft Council Programme which would be subject to further consideration;
- ii. **NOTED** the development of the Corporate Plan with key outcomes linked to robust target setting to be submitted to Council for Members' approval in the New Year; and
- iii. **AGREED** that a two day all-Member seminar be held in January 2019.

15. Your Voice: Budget Engagement and Financial Update Cunntas às Ùr mu Bhuidseat

There had been circulated Report No. HC/50/18 by the Chief Executive and Depute Chief Executive.

In addition to the report, the Depute Chief Executive provided a verbal update on the previous day's Scottish budget announcement during which he explained that the specific grant allocation for the Council would not be known until Monday 17 December. The headline figure presented by the Scottish Government was a cash increase of £163m for local government in the next financial year. However, COSLA was presenting that as a reduction in core grant funding of £237m, the difference between the two figures relating to ring-fenced funding for a number of new commitments that were included in the settlement, details of which were provided. The reduction in core grant equated to 2% but the Council's budget assumptions were based on a 1% reduction. The difference between 1% and 2% was approximately £4.3m. However, time was needed to analyse the figures in detail.

The Budget Leader commended the report to Members, commenting that, in common with other local authorities, the Council faced considerable challenges in managing its budget, but there were also opportunities. The Budget Team remained committed to a three-year planning cycle and the projected overspend had reduced from £5.112m to £2.238m. However, there were risks, such as the Looked After Children budget, winter

maintenance and the staff pay award. A target had been set of returning Council reserves to at least 2% of the revenue budget and, although the situation was challenging, it was important to bear in mind that there was in excess of £500m currently available to spend on the delivery of core services.

The Budget Team was committed to closing the budget gap, primarily by raising money through Council Tax and other fees, charges and taxes, and to spending less on services by delivering them more efficiently. It was important that communities influenced the Council's priorities, and the recent round of engagement events with staff and the public was evidence of the consultative approach to the budget. The principal message in the face of the challenging national situation was delivering services to meet community needs as efficiently as possible, keeping within budget, and this would be best achieved through a collaborative approach within the Council and working with staff and the public, the input from whom had been humbling and encouraging.

During discussion, Members raised the following issues:-

- concern was expressed that the Budget Team had not been working collaboratively with the Opposition, who were also working on proposals with officers, and information was sought on when more detail on the budget proposals would be available. In response, the Budget Leader explained that the budget papers were a work in progress and it was hoped that they would be available in early January in good time for the proposed seminar;
- the report referred to the very positive contributions to the budget engagement process. However, many of the comments on social media were negative and there was a lot more to be done in terms of communicating why the Council did certain things and how initiatives such as the River Ness public art project and the Inverness Town House refurbishment were funded. It was added that the press had a role to play in that regard. In response, the Budget Leader acknowledged that there was a long way to go. However, the engagement events that had taken place had been positively received and the Budget Team was listening to feedback and was committed to continuing the process;
- information was sought, and provided, on the current position in relation to undelivered savings;
- it was necessary to do things differently and the redesign work was starting to pay dividends. However, some savings and culture changes took time to materialise;
- it was necessary to ask whether specific services needed to be provided and, if so, whether there was a more effective way of doing things;
- increasing income was key, and it was necessary to set targets and aim to reach them but recognise that, in some cases, they would not be achieved;
- it was important to think big and to take steps to get there, and the Council's vision was ambitious, transformational and aspirational;
- Members and the public needed to know, in much more granularity, what Council funding was being spent on;
- the importance of consultation and communication was emphasised;
- it was necessary to explore new systems and processes, and there was a need for more remote, flexible and agile working;
- Members described the positive engagement that had taken place at Dingwall Academy, particularly at the School Fair, emphasising that the public recognised the issues being faced in relation to the budget, and had, in some cases, experienced the same issues in their own workplace and wanted to work with the Council to achieve improvements. Other Members added that re-arranging one of the sessions at short notice had not been helpful, and inviting all Local Members to attend the Fair would have been more collaborative;

- thanks were expressed to the Budget Leader and the Executive Leadership Team, who had attended a significant number of engagement events throughout Highland;
- there was a need for a critical analysis of service provision from the bottom up rather than the top down to ensure that frontline staff had the opportunity to say what was working and what was not, and that their ideas for improving services and realising savings or revenue increases were reflected in the budget proposals that came forward;
- sometimes culture change was required. However, it was not always comfortable to think about the impact some changes might have internally;
- in relation to income generation, it was believed that the parking meter at Eden Court Theatre was generating over £1000 per week, the majority of which was going back to the theatre to support drama and the arts;
- it was important to get maximum value out of the public pound;
- whilst the civic bonfire and fireworks display in Inverness cost in the region of £15,000 annually, the event brought a significant amount of revenue to the city and the money spent on stewarding, safety barriers etc benefitted the community and other public agencies;
- concern was expressed regarding janitors' houses which had lain empty for a number of years and the associated missed potential in terms of rental income and Council Tax;
- whilst the Redesign Board was on the right track, it was necessary to move much faster and to monitor initiatives at an early stage so they could be modified or terminated if the anticipated efficiencies were not being achieved;
- it was necessary to apply more business acumen to public services to generate income;
- the level of response to the Facebook live session on education had been disappointing;
- if the predictions by COSLA and other local authorities were correct, the reduction in core grant funding was likely to be between 2-3% and the Council would require to identify additional savings of £4-5m. It was no longer possible to "salami slice" and it was necessary to consider what areas to target and what services not to deliver. It was important to recognise the enormity of the challenge, particularly against a backdrop of trying to increase capacity and better engage with the Third Sector, Community Councils, and communities in general. It was necessary to work in collaboration to find the best possible solutions and to move forward with a sense of positivity, share the challenges with communities, be open and transparent in all communications and hopefully identify areas where any cuts would have the least possible impact on the most vulnerable people in Highland;
- staff and the public had a lot of good ideas and confidence was expressed that, with their help, the Council was up to the challenges and the legal requirement of a balanced budget would be achieved;
- there were positives and negatives to the Scottish Government budget depending on your point of view. For example, HIE funding had been cut by 16% or £10m whereas Government Business and Constitutional Relations funding had increased by 500%, which equated to an additional £9.7m; and
- the island authorities had received extra money and it was maintained that, in many ways, Highland was like a large island and also required additional funding.

Decision

The Council:-

- i. **NOTED** the very positive contributions and the significant effort made by communities, staff and Members to the budget engagement process in the month of November; and

- ii. **AGREED** to a Members' seminar in January 2019 to take forward the matters raised into clear actions which will then be incorporated into the February budget paper.

16. Options for Funding Future Highland Tourism Development: A Transient Visitor Levy
Cis Neach-tadhail Sealach

Declaration of Interest – Mrs I Mackenzie, Mrs I Campbell, Mr A Henderson, Mr G Adam, Mrs C Caddick, Mr H Morrison, Mr R MacDonald, Mr R Bremner, Mr C MacLeod, declared financial interests in this item as a tourist operator and Mr J Gordon declared a financial interest as a tourist operator and a non-financial interest as a director of SkyeConnect 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/51/18 dated 5 December 2018 by the Director of Development & Infrastructure.

It was highlighted to Members that, if approved, the proposed public consultation on the implementation of a Transient Visitor Levy would commence in early 2019.

During discussion, Members raised the following issues:-

- the Cabinet Secretary had informed the Convener that he was looking forward to receiving responses from the Council's consultation;
- the consultation presented a once in a lifetime opportunity to consult on a Transient Visitor Levy and it was estimated that a levy could bring in between £5-10m per annum;
- whilst there were currently some areas which might not attract much tourism, it was important to ensure that the consultation reached every person and village in the Highlands as there was potential that visitor numbers could increase due to exposure through the internet and social media;
- there was a growing consensus across the whole of Scotland that a Transient Visitor Levy was required immediately and this had been recognised by the Scottish Government;
- Members should act as ambassadors for the levy and actively encourage people to respond to the consultation;
- in highlighting that other countries operated a tourism levy, it was emphasised that the levy was seeking to generate income from tourists and not the tourism sector or hoteliers. The levy could be used to help address issues regarding infrastructure and had the potential to create opportunities for the tourism industry to apply for funding from;
- it was important to recognise the wider impact the introduction of a levy could have on the tourism industry in the Highlands and that the focus should not just be on the revenue that could potentially be generated from it;
- the consultation should contain evidence of how tourism levies worked in other countries as the way they operated could be different to what was being proposed in Scotland;
- the UK had both the highest level of VAT rates and air traffic passenger levies in Europe;
- other countries had the ability to change or reimburse tourism levies to compensate the local economy;
- in emphasising that the way in which a tourism levy was implemented in a city could be very different to how it was implemented within a rural area, it was highlighted

that planning had started within Skye towards the introduction of separate car parking charges in iconic sites frequented by tourists, which could be considered as an equitable tax;

- in highlighting the importance of investing in infrastructure to sustain a viable tourism model, it was pointed out that, whilst revenue generated by tourism in Skye had made an important contribution towards central government, this had not always been reinvested in the area;
- discussion should take place with business representatives at the earliest opportunity to identify any issues they might have in relation to extra work arising from the introduction of a tourism levy;
- four years previously Inverness had had the highest proportion of empty commercial units of any high street within the UK and caution was urged against anything that could potentially impact on businesses;
- a recent study by UK Hospitality had identified Scotland as being ranked 135th out of 136 countries for tourism price competitiveness and concern was expressed that a small increase in cost to tourists could exacerbate this;
- any impact on income could be addressed by devolving a small percentage of local VAT revenues to the Council and that the consultation should seek views on this as an addition to the second recommendation contained within the report;
- it was not always the case that tourists were responsible for the increase in tax and these types of comment should be avoided during the consultation as some of instances of this tax would fall on those businesses and individuals that provide the services and could alienate those businesses the Council was seeking to consult with;
- the economy of rural and remote communities along the West Coast was reliant on tourism;
- it had been suggested locally by some organisations that there was potential for levies from tourism to be devolved to local areas for spending;
- the potential income generated from car parking charges at iconic visitor sites could raise similar sums of money to that suggested in the tourism levy and could also have a smaller impact on local businesses;
- the Highlands and Islands Federation of Small Businesses had recently conducted a survey of around 200 firms, of whom almost three quarters felt that the tourism levy would have a negative impact on the areas' economy. Conversely, it was highlighted that only 8% of firms within the Highlands and Islands Federation of Small Businesses had actually responded;
- the proposed tourism levy had the potential to increase revenue to the Council and that whilst various cases for spending money had been made by Members, other ideas for generating income were not always forthcoming;
- a tax on tourism was a standard form of income generation and could be used for investment in infrastructure;
- the potential to generate income from users of motorhomes was highlighted and whilst there was a willingness from users to spend money to clear their waste water and fill up water tanks, the opportunity was not currently available to them due to a lack of infrastructure;
- people visiting other countries were used to the concept of a tourism tax and it was unlikely an extra charge would put off potential visitors;
- in response to a comment expressing the need to ensure that the consultation included businesses and tourist operators and the potential for a cross-party group to identify what content should be included, it was highlighted that there was already a Tourism Working Group comprising of cross-party Members;
- the importance of having a means of financing improvements to infrastructure that would help to contribute to sustainable tourism was emphasised; and

- the popularity of videos recorded in Highland and posted on YouTube, such as those by Danny MacAskill, helped attract tourists to the area and it was important to generate revenue for investment in infrastructure.

Thereafter, Mr A Henderson, seconded by Ms M Smith, **MOVED** the terms of the recommendation as detailed.

As an **AMENDMENT**, Mr A Jarvie, seconded by Mr C Smith, moved that the following additional phrase be included within the second recommendation: 'also, for this consultation to seek the same views on devolving a percentage of local VAT revenue to the Council'.

On a vote being taken, the **MOTION** received 46 votes and the **AMENDMENT** received 8 votes, with 2 abstentions, and the **MOTION** was therefore **CARRIED**, the votes having been cast as follows:-

For the Motion:

Mr G Adam, Mrs J Barclay, Mr B Boyd, Mr R Bremner, Mrs C Caddick, Miss J Campbell, Mrs I Campbell, Mrs G Campbell-Sinclair, Mr A Christie, Dr I Cockburn, Mrs M Cockburn, Ms K Currie, Mrs M Davidson, Mr J Finlayson, Mr M Finlayson, Mr K Gowans, Mr A Graham, Mr J Gray, Ms P Hadley, Mr T Heggie, Mr A Henderson, Ms E Knox, Mr R Laird, Mr B Lobban, Mrs L MacDonald, Mr R MacDonald, Mr G MacKenzie, Mr A MacInnes, Mr A Mackinnon, Mrs A MacLean, Mr C MacLeod, Mr D Macpherson, Mr R MacWilliam, Mr H Morrison, Ms L Munro, Mrs P Munro, Mrs M Paterson, Mr M Reiss, Mr D Rixson, Mrs F Robertson, Mrs T Robertson, Mr K Rosie, Mr G Ross, Ms N Sinclair, Ms M Smith and Mr B Thompson.

For the Amendment:

Mr J Bruce, Mr L Fraser, Mr A Jarvie, Mr D Mackay, Mr D MacLeod, Mr P Saggars
Mr A Sinclair and Mr C Smith.

Abstentions:

Mr R Balfour and Mr A Baxter.

Decision

The Council:-

- NOTED** the range of factors that would need consideration in deciding whether and how to implement a Transient Visitor Levy; and
- APPROVED** the proposal that the Council should carry out a public consultation on the implementation of a Transient Visitor Levy as described in section 7 of the report.

**17. Redesign of Highland Council – Progress Report
Ath-dhealbhadh Chomhairle na Gaidhealtachd – Aithisg Adhartais**

Declaration of Interest – Mr L Fraser as housing maintenance sub-contractor and Mr D Rixson as a Board member of Lochaber Housing Association declared non-financial interests in this item but, having applied the test outlined in Paragraphs 5.2 and 5.3 of the Councillors' Code of Conduct, concluded that his interest did not preclude him from taking part in the discussion.

There had been circulated Report No. HC/52/18 dated 4 December 2018 by the Chief Executive.

There had also been circulated Minutes of Meeting of the Redesign Board held on 13 November 2018.

During discussion, the following main issues were raised by Members:-

- reference was made to press reports about an Auditor's Report in relation to the Council's financial arrangements, written on behalf of the Council. It was explained that these press reports were inaccurate. The Council had received a report for the Redesign Board, free of charge, by a person independent of the Council. The Board had commended the report as a great piece of work for consideration;
- there had been good engagement in the Redesign process by staff at all levels. It was important to focus now on the implementation of reviews;
- it was acknowledged that the Trade Services Review had been very complicated but if good systems and processes were put in place that were easy to adopt then staff were more likely to adapt easier to the changes which had the potential to generate significant savings. The implementation of this review required to be regularly monitored to ensure it was achieving the desired outcomes;
- in terms of the Trades Review, if there was evidence of poor workmanship then this needed to be challenged, as should excessively high charges for work completed. It was suggested that a lack of supervision might be a reason for poor workmanship. Furthermore, it was understood that the merging of two systems within Trades Services had been tried in the past and halted some years later and there was concern that this could happen again;
- it was important that all the appropriate Officials that had an interest in the Trades Review had the chance to comment on the report, particularly from a health and safety perspective; and
- in relation to the Agency and Temporary workers review, some benefits could be achieved by simply adhering to current Council policies. This review would also involve organisational change and flexible working.

The Council:-

- i. **APPROVED** the Minutes of the Redesign Board;
- ii. **NOTED** progress on Council Redesign work;
- iii. **APPROVED** the recommendations of the Trade Services Peer Review; and
- iv. **AGREED** that the Redesign Board should continue to oversee the delivery and implementation of three specific recommendations in the short term which would assist with the delivery of savings, with increased efficiency of operation and with the development of the in-house capability for trade services for both Council housing and other property. These were:
 - A Lean review into housing and property repairs processes;
 - The development of a trial to pilot more effective joint working between Community Services and Development & Infrastructure; and
 - The procurement of a new framework for trade services.

18. Inverness and Highland City Region Deal Annual Report Cùmhnant Roinne/Baile

Declaration of Interest – Mr A Christie declared a financial interest in this item as a Board Member 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.

There had been circulated Report No. HC/53/18 dated 3 December 2018 by the Director of Development and Infrastructure.

During discussion, Members raised the following issues:-

- it was queried what would follow after the current Inverness and Highland City Region Deal was concluded. It was requested that, in the Council Programme, there be a commitment for the Council to promote to the UK and Scottish Governments for a successor to the City/Region Deal, particularly focusing on the North and West Coast Highlands and perhaps also in partnership with Partners in Northern Argyll to address some of the fundamental issues in these areas that the current City/Region Deal was just beginning to address. In this respect, the Leader undertook to arrange a meeting with Members interested in this issue;
- the time was now right for a new Region deal as the current City/Region deal had provided minimal benefits out with Inverness. Any successor to the City/Region Deal should give consideration to smaller rural areas;
- the extensive geographical area and coastline of the Highlands needed to be taken into account in any successor to the City/Region deal;
- the work by Officers involved in the City/Region Deal was commended and there was good progress on projects such as the installation of WiFi and ultra-fast Broadband in various villages and towns across Highland. This was a fantastic benefit for UHI, colleges and businesses across the Highlands;
- given the importance of retaining young people in the Highlands, the housing element within the City/Region Deal was mid-market rent housing, aimed at younger people. Developments were planned in various locations throughout the Highlands;
- there was a need to look at how Local Committees could deliver on their local strategic priorities and how any successor to the City/Region Deal funding could be used to help meet these priorities; and
- it was explained that when the Council had drawn up its wish list of projects for City/Region Deal, the Treasury had only been interested in projects that could generate significant tax income or economic benefits e.g. more housing with increased income from Council tax. However, the value of projects was not just be about their cost benefit return and the Council needed to be able to demonstrate the economic benefits of projects beyond any tax income that could be achieved.

Thereafter, the Council:-

- i. **NOTED** progress with the City Region Deal during 2018; and
- ii. **APPROVED** the publication of the report on the Council's website.

19. Member Attendance at Meetings **Làthaireachd Bhall aig Coinneamhan**

It was confirmed that the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 required that if a Member of a Local Authority failed, throughout a period of six consecutive months, to attend any meeting of the Authority, they should, unless the failure was due to some reason approved by the Authority, cease to be a Member of that Authority.

In this regard, it was advised that Mr Blair Allan had, because of illness, been unable to attend meetings of the Council since 28 June 2018. As this might continue beyond the 6 months stipulated in the Act, the Council was required to approve his absence because of illness to enable him to continue as a Member of the Authority.

Decision

The Council **APPROVED** Mr Allan's absence as a result of illness on the basis that the position would be reviewed following a further three month period and an update provided for the meeting on 7 March 2019 if necessary.

20. Timetable of Meetings
Clàr-ama Choinneamhan

The Council **AGREED** the following change to the timetable of meetings for 2019 -

Special Meeting of Highland Council – 16 January 2019 at 2.00 pm

Lochaber Area Committee – to now be held on 23 January 2019 (instead of 16 January 2019)

North Planning Applications Committee – to now be held on 9 April 2019 (instead of 16 April 2019)

The Council also **AGREED** to revisit Committee meeting dates scheduled for October 2019 with a view to avoiding school holidays.

21. Deeds Executed
Sgrìobhainnean Lagha a Bhuilicheadh

The Council **NOTED** that a list of deeds and other documents executed on behalf of the Council since the meeting held on 25 October 2018 was available in the Members' Library and on the Council's Website.

The meeting ended at 5.35 pm.

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The Highland Council
No. 7 2018/2019

Minutes of Meeting of the Highland Council held in the Council Chamber, Council Headquarters, Glenurquhart Road, Inverness on Wednesday, 16 January 2019 at 2.00pm.

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

Present:

Mr G Adam	Mrs L MacDonald
Mr R Balfour	Mr A MacInnes
Mrs J Barclay	Mrs D Mackay
Mr A Baxter	Mr D Mackay
Mr B Boyd	Mr W MacKay (V/C)
Mr R Bremner (V/C)	Mr G MacKenzie
Mr I Brown	Mrs I MacKenzie
Mr J Bruce	Mr S Mackie
Mrs C Caddick	Mr A Mackinnon
Miss J Campbell	Mrs A MacLean
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
Mrs M Cockburn	Ms L Munro
Mr G Cruickshank	Mrs M Paterson
Ms K Currie	Mr I Ramon
Mrs M Davidson	Mr M Reiss
Mr J Finlayson	Mr A Rhind
Mr M Finlayson	Mr D Rixson
Mr C Fraser	Mrs F Robertson
Mr R Gale	Mrs T Robertson
Mr J Gordon	Mr K Rosie
Mr K Gowans	Mr G Ross
Mr A Graham	Mr P Saggars
Mr J Gray	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	Mr B Thompson
Mr B Lobban	Ms C Wilson
Mr D Louden	

Also in Attendance:

Miss E Leitch, Youth Convener

In Attendance:

Chief Executive

Acting Head of Policy

Mr B Lobban in the Chair

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

Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of Mr B Allan, Dr I Cockburn, Mr L Fraser, Ms P Hadley, Mr T Heggie, Mr R MacDonald, Mr C MacLeod, Mr J McGillivray, Mr N McLean, Mrs P Munro and Mr H Morrison.

2. Declarations of Interest Foillseachaidhean Com-pàirt

There were no Declarations of Interest.

3. Review of the Highland Scheme of Establishment for Community Councils 2018/19 Ath-sgrùdadh air Sgeama Stèidheachaidh na Gàidhealtachd airson Chomhairlean Coimhearsnachd 2018/19

There had been circulated Report No. HC/1/19 dated 4 January 2019 by the Acting Head of Policy.

The Acting Head of Policy having set out the process for the review and the initial engagement which had taken place, the following issues were raised by Members during discussion:-

- acknowledging the considerable work undertaken by officers, appreciation was also expressed to those Community Councils who had already taken part in the pre-phase of engagement. Moving to the next stage it was important Community Councils were aware of the timescales involved. Everyone was to be encouraged to feed into the consultation;
- the strength of feeling over some proposed changes to Community Council boundaries in Caithness was acknowledged and it was proposed that these were revisited in consultation with Local Members and the Community Councils concerned. In this regard, some boundaries in Inverness were no longer appropriate and they too required to be re-examined so that they better represented communities rather than historical electoral wards;
- going forward there would be further opportunities to revisit Community Council boundaries;
- increasing grants to rural Community Councils would have a corresponding effect of reducing grants to urban ones. Furthermore, some Community Councils had more resources available to them and therefore the whole system of their funding should be looked at taking into account the core functions of Community Councils;
- additional funding could be made available through establishment of a Discretionary Fund. However, while there was appetite to review the funding formula, the Scheme was being reviewed within existing resources, the budget for which had been reduced for 2018/19;
- the impact of cuts already made to Community Council grants was recognised;
- the costs of remote Community Councils travelling to meeting in Inverness should be taken into account;
- the role of Community Councils needed to be re-examined. At present, they were seen as consultees and not decision makers and a change to this regime was proposed. For example, representations made by Community Councils on planning applications could be included in reports considered by the Council's Planning Application Committees;
- empowering Community Councils would enable Highland Council to better deliver services. In addition, by delegating powers and budgets to Community Councils, it would delegate a greater degree of democracy. However, it was also important at the same time not to overburden Community Councils;
- comparison was made to English Parish and Neighbourhood Councils and to how effective and successful they could be. As their role was valued contested elections

often took place. A similar arrangement should be considered for Community Councils;

- there was support to consider, as part of the review, the possibility of a local levy;
- the inclusion of the recording of declarations of interests would protect Community Councillors, especially if they were to have a greater influence in the planning process and negotiating community benefit. In this regard, the guidance provided to them should be clear;
- wider public participation needed to be encouraged with many Community Councils relying on co-opted members. In this regard, Members welcomed youth participation and perhaps extending the suggested 14-18 age group to younger people who often had innovative ideas;
- Community Councillors were often the first step to standing for election to Highland Council. They often too acted as a springboard for the creation of other community groups who were able to source funding;
- although there was an aspiration to use electronic voting, the cost and high level security concerns needed to be addressed. It was suggested this be explored with the Council's IT officers as it might also have merit as a means of communication with the general public around participatory budgeting. While consideration might also be given to processes such as postal voting, this should be only one out of a range of options;
- the practise of consultation with Community Councils should not cease in June 2019 but be an on-going process to ensure that the Highland Council could invigorate and sustain Community Councils into the future;
- the frustrations experienced by Community Councillors were recognised: while they were consulted their views were not always listened to leading to a sense of powerlessness;
- there were many welcome suggestions in the Scheme and in the proposed response to the Local Governance Review response such as supporting a change in the legal status of Community Councils and allowing them to have similar arrangements as those afforded to Highland Councillors who were unable to attend meetings due to extenuating circumstances;
- in examining the ideal governance structure this had to be within the confines of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973. However, Members had the opportunity here to encourage localism, community empowerment and to stimulate activity, especially in those areas where Community Councils were in abeyance; and
- the public should be encouraged to attend meetings by assuring them that they could expect that their views would be listened to.

The Council:-

- i. **AGREED** to the formal review of the Highland Scheme of Establishment for Community Councils as required under section 53 of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973;
- ii. **AGREED** to the draft proposals outlined in Section 4 of the report and in appendices 1-3 with the exception of a change to the boundary proposals set out in appendix 2 and section 4.1 of Appendix 1 relating to Caithness and Inverness where, following local discussion, it is proposed that these are replaced with a single proposal to "Review Caithness and Inverness Community Council boundaries in conjunction with local Community Councils";
- iii. **NOTED** that a three month consultation will take place seeking public views on the draft proposals and seeking any further representations for amendments to the Scheme; and
- iv. **AGREED** that the areas outlined at section 4.11.6 of the report are included as part of the Council's response to the Local Governance Review.

The meeting ended at 3.00 pm.

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The Highland Council
No. 8 2018/2019

Minutes of Special Meeting of the Highland Council held in the Council Chamber, Council Headquarters, Glenurquhart Road, Inverness on Thursday, 14 February 2019 at 10.30am.

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

Present:

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

In Attendance:

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

Mr B Lobban in the Chair

Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of Mr B Allan, Mrs G Campbell-Sinclair, Mr R Gale, Mr A Graham and Mrs C Wilson.

Prior to commencement of the formal business, the Convener drew attention to an error which had been carried forward in relation to Item 4(v) on the agenda and in this regard confirmed that the estimated HRA surplus in 2019/20 to be applied as capital from current revenue to fund HRA capital investment was £2.5m (and not £2.148m as had been stated).

At this point, and in response to a point of order, it was confirmed that adjournments throughout the meeting could be arranged if and when necessary for any Member who wished to seek advice on alternative budget proposals which they might wish to put forward.

2. Declarations of Interest Foillseachaidhean Com-pàirt

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

3. Revenue Budget 2019/20 to 2021/22 Buidseat Teachd-a-steach agus Cìs Comhairle 2019/20

There had been circulated Joint Report No. HC/2/19 dated 9 February 2019 by the Chief Executive and Depute Chief Executive/Corporate Resources.

During a summary of the report, it was advised that the Scottish Government had announced its draft budget for 2019/20 in December but could not be viewed as final until it had been formally approved on 21 February. However, the detail of the budget contained a number of key changes to the Local Government settlement in that, whilst the overall cash level of funding would increase from 2018/19, the Council would be expected to incur additional expenditure to deliver Scottish Government priority policies, including increased early years provision and health and social care.

Within the overall resource available, the money to provide existing services had reduced by just under £5m from 2018/19 and this reduction in funding for existing services, together with pay and other cost pressures, contributed to the overall budget gap being faced by the Council.

Total grant funding for the Council had however increased by £4.228m since the announcement in December and as such the Administration had indicated its intention to use this improved settlement to set aside funding for investment in roads infrastructure and to create a Change Fund as detailed in the report.

The Scottish Government had only announced a one year budget whilst the Council was intending to set a three year budget. For planning purposes, it had therefore been necessary to assume an annual reduction in funding of 1% on the basis that there would be a consequential impact on the budget gap should this not be the case.

However, as part of the agreed budget, the Scottish Government had made a commitment to bring forward a three year funding settlement for Local Government from 2020/21 onwards and this was welcomed. In addition, a number of commitments to potential changes to Local Government taxation raising powers had been made, including consultation in the current year on the principles of a local determined tourist tax prior to introducing legislation to permit Local Authorities to introduce a transient visitor levy, support for an amendment to the Transport (Scotland) Bill to enable Local

Authorities to introduce a workplace parking levy and the devolving of Non-Domestic Rates Empty Property relief to Local Authorities in time for the next revaluation.

The revised budget proposals also contained two significant items of note, namely Local Authorities having the flexibility to increase Council Tax in 2019/20 by up to 4.79% (whereby in the past two years any increase had been capped at 3%) and the option to reduce the spending allocation to adult social care by 2.2% compared with 2018/19 (excluding the additional funding being provided as part of the settlement).

In relation to the budget gap, it was noted that this had been identified as £60.297m (10.65% of the 2018/19 budget) for the period from 2019/20 to 2021/22 and reflected the difference between the estimated costs of continuing current service levels together with the additional costs of any new expenditure commitments and the income which the Council would have available to it over the period.

With specific reference to the funding requirement for 2019/20 to 2021/22, and in terms of the incremental budget approach which had been used for the three year period, the starting point for that approach, the budget figure of £566.289m, was the net revenue budget in the current financial year, adjusted to take account of any already agreed savings. Added to the figure was the anticipated cost of pay awards for Council employees and an allowance had also been made for budget pressures of £10.798m over the period. The need to increase reserves for both specific and general purposes had also been recognised, with proposals focusing on the establishment of a Change Fund of £2.5m in 2019/20 and an annual increase in general reserves of £2m from 2020/21 onwards.

Finally, and in respect of risk implications, it was highlighted that agreement of the budget required Services to manage budgets, together with the delivery of a significant number of savings, which represented a significant challenge. There was a particular risk around those savings where the actions required to deliver them were still to be fully determined and as such close monitoring throughout the year in this regard would be essential.

Thereafter, the Budget Leader, in moving the recommendations within the report, confirmed that this was a budget for jobs, performance and change. The good news was that the Council would have nearly £600m to spend in the next year and this would enable the delivery of outstanding projects across the Highland area. In thanking the talented and dedicated staff across the Council for their input to the budget process, he also thanked the members of the public who had also taken part in the process.

Specifically, it was confirmed that the launch of the new approach to involving and engaging the public and staff in the budget setting process, including identifying and shaping Council priorities, had been undertaken in November 2018 and had included over fifty engagement sessions, an online survey, budget challenge tool and Facebook chat sessions. Feedback had helped to inform a two day Seminar in January which had focused on internal and external governance arrangements, community engagement and participation, new approaches to delivering service change and transformation and developing a flexible and capable workforce. It had also been integral to shaping the budget themes of efficiency, income generation, redesign, workforce and the approach to meeting the budget gap.

In this respect, the Council's Change Strategy for 2019/2022 had been set out in the accompanying paper to the report – 'A Sustainable Highland' – which set out the vision for change and how it would be achieved. Whilst it was anticipated that the delivery of the required changes would be difficult, it was intended to establish a Programme Management Office to ensure that there was better collaboration and co-ordination across the Council, better visibility of initiatives, more efficient and faster delivery of

projects with greater returns, better risk mitigation and structured risk resolution and a clear and consistent mechanism for assessing potential projects arising from Member, staff and public feedback.

The Leader of the Opposition highlighted the engagement of the SNP Group in the cross-party discussions on the budget and the clear expectation that the savings now proposed by the Administration would be delivered in the coming year. In addition to this, the SNP Group had also identified some alternative savings which would be formally put forward later in the meeting and included reference to Ward Discretionary Budgets and High Life Highland in particular.

In relation to the Scottish Government settlement, it was suggested that there was a need for the Administration to review what was currently included in the core budget and in this regard the additional £4m which had been received was welcomed, not least in terms of enabling a Change Fund to be set up and allowing an additional £1.5m to be invested in roads across the area. The Scottish Government commitment to considering a Transient Visitor Levy was also welcomed. Reference was also made to the fact that the Administration had previously advocated for the ability to raise Council Tax in previous years but had now taken a decision not to raise it for the forthcoming year which was welcomed.

Finally, and in noting that the opportunity would be taken to replenish reserves whenever and wherever possible, thanks were conveyed to the Chief Executive and Officers across the Council for their help and input to the SNP Group in terms of the budget process.

In response, the Budget Leader confirmed that cross-party monthly meetings in relation to the budget situation would be arranged from the following month. In addition, a Resources and Improvement Board was to be set up, involving himself and the Chief Executive and Depute Chief Executive/Director of Corporate Resources, to take forward the budget proposals and that this would include a focus on issues around the potential for future income generation.

At this point in the meeting, the alternative budget proposals from the SNP Group were tabled.

Following a request from the Convener for amendments in relation to the first section of the budget papers –

Mr A Jarvie, seconded by Mr A Sinclair, moved that in relation to Paragraph 1.25 (Travel and Hire Desk), the saving should be increased by £23k in the forthcoming year and that this should be used in relation to Paragraph 2.9 (Graduated % increase in fees and charges in Community Services) instead and specifically to decrease the cost of Fish Export Certificates by 20%.

Following a vote between the Motion from the Budget Leader, seconded by the Depute Leader of the Council, and the Amendment from Mr A Jarvie, seconded by Mr A Sinclair, the **MOTION** received 52 votes and the **AMENDMENT** received 13 votes, with 2 abstentions, and the **MOTION** was therefore **CARRIED**, the votes having been cast as follows:-

For the Motion:

Mr G Adam, Mr R Balfour, Mrs J Barclay, Mr B Boyd, Mr R Bremner, Mr I Brown, Mrs C Caddick, Miss J Campbell Mrs B Campbell, Mrs H Carmichael, Mr A Christie, Dr I Cockburn, Mrs M Cockburn, Ms K Currie, Mrs M Davidson, Mr M Finlayson, Mr J Finlayson, Mr L Fraser Mr C Fraser, Mr J Gordon, Mr K Gowans, Mr J Gray, Ms P Hadley, Mr T Heggie, Mr A Henderson, Ms E Knox, Mr R Laird, Mr B Lobban, Mr D

Louden, Mrs L MacDonald, Mr R MacDonald, Mrs D Mackay, Mr G MacKenzie, Mrs A MacLean, Mr C MacLeod, Mr D Macpherson, Mr R MacWilliam, Mrs B McAllister, Mr J McGillivray, Mr N McLean, Mr H Morrison, Ms L Munro, Mrs M Paterson Mr M Reiss, Mr A Rhind, Mr D Rixson, Mrs T Robertson, Mrs F Robertson, Mr G Ross, Ms N Sinclair, Ms M Smith and Mr B Thompson.

For the Amendment:

Mr A Baxter, Mr J Bruce, Mr G Cruickshank, Mr A Jarvie, Mr D Mackay, Mr W MacKay, Mrs I MacKenzie, Mr S Mackie, Mr D MacLeod, Mr I Ramon, Mr P Saggars, Mr A Sinclair and Mr C Smith.

Abstentions:

Ms P Munro and Mr K Rosie.

In relation to the tabled Budget Proposals from the SNP Group and specifically Paragraph 2.16 (Increased income maximisation target for High Life Highland), it was **AGREED** to accept the proposal to restrict High Life Highland card membership price increases at inflation on the basis that a £30 card would increase to only £31 and a £20 card to £20.60 (subject to agreement by the High Life Highland Board).

Thereafter, and during general discussion, the following issues were raised:-

- care had to be taken in relation to the implementation and potential impact of the proposals in the report and specific reference in this regard was made to school lets which had reduced over the past year due to previous increases in charges;
- in relation to Paragraph 1.2 (Revision of all staffing allocations to schools and a targeted approach to management of absence), there was disappointment in relation to the lack of detailed information on these proposals and concern that this had the potential to cause consternation for parents and parent bodies when the full implications were realised. In this regard, it was highlighted that schools were very limited in terms of what could be achieved through partnership working with external bodies as there were very few external funding opportunities available. Also, the proposal in relation to returning pupils with additional support needs to mainstream would have to be very closely monitored and great care needed to be taken when making reference to the Council being 'over resourced', specifically in terms of comparing 'like for like' with other Local Authorities. It also had to be highlighted that the four largest schools accounted for the delivery of education to approximately one third of the pupils in the Highland area and the ratio of staffing in these schools was significantly poorer in comparison with other areas. In view of all of these issues, it was imperative that the Change Fund was available to deal with any future and unforeseen impacts which might arise from these proposals;
- in relation to Paragraph 1.19 (Grass Cutting), and specifically in regard to the proposals as to how this saving would be delivered, it was highlighted that consultation was currently being undertaken with local communities across the Highlands to identify local solutions and this had to be closely monitored and taken into account as part of any future proposals;
- both Street Cleaning and Grass Cutting were highly visible issues in terms of the delivery of Council services and as such the SNP Group, through consultation on the budget process, had identified measures to reduce the original planned level of savings in both cases and this was welcomed; and
- in regard to the proposals around additional support needs, it was important to assess the performance of the Council in comparison with other Local Authorities but care had to be taken in assuming that any comparison was being undertaken on a 'like for like' basis. In this regard, it was clear that the situation could be improved and it was imperative that the clear links between additional support needs and deprivation were recognised and that a system where need was

dictated by want did not prevail. As such, a new system of governance required to be implemented in order to focus on these issues and this should also include addressing current concerns about the worrying stress levels being experienced by teachers as a result of workloads; and

- there was a need to thank the Budget Leader and Mr M Reiss for the work which they had undertaken throughout the budget process.

At this point, Mr A Baxter, seconded by Mr N McLean, moved that, in relation to Paragraph 2.9 (Graduated % increase in fees and charges in Community Services) and specifically the Corran Ferry, a flat charge of £1 per foot passenger should be introduced in order to offset the proposed 3% increase in fees.

Following a vote between the Motion from the Budget Leader, seconded by the Depute Leader, and the Amendment from Mr A Baxter, seconded by Mr N McLean, the **MOTION** received 42 votes and the **AMENDMENT** received 24 votes, with 2 abstentions, and the **MOTION** was therefore **CARRIED**, the votes having been cast as follows:-

For the Motion:

Mr G Adam, Mr R Balfour, Mrs J Barclay, Mr J Bruce, Mrs C Caddick, Miss J Campbell, Mrs B Campbell, Mrs H Carmichael, Mr A Christie, Mr G Cruickshank, Mrs M Davidson, Mr M Finlayson, Mr J Finlayson, Mr J Gordon, Mr J Gray, Mr T Heggie, Mr A Henderson, Mr A Jarvie, Mr B Lobban, Mr R MacDonald, Mrs D Mackay, Mr W MacKay, Mr A Mackinnon, Mrs A MacLean, Mr D MacLeod, Mr D Macpherson, Mrs B McAllister, Mr J McGillivray, Mr H Morrison, Ms L Munro, Mrs M Paterson, Mr I Ramon, Mr M Reiss, Mr A Rhind, Mr D Rixson, Mrs T Robertson, Mrs F Robertson, Mr G Ross, Mr P Saggars, Ms N Sinclair, Mr C Smith and Mr B Thompson.

For the Amendment:

Mr A Baxter, Mr B Boyd, Mr R Bremner, Mr I Brown, Mrs M Cockburn, Dr I Cockburn, Ms K Currie, Mr C Fraser, Mr K Gowans, Ms P Hadley, Ms E Knox, Mr R Laird, Mr D Louden, Mrs L MacDonald, Mr A MacInnes, Mr D Mackay, Mr G MacKenzie, Mr C MacLeod, Mr R MacWilliam, Mr N McLean, Ms P Munro, Mr K Rosie, Mr A Sinclair and Ms M Smith.

Abstentions:

Mrs I MacKenzie and Mr S Mackie.

Thereafter, and also in relation to Paragraph 2.9 but with specific reference to Burial Fees, Mr S MacKie, seconded by Mr C Smith, moved that the Council should introduce ancillary services for families and implement an initial memorial wall offering to generate £0.035m. Also, to use the revenue from the ancillary services to reduce the 2019/20 savings by £0.032m and to extend the child burial scheme to 18 year olds (£0.003m). This would reduce the increase to 1.6% in the current financial year.

Following a vote between the Motion from the Budget Leader, seconded by the Depute Leader, and the Amendment from Mr S Mackie, seconded by Mr C Smith, the **MOTION** received 36 votes and the **AMENDMENT** received 29 votes, with 1 abstention, and the **MOTION** was therefore **CARRIED**, the votes having been cast as follows:-

For the Motion:

Mr G Adam, Mr R Balfour, Mrs J Barclay, Mr B Boyd, Mr I Brown, Mrs C Caddick, Mrs B Campbell, Miss J Campbell, Mrs H Carmichael, Mr A Christie, Mrs M Davidson, Mr J Finlayson, Mr M Finlayson, Mr J Gordon, Mr J Gray, Mr T Heggie, Mr A Henderson, Mr B Lobban, Mr R MacDonald, Mrs D Mackay, Mr W MacKay, Mr A Mackinnon, Mrs A MacLean, Mr D Macpherson, Mr R MacWilliam, Mrs B McAllister, Mr H Morrison, Ms L

Munro, Mrs M Paterson, Mr M Reiss, Mr A Rhind, Mr D Rixson, Mrs F Robertson, Mrs T Robertson, Mr G Ross and Mr B Thompson.

For the Amendment:

Mr A Baxter, Mr R Bremner, Mr J Bruce, Mrs M Cockburn, Dr I Cockburn, Mr G Cruickshank, Ms K Currie, Mr K Gowans, Ms P Hadley, Mr A Jarvie, Mr R Laird, Mr D Loudon, Mrs L MacDonald, Mr A MacInnes, Mr D Mackay, Mrs I MacKenzie, Mr G MacKenzie, Mr S Mackie, Mr C MacLeod, Mr D MacLeod, Mr N McLean, Ms P Munro, Mr I Ramon, Mr K Rosie, Mr P Saggars, Mr A Sinclair, Ms N Sinclair, Mr C Smith and Ms M Smith.

Abstention:

Mr J McGillivray.

At this point, and in relation to Paragraph 2.2 (Catering Service Income – Increase school meal prices by 5p per meal), it was **AGREED** to accept an alternative proposal from the SNP Group as follows – redesign school meals vis a vis the Deloitte Report to the Redesign Board and (a) choose a school that performed well and study why in relation to choice of meals, little competition out with school and food suppliers and duplicate the model across some or all schools where possible and (b) avoid waste so order less food to throw away. Also, take three months to study and implement in August 2019 across Highland schools.

During continuing general discussion, Members raised the following issues:-

- in relation to Paragraph 2.9 (Graduated % increase in fees and charges in Community Services) and specifically the Uplift of Green Waste, there was concern that the increase of £5 per brown bin could lead to this service being less well used in future and it was suggested that this should be closely monitored as the new charges were implemented;
- with regard to Paragraph 2.17 (Planning and Building Warrant Fee Income), and whilst supporting this saving, it was suggested that this proposal should be monitored and if necessary consideration should be given to additional staffing within this Service as a ‘spend to save’ measure;
- in terms of any additional funding being made available for Ward Discretionary Budgets, consideration should be given to reallocating a percentage of this funding to local Community Councils and Community Partnerships as many were struggling to meet current costs and this would represent a ‘statement of faith’ in the services which they provided;
- it was imperative that the savings associated with the Care & Learning Service were handled sensitively and with the involvement of all stakeholders to ensure the best possible outcomes for all concerned and most especially to ensure that all children across the Highlands reached their full potential;
- in relation to Paragraph 2.3 (Electric Vehicle – Recharging), it had to be recognised that this was something which was still at a relatively early stage of its development and as such there was a need to be cautious in terms of identifying savings at this stage;
- in regard to Paragraph 2.21 (Waste Management), there was concern that changes/restrictions in relation to Waste Recycling Centres could lead to an increase in fly-tipping and this would therefore have to be closely monitored from the outset and revisited if necessary;
- in relation to Paragraph 4.4 (Children’s Services Redesign), and with specific reference as to how the proposed savings would be delivered, it was highlighted that the Pupil Equity Fund and the Scottish Attainment Challenge Fund were meant to be used as an addition to (and not instead of) core Council funding and there should therefore be no instruction from the Council to

schools on how such funding streams were to be used and they should not be used to meet savings targets. There was also a need to closely monitor staffing issues in line with the proposed savings measures in order to avoid any potential problems for local communities in this regard;

- in relation to Paragraph 4.6 (Implementation of Redesign Board recommendations), it was disappointing to see the inclusion of income from car parking charges despite previous assurances that local consultation would be undertaken in the first instance. In this regard, a detailed breakdown of the proposed saving of £0.8m was required and specifically clarification as to how much of this equated to car parking income generation and the areas in which it was expected to be implemented;
- it was felt that consideration of the Capital Programme should have been undertaken at the same time as the Revenue Budget;
- it was imperative that a redesign exercise was undertaken in relation to the proposals for Additional Support Needs, specifically to enable a full understanding of all issues involved in conjunction with Head Teachers and parents. In this respect, it was suggested that there was no support for any reduction in Additional Support Need or Pupil Support Assistant frontline staff;
- it had to be highlighted that Highland Council was one of only very few Local Authorities who were able to present a budget which avoided reference to large scale compulsory redundancies and this was welcomed, together with the proposals for making the Council more commercially minded and identifying income generation opportunities in future;
- in regard to Paragraph 3.17 (Sustainable Education Programme), there was some concern that this had already been the subject of review and a way forward agreed with those concerned and this now represented revisiting that agreement with further additional consultation;
- in relation to Paragraph 4.2 (Support Services), it was considered that an excellent service was currently being provided and there was therefore disappointment at the scale of the savings being proposed at this time which would have a subsequent impact on pupils. As such, the SNP Group had looked closely at this proposal and would be presenting an amendment in this regard;
- in relation to Paragraph 4.1 (Benchmarking of support in schools), there was a need for detailed consideration as to how and why the highest reported levels of Additional Support Need in Scotland had been recorded in Highland with 37.2% of primary pupils in this category (against a Scottish average of 23.5%) and 40.6% of secondary pupils (against a Scottish average of 29.9%); and
- there was general concern that the specific detail and/or outcomes arising from many of the budget proposals would not be known until a later date, particularly in relation to educational issues, and also in relation to the current low level of reserves should it be necessary to have to deal with any unanticipated consequences during the following year.

At this point, the SNP Group, having engaged with the budget process on the basis of stability, trust and scrutiny, requested that the following issues be either reviewed or set up and completed within a 12 month period or in parallel with the Redesign Board –

- (a) a complete review of Education from Early Years through to 18 – this must include cared for children and where the Council was failing at present. A team to be set up, including representation from the SNP Group, to look at this on a monthly basis to review and evaluate changes;
- (b) the Care, Learning & Housing Committee to be split into 2 sections – Health Care & Housing and Education;
- (c) a complete review of property and rented property that the Council had on its portfolio;

- (d) a complete review of borrowing due to money being cheap at present to enable the Council's capital spend for schools and roads to be increased – this to be done before Brexit on 29 March;
- (e) a complete review of electricity usage and this usage to be put out to auction with bids to come in for supply. Also, include houses owned by the Council and do this as a separate issue to see if the Council could reduce fuel poverty and make a slight profit on domestic use; and
- (f) NHS cross party arrangements to be set up with the prime objective being better outcomes with the NHS Joint Partnership.

In response, the Leader of the Council confirmed that a written response on all of the issues raised would be provided for the SNP Group in due course.

Thereafter, it was **AGREED** to accept a new funding proposal from the SNP Group for additional funding for Ward Discretionary Budgets in the sum of £210k in 2019/20 in order to inject funds back into communities to help local projects or fund cash strapped Community Councils who were struggling to make ends meet. Localism and community empowerment were key agenda items for the Council and had to be upheld as important. Specifically, this proposal was to give back £10k to each Ward Discretionary Budget for communities to bid into – this was a one-off saving to assist groups to find match funding and/or also get involved in participatory budgeting.

It was also **AGREED** - in relation to Paragraph 4.2 (Support Services) – to accept the alternative proposal from the SNP Group to remove £235k from the proposed saving of £354k in 2019/20 thereby leaving a saving of £119k.

For clarification at this point, it was noted that the alternative proposals/amendments which had been put forward by the SNP Group in the total sum of £650k would be fully funded from additional savings which they had identified in respect of the following – Estate savings/Office Rationalisation, Miscellaneous – Infrastructure, ICT, Deloitte, Housing savings and Invoice savings through amendment to credit terms.

In relation to Paragraph 3.11 (Placement Service Change Programme), and following an alternative proposal being put forward by Mr A Jarvie that, in view of the fact that this was a vast and complex issue, there should be a full and detailed report presented to the next possible meeting of the Care, Learning & Housing Committee on this subject, including how Highland foster carer capacity could be grown within the Council, it was **AGREED** that a detailed report would come forward to the next possible meeting of that Committee to demonstrate clearly how a robust evaluation would be undertaken in terms of delivering the future savings which had been identified.

In relation to Paragraph 3.8 (Specialist Teachers), Mr A Jarvie, seconded by Mr P Saggars, moved that £500k should be taken from the Self Insurance Fund, reducing the balance to slightly over funded, in order to set up a Fund to deliver Additional Support Need training to teachers.

On a vote being taken between the Motion from the Budget Leader, seconded by the Depute Leader, and the Amendment from Mr A Jarvie, seconded by Mr P Saggars, the **MOTION** received 55 votes and the **AMENDMENT** received 10 votes, with no abstentions, and the **MOTION** was therefore **CARRIED**, the votes having been cast as follows:-

For the Motion:

Mr G Adam, Mr R Balfour, Mrs J Barclay, Mr A Baxter, Mr B Boyd, Mr R Bremner, Mr I Brown, Mrs C Caddick, Mrs B Campbell, Miss J Campbell, Mrs H Carmichael, Mr A Christie, Dr I Cockburn, Mrs M Cockburn, Ms K Currie, Mrs M Davidson, Mr M Finlayson,

Mr J Finlayson, Mr C Fraser, Mr J Gordon, Mr K Gowans, Mr J Gray, Ms P Hadley, Mr T Heggie, Mr A Henderson, Mr R Laird, Mr B Lobban, Mr D Louden, Mrs L MacDonald, Mr R MacDonald, Mr A MacInnes, Mrs D Mackay, Mr W MacKay, Mr G MacKenzie, Mr A Mackinnon, Mrs A MacLean, Mr C MacLeod, Mr D Macpherson, Mr R MacWilliam, Mrs B McAllister, Mr J McGillivray, Mr H Morrison, Ms L Munro, Ms P Munro, Mrs M Paterson, Mr M Reiss, Mr A Rhind, Mr D Rixson, Mrs F Robertson, Mrs T Robertson, Mr K Rosie, Mr G Ross, Ms N Sinclair, Ms M Smith and Mr B Thompson.

For the Amendment:

Mr G Cruickshank, Mr A Jarvie, Mrs I MacKenzie, Mr S Mackie, Mr D Mackay, Mr D MacLeod, Mr I Ramon, Mr P Sagers, Mr A Sinclair and Mr C Smith.

Finally, a new proposal was presented by Mr A Jarvie in relation to Sustainable and Equitable Highland Social Housing which it was suggested could deliver more housing stock, a reduction in the impact of homelessness on individuals and increased investment in existing stock improvements. In terms of outcomes, it was highlighted that there was the potential for an additional 115 new Council houses to be built, an 88% increase of £2.221m for improvements to current stock, £0.150m saving against homelessness and approximately £0.142m extra Council Tax revenue.

In this regard, the Leader of the Council **AGREED** to provide a commitment that a rapid review of the feasibility of this proposal would be undertaken and a response provided by the end of March 2019.

Thereafter, Members:-

- i. **AGREED** the Council's change programme, 'A Sustainable Highland', to deliver £37.456m of savings over the next three years – subject to the amendments/additions agreed at the meeting in relation to High Life Highland card membership prices, School Meals, Ward Discretionary Budgets, Support Services, the Placement Service Change Programme and Sustainable and Equitable Highland Social Housing (all as detailed below);

Paragraph 2.2 – School Meals – redesign school meals vis a vis the Deloitte Report to the Redesign Board as follows – (a) choose a school that performed well and study why in relation to choice of meals, little competition out with school and food suppliers and duplicate the model across some or all schools where possible and (b) avoid waste so order less food to throw away. Also, take three months to study and implement in August 2019 across Highland schools;

New Funding Title – Injection into Ward Discretionary Budgets - £210k in 2019/20 – inject funds back into the communities to help local projects or fund cash strapped Community Councils who were struggling to make ends meet. Localism and community empowerment were key agenda items for the Council and had to be upheld as important. Proposal was to give back £10k to each Ward Discretionary Budget for communities to bid into - this was a one-off saving to assist groups to find match funding and/or also get involved in participatory budgeting;

Paragraph 4.2 – Support Services – remove £235k from the proposed saving of £354k in 2019/20 thereby leaving a saving of £119k.

(Clarified that Paragraph 2.2, the New Funding Title and Paragraph 4.2 above were all part of the budget proposals from the SNP Group which had specified savings of £650k in the first year through estate, miscellaneous and invoice savings in order to finance the above and also, with reference to saving proposal Paragraph 2.16, to

reduce the proposed income maximisation target by £205k to allow High Life Highland to restrict card membership price increases at inflation);

Paragraph 3.11 – Placement Service Change Programme – agreed that a detailed report would be submitted to the next possible Care, Learning & Housing Committee to demonstrate clearly how a robust evaluation would be undertaken in terms of delivering the future savings which had been identified; and

New Proposal – Sustainable and Equitable Highland Social Housing – new and detailed proposals related to the provision of more housing stock, reduction in the impact of homelessness on individuals and increased investment in existing stock improvements. In terms of outcomes, potentially an additional 115 new Council houses to be built, an 88% increase of £2.221m for improvements to current stock, £0.150m saving against homelessness and approximately £0.142m extra Council Tax revenue. In this regard, the Leader of the Council gave a commitment that a rapid review of the feasibility of this proposal would be undertaken and a response provided by the end of March 2019.

- ii. **AGREED** the additional and recurring £1.500m investment in roads maintenance as outlined in Section 5.5 of the report;
- iii. **AGREED** the changes to Council Tax as outlined in Section 7 of the report;
- iv. **AGREED** to set aside £2.500m into a change fund with a view to ensuring that 'A Sustainable Highland' was fully resourced and delivered as outlined in Section 14.5 of the report; and
- v. **AGREED** the medium term target for the non-earmarked general fund reserve of 3% of annual revenue budget as outlined in Section 14.3 of the report.

4. **Housing Revenue Account Estimates 2019/20** **Tuairmsean Chunntasan Teachd-a-steach Taigneadais 2019/20**

At its meeting on 24 January 2019, the Care, Learning and Housing Committee had agreed to make recommendations to the Council on the Housing Revenue Estimates 2019/20 and on rents for houses, garages and other charges.

In this connection, there had been circulated separately Extract from the Minutes of that Meeting.

The Council:-

- i. **AGREED** a 3% increase for council house rents for 2019/2020;
- ii. **AGREED** that the above percentage increase (3%) be applied to all residential HRA rents and service charges and to Gypsy/Traveller site pitches;
- iii. **NOTED** that, following consideration by Area Committees/Ward Members, rents for garages and garage sites except in Lochaber would be increased by 3%, with rents for garages and garage sites in Lochaber to be as agreed by Lochaber Members;
- iv. **AGREED** that non-HRA rents for leased property should increase as stipulated in existing contracts;
- v. **AGREED** the estimated HRA surplus of £2.5m in 2019/2020 be applied as capital from current revenue to fund HRA capital investment; and

- vi. **AGREED** that a full review of HRA loan charges and capital planning be carried out during 2019/20 to inform future HRA rents policy and the 2021-2026 HRA Capital Plan.

The Council **AGREED** the recommendations from the Care, Learning and Housing Committee as detailed.

It was also **AGREED** that in future consideration of rents for garages and garage sites had to be undertaken by – and formally approved by – Local Committees.

**5. Clerk of Highland Licensing Board
Clàrc Bòrd Ceadachd na Gàidhealtachd**

It was noted that the Licensing (Scotland) Act 2005 required the Council to appoint and employ an Officer to be Clerk of every Licensing Board with jurisdiction within its area.

In this regard, the Council **AGREED** that Ms Claire McArthur, Principal Solicitor (Regulatory Services) should be appointed Clerk of Highland Licensing Board with immediate effect.

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

The Council **AGREED** the following change to the timetable of meetings for 2019–

Sutherland County Committee – to now be held on 25 February 2019 (instead of 26 February 2019) at 2.00pm.

The meeting ended at 2.40pm.

Declarations of Interest – Item 3

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

Mr A Christie – Director of Highland Third Sector Interface, General Manager of the Inverness, Nairn, Badenoch & Strathspey Citizens' Advice Bureau and Friend of Eden Court

Ms L Munro – Director of High Life Highland

Mrs T Robertson – Friend of Eden Court

Mr G Adam – Board Member of Eden Court

Mrs I Campbell – Board Member of Eden Court

Mrs M Davidson – family member employed by the Burial Grounds service, Highland Council

Mrs M Paterson – Board Member of Eden Court and Board Member of the Puffin Hydrotherapy Pool

Mr T Heggie – Director of High Life Highland

Miss J Campbell – Board Member of Eden Court

Mr D Macpherson – Director of High Life Highland and Friend of Eden Court

Mr G MacKenzie – Board Member of the Puffin Hydrotherapy Pool

Mr K Rosie – Director of Caithness Horizons Museum

Mr D Louden – Director of Tain & District Museum (part funded by High Life Highland) and attendee at Board Meetings of the Duthac Centre, Tain

Ms E Knox – Ex-Officio Director of Highland Disability Sport and Non-Executive Director of Children in the Highlands Information Point (CHIP+)

Mr B Boyd – Friend of Eden Court

Mr A Henderson – family member – Voluntary Director of New Start

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 A Christie – Non Executive Director of NHS Highland and as a parent of a child who was in receipt of Primary School Meals and Music Tuition

Mr A Baxter – parent of children in receipt of Primary School Meals and Music Tuition

Mr K Gowans – family member employed by High Life Highland

Mr I Brown – employee of NHS Highland

Mr A MacKinnon – Director of Organic Sea Harvest Limited and Secretary of Skye Sea Harvest Limited

Mr A MacInnes – Director of Organic Sea Harvest Limited and Director of Skye Sea Harvest Limited

Declaration of Interest – Item 4

Mr D Rixson – Board Member of Lochaber Housing Association

The Highland Council

Minutes of Meeting of the **Lochaber Committee** held in The Nevis Centre, An Aird, Fort William on **Wednesday, 23 January 2019 at 10.30 a.m.**

Present:

Mr A Baxter
Mr A Henderson
Mr N McLean

Mr I Ramon
Mr D Rixson
Mr B Thompson

In attendance:

Mrs D Ferguson, Senior Ward Manager (Ross, Skye and Lochaber)
Mr S Dalgarno, Development Plans Manager, Development and Infrastructure Service
Mr D Goldie, Head of Housing and Building Maintenance, Community Services
Mr D Kennedy, Access Officer, Skye, Lochalsh and West Lochaber
Mr S Eastaugh, Access Officer, Inverness, Nairn and East Lochaber
Ms P Donaldson, Technician, Community Services
Ms E Tayler, Assistant Ward Manager
Mr A MacInnes, Administrative Assistant, Chief Executive's Service

Also in attendance:-

Mr A Nicolson, Programme Manager, Highlands & Islands Enterprise

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

1. Apologies for Absence Leisgeulan

Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of Mr B Allan and Area Inspector, I Campbell, Police Scotland.

2. Declarations of Interest Foillseachaidhean Com-pàirt

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

Item 7– Mr D Rixson (non-financial)

3. Police Scotland Local Committee Performance Report Aithisg Coileanadh Comataidh Ionadail Poileas Alba

There had been circulated Report No. LA/1/19 by the Area Commander for Police which provided an update on the progress with reference to the objectives outlined in the Highland Policing Plan 2017-20.

The Committee, having been informed that the Area Inspector, Police Scotland was

unable to attend the meeting due to operational reasons, **NOTED:-**

i the progress made against the objectives set within the Highland and Islands Local Policing Plan 2017-20 Year 2, attached as Annex A to the report, for the period covering 1 April 2018- 31 December 2018; and

ii that information would be requested from Police Scotland on the following issues and circulated to Members:-

- What had changed in Police Scotland's approach in Lochaber to missing person enquiries (particularly in relation to missing children and missing Looked after children) which had led to a reduction in missing person reports;
- There was only one Third Party Reporting Centre in Lochaber and information was requested on whether other organisations in Lochaber had been approached as a Third Party reporting centre and had declined the request;
- What could the Council do to encourage organisations to act as Third Party Reporting Centres.

4. Fort William 2040 Consultation Bùth-obrach Cho-chomhairle Gearasdan 2040

There was circulated Report No. LA/2/19 by the Director of Development and Infrastructure which presented the outcome of a major consultation exercise held from September to December, 2018 which brought together a wide range of stakeholders to create a vision for the future of Fort William, in its wider Lochaber context, and to prepare a Delivery Programme outlining projects, responsibilities and actions for contribute towards that vision.

The report presented the findings of the consultation and sought approval for ongoing collaboration in monitoring and implementing the vision for Fort William.

Members commended Officers for their work on the Fort William 2040 vision and thereafter, the following main points were raised by Members:-

- It was welcomed that included in the report was the desire for Fort William to be a place with a distinctive, local, cultural identity.
- While the consultation had obtained views of the community on what should be included in the vision for Fort William, also of importance was feedback on what should not be included in the vision.
- The issue of little contacts between the North and South sides of Loch Linnhe raised during the consultation would be considered and acted upon going forward with the vision for Fort William.
- It was queried how the Delivery Programme document could be made user friendly as possible for the public, e.g. to include contacts for specific projects. It was confirmed that this would be done in the next phase of the Programme with the assistance of a Marketing contractor. Further, the Council had to prepare a Fort William 2040 delivery programme which would be incorporated into the wider WestPlan local Delivery Programme. This would then be used as a proactive tool to monitor and coordinate the delivery of the programme.
- Fort William 2040 showed that there was real ambition within the Lochaber community with exciting and interesting projects included in the vision. The consultation process was commended as it showed how the Council could better communicate with the community and its partner agencies. The Fort

William 2040 vision was much stronger as a result.

Thereafter, the Committee:-

i **NOTED** the comments made through the FW2040 consultation as summarised at Appendix 1 to the report;

ii **AGREED** the new FW2040 vision statements and diagrams at Appendix 2;

iii **NOTED** the FW2040 Delivery Programme at Appendix 3 and the corresponding FW2040 Masterplan at Appendix 4; and

iv **AGREED** next steps and ongoing monitoring arrangements outlined at paragraphs 7.1 and 7.2.

At this point the meeting was adjourned for a short break and it resumed again at 11a.m.

5. West Highland and Islands Amended Core Paths Plan, Lochaber Area Plana Atharraichte Phrìomh Cheuman na Gàidhealtachd an Iar agus nan Eilean, Sgìre Loch Abar

There was circulated Report No. LA/3/19 by the Director of Development & Infrastructure which presented a Draft Amended Core Paths Plan for the Lochaber Area.

In discussion, the following main points were raised by Members:-

- It was confirmed that there should be free access for all users on all core paths. If there were locked field gates, then there should be some form of access for all users around this.
- In terms of Map LO17a – addition to Mallaig circular, it was advised that there were plans for more houses in this location which may affect this route. It was confirmed that the Access Officer had met with the Estate Manager and the planned additional path should not be affected by any future housing in that area.
- The Lochaber Local Access Forum had met to consider the recommendations in the amended core paths plan and had approved them. The Local Access Forum was working well at present, with some new members joining the Forum. It was requested that minutes of the Lochaber Local Access Forum meetings be circulated to all local Members and that the Chair of the Forum present a report to Committee on an annual basis covering the activities of the Forum.
- In terms of Map LO14a – the extension of Ciaran Path to Corroul Station was welcomed. As it was a natural loop for anyone starting from Kinlochleven, heading out on the Ciaran path as far as the Blackwater Reservoir, it was queried why the track south of the River Leven heading back from the Blackwater Reservoir and back onto the West Highland Way had not been included as a Core Path. It was explained that this would be considered as part of the consultation process as it was noted that this natural loop was favoured by the community and that it should be a Core Path.
- There was a request for more core paths in Ardnamurchan. It was explained that due to legislative changes, additional core paths could now be added more frequently.

Thereafter, the Committee:

i **APPROVED** the Amendments to the Lochaber area of the West Highland and Islands Core Path Plan to be published for formal consultation; and

ii **AGREED** that minutes of the Lochaber Local Access Forum meetings be circulated to all local Members and that the Chair of the Forum would present a report to Committee on an annual basis covering the activities of the Forum.

6. The Highland Council (B863 North Ballachulish) (30mph Speed Restriction) Order 2019
Comhairle na Gàidhealtachd (B863 Baile a' Chaolais a Tuath) Òrdugh (Cuingalachadh Astair 30 msu) 2019

There had been circulated Report No LA/4/19 by the Director of Community Services which proposed implementations of amendments to the current speed restriction in North Ballachulish.

Following consideration, the Committee:-

i **APPROVED** the introduction of a 30mph speed restriction in North Ballachulish and the preparation and advertising of a Draft Order and the making of the Order should there be no unresolved objection; and

ii **AGREED** to seek early approval from the Roads Operations Manager for the necessary expenditure to be agreed to allow the 30mph speed restriction in North Ballachulish to be implemented. A formal letter with this request would be sent by the Chairman to the Roads Operations Manager.

7. Housing Revenue Account – Garage Rents 2019/20
Cunntas Teachd-a-steach Taigheadais – Màil Garaids 2019/20

Declaration of Interest: Mr D Rixson declared a non-financial interest in this item as the Council's representative to Lochaber Housing Association 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 discussion.

There had been circulated Report No. LA/5/19 by the Director of Community Services which provided information on garage and garage site rents for Lochaber and invited the Committee to set rent levels for garages and garage sites held on the Housing Revenue Account for 2019/20.

In discussion, the following main points were raised by Members:-

- It was queried if it was easy for members of the public to find out if garages were available for let, as local commercial operators had been very successful in letting commercial garages at much higher rent than the Council was charging. It was explained that the advertising for garage lets had been reviewed a few years ago and an online application form had been included on the Council's website and a waiting list was kept. An undertaking was given to review the marketing of garage lets so that the process was as visible as

possible to ensure that garages were re-let quickly.

- It was welcomed that more detailed information on garages and garage sites would be discussed with Ward Members in order to develop future priorities for garage and garage sites.
- It was queried if the repairs budget for garages in Lochaber was increasing, or was it set at the same level from one year to the next. It was explained that the repairs budget for garages went up in line with the increase in the Council's general repairs budget. The repairs budget was only for day to day repairs rather than for any structural repairs that may be required.
- It was queried if there was information on types of uses of garages, e.g. for storage. Private sector storage units were of high quality and movable and could be adapted according to what it was required to be used for. The Council's garages were static and lower quality and it was queried if there had been consideration of installing modular storage units at garage sites, with potential to generate more income. It was advised that this had not been considered as yet, and in the past when garages had been demolished, this had been done to provide more car parking. Members could look at options as to what their local priorities might be on a site by site basis and there may well be some commercial opportunities.

Thereafter, the Committee **AGREED**:-

- i. a 3% rent increase to apply to Lochaber Garages and Garage Sites.
- ii. that Officers undertake a review of all garage sites in Lochaber to include a condition survey and identify possible future alternative uses of those sites, if appropriate, so that Members can consider a new Business plan for Garage sites at the August, 2019 Local Committee.

8. Street Naming Ainmeachadh Sràide

There had been circulated Report No. LA/6/19 by the Acting Head of Policy which set out requests from the Development and Infrastructure Service to establish a street name for a new housing development and to consider a developer request to rename a flatted residential block.

The Committee **AGREED**:-

- i to homologate the naming of one new street for a residential development at Achabeag, Lochaline as Achnaha View; and
- ii the developer request to rename a flatted block currently known as Nevis Bank Cottages as Woodlands Cottages.

9. Minutes Geàrr-chunntas

There had been circulated and were **NOTED** the Minutes of Meeting of the Lochaber Committee held on 7 November 2018 which were approved by the Council on 13 December 2018.

The meeting ended at 11.30 a.m.

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 24 January 2019 at 10.05 am.

Present:

Mrs J Barclay	Mr W Mackay (V/C) (am only)
Mr B Boyd	Mr G MacKenzie
Mr R Bremner (V/C)	Mrs I MacKenzie
Mrs M Davidson (Substitute)	Mr D Macpherson
Mr A Christie	Mrs B McAllister
Mrs M Cockburn	Ms L Munro (Vice Chair)
Ms K Currie	Mrs M Paterson
Mr R Gale (Substitute)	Mrs F Robertson (am only)
Mr A Henderson (Substitute) (am only)	Mr G Ross
Mr A Jarvie	Ms N Sinclair (V/C)
Ms E Knox (am only)	Mr C Smith (am only)
Mr D Mackay	Mr B Thompson (Substitute) (V/C) (am only)

Religious Representatives:

Ms S Lamont
The Very Rev S Murray (am only)
Mr W Skene

Youth Convener:

Ms E Leitch

Non-Members also present:

Mrs C Caddick	Mr J McGillivray (V/C)
Mrs L MacDonald (am only)	Mrs T Robertson (am only)
Mrs D Mackay	Mr P Sagers (am only)
Mr A MacInnes (am only)	Mr A Sinclair

In attendance:

Ms D Manson, Chief Executive
Mr D Yule, Depute Chief Executive/Director of Corporate Resources
Ms S Campbell, Interim Director of Care and Learning
Mrs B Cairns, Head of Additional Support Services, Care and Learning Service
Mr B Porter, Head of Resources, Care and Learning Service
Ms K Ralston, Interim Head of Children's Services, Care and Learning Service
Dr J Vance, Interim Head of Education, Care and Learning Service
Mr D Goldie, Head of Housing and Building Maintenance, Community Services
Mrs F Shearer, Interim Area Care and Learning Manager – South, Care and Learning Service
Mr B Cameron, Housing Policy and Investment Manager, Community Services
Mr J Maybee, Principal Officer (Criminal Justice), Care and Learning Service

Mr M Mitchell, Finance Manager, Finance Service
 Ms R Connelly, Connecting Carers (Third Sector)
 Ms J Douglas, Care and Learning Alliance (Third Sector)
 Ms G Newman, Highland Children's Forum (Third Sector)
 Ms G Hainey, Tenant Representative
 Mr A Tubb, Tenant Representative
 Miss J MacIennan, Principal Administrator, Chief Executive's Office
 Miss M Murray, Committee Administrator, Chief Executive's Office

Also in attendance:

Ms A Watmough, Parent Carer

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

Ms L Munro in the Chair

Business

1. Apologies for Absence
Leisgeulan

Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of Mrs I Campbell, Mr J Finlayson, Mr A Graham, Mr T Heggie, Mr R MacWilliam and Prof H van Woerden.

2. Declarations of Interest
Foillseachaidhean Com-pàirt

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

Item 4 – Mr A Christie (non-financial)
 Item 5 – Ms L Munro (financial)
 Item 7 – Mr A Jarvie, Mr D Macpherson and Ms L Munro (all non-financial)
 Item 8 – Mr A Christie (financial)
 Item 11 – Mr A Christie (financial)
 Item 13 – Mr A Christie and Ms E Knox (both non-financial)
 Item 15 – Mr A Christie (non-financial)
 Item 17iv – Mr A Christie (financial)

3. Good News/Outstanding Achievements
Naidheachdan Matha/Coileanaidhean Air Leth

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

The Committee:-

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

4. **Housing Revenue Account and Non-HRA Budget Monitoring** **Sgrùdadh Buidseit Teachd-a-steach Taigheadais**

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

There had been circulated Report No CLH/01/19 dated 14 January 2019 by the Director of Community Services.

During discussion, the following issues were raised:-

- clarification was sought, and provided, on the use and meaning of brackets in the financial tables, in which they represented underspends on expenditure and over achievement of income on revenue;
- further information on the £218k of other costs detailed in the report was requested by Councillor G MacKenzie;
- information was sought on the current number of people on the Council Housing waiting list. In response, Members were informed that there were approximately 9,000 on the waiting list;
- reference was made to various 'janitor's' houses located at schools in Inverness which were vacant and could be generating council tax and rental income. In response, it was explained that there were some complexities around the use of such houses but further information could be provided to Members about specific properties;
- information was sought, and provided, on plans for the coming year in relation to Housing repairs, for which a review had been undertaken, and work was underway to increase in-house expertise, which was more cost efficient than using external contractors, through improved workforce planning; and
- confirmation was sought, and provided, that the additional monies raised from the proposed 3% rent increase and which was to be added to the environment budget would be allocated to Areas according to an appropriate formula.

The Committee **APPROVED** the budget position on the Housing Revenue Account and non-Housing Revenue Account.

5. **Housing Revenue Account Estimates 2019/20** **Tuairmsean Cunntais Teachd-a-steach Taigheadais**

Declaration of Interest: Ms L Munro declared a financial interest in this item as a Council house tenant but, in terms of the dispensation granted by the Standards Commission, remained to participate in the discussion.

There had been circulated Report No CLH/02/19 dated 15 January 2019 by the Director of Community Services.

During discussion, the following issues were raised:-

- as confirmed during discussion of the previous item, the additional revenue raised from the proposed 3% rent increase would be spent on environmental

improvements and allocated to Areas on a pro rata basis according to their Housing stock levels. In this regard, further detail on expenditure and budgets available on environmental improvements was sought for Area Committees;

- this localised approach would be welcomed by tenants who had indicated a preference for direct benefits to be achieved from increased rent;
- in some Wards tenants were being actively encouraged to suggest what environmental improvements were need. It was suggested that this approach provided an opportunity to widen the scope of participatory budgeting;
- local concerns about potential contractor capacity would be discussed at Ward level;
- again it was confirmed that, through workforce planning, the intention was to increase in-house capacity to undertake repairs and improvements. In this regard, the redesign work to bring property maintenance closer to the Housing service was welcomed;
- support was voiced for the 3% rent increase, pointing out that recent rent increases had been significantly lower than many other Local Authorities;
- information was sought on the rationale behind the setting of rents. For example, it was questioned if it was appropriate for rents in rural areas to be similar to those in Inverness and whether rent setting should be delegated to Area Committees. In response, it was explained that policy issues such as these were dealt with through the Policy Development Group, the meetings of which all Members were able to attend;
- it was important to continue working with the Treasury and the Scottish Government in relation to Housing loans and early settlement charges and the Leader would speak about this at a CoSLA meeting the following day;
- concern was expressed about the impact of Universal Credit on rent arrears and increased levels of debt. It was important the Council's approach towards tenants with debt or arrears was empowering and supportive and that people were treated with respect and dignity. Early intervention in relation to debt was helpful. Accordingly, as suggested in the report, a future report on communication with tenants on arrears needed to be added to the recommendations;
- a request, by a local MP, had been made in Parliament for additional funds to cover rent arrears that had resulted from issues around the implementation of Universal Credit;
- alternative means, including digital online communication, of engaging with tenants should be explored, noting that traditional letters were expensive to produce and, at times, a barrier to communication. Drop-in sessions and liaison with other services such as social services and High Life Highland could be helpful to empower and encourage active vibrant tenant associations;
- consideration should be given to investing in garage voids to facilitate their rental, thus increasing income and possibly reducing on-street congestion. Community resilience and empowerment in this regard should be explored, including possible discussion with tenants' associations;
- the response rate to the tenant survey was only around 3-4% and efforts should be made to increase engagement with a wider range of tenants, including tenant support and advocacy. It was also suggested that engagement should be undertaken with people on the Housing waiting list;
- communication with communities in relation to empty houses was useful for early alerts about properties that had been vacated;

- in relation to the Council houses that were left in a poor state of repair by tenants, attention should be drawn to the difference in rent levels between Council properties and the private sector;
- specific issues were raised regarding environmental improvements in the Bught area and a housing issue in Tomatin and officers undertook to discuss these in greater detail with the Local Members involved;
- information having been sought on the reduction in the sheltered housing budget, it was explained that this related to reductions in the cost of warden accommodation;
- the policy in relation to housing estates that were now mixed tenure was explained, namely that where land was held on the Housing Revenue Account the cost of maintenance was met from the Housing Revenue Account. In response, it was explained that this was consistent with most other Councils' policies and any decision to change this would be a political one;
- the planned review of loan charges and capital planning was welcomed, and it was suggested that a unified Housing Revenue report would be beneficial and that the tenants' finance and participation group should be involved in the review from the outset rather than at the end of the process; and
- the outcomes from a pilot in Ross and Cromarty considering inspections of vulnerable or at risk properties could be shared with the Area Committee.

* The Committee **AGREED TO RECOMMEND** to the Council:-

- i. a 3% increase for council house rents for 2019/2020;
- ii. that the above percentage increase (3%) be applied to all residential HRA rents and service charges and to Gypsy/Traveller site pitches;
- iii. that non-HRA rents for leased property should increase as stipulated in existing contracts;
- iv. that the estimated HRA surplus of £2.5m in 2019/2020 be applied as capital from current revenue to fund HRA capital investment; and
- v. that a full review of HRA loan charges and capital planning be carried out during 2019/20 to inform future HRA rents policy and the 2021-2026 HRA Capital Plan; and

AGREED:-

- vi. that a detailed report be brought back to a future Committee on how the Service contacted and communicated with tenants on arrears;
- vii. that detail on expenditure and budgets available on environmental improvements be provided to Area Committees; and
- viii. **NOTED** that, following consideration by Area Committees/Ward Members, rents for garages and garage sites would be increased by 3%.

6. **Private Housing (Tenancies) (Scotland) Act 2016: Rent Pressure Zones Achd Taigheadais Phriobhaideach (Teanantachdan) (Alba) 2016: Raointean Cuideam Mài**

There had been circulated Report No CLH/03/19 dated 11 January 2019 by the Director of Community Services.

During discussion, the following issues were raised:-

- expensive rents were an issue throughout Highland and there were particular areas where it was having a negative impact on the rural economy in terms of recruiting and retaining staff. Concern was also expressed that the issue could be somewhat hidden due to people living in overcrowded properties;
- it was hoped that future reports on Rent Pressure Zones would include some tangible actions;
- some private rented properties were in poor condition and often it took a long time for repairs to be carried out. This was unacceptable given some of the rents being charged;
- there was insufficient social housing and the Council house waiting list was increasing daily;
- it was essential to make sure that private rents were affordable for people who did not qualify for social housing;
- the issue of high rents and house prices affected a significant proportion of young adults. However, the protection afforded by Rent Pressure Zones only applied to existing tenants and, where similar policies had been brought in elsewhere, it had led to landlords terminating tenancies after a year or two and re-letting properties in order to increase the rent. It was therefore considered that implementing Rent Pressure Zones would not be beneficial, either in terms of bringing prices down or giving people the security of their own home;
- there was evidence that Inland Revenue changes in respect of “buy to let” mortgages had resulted in private landlords reducing their stock or turning properties into holiday homes, which were already prevalent in Highland; and
- it was necessary to find an alternative solution to the problems in Inverness and other areas where there was a shortage of private rented accommodation and to work with communities and existing private landlords in that regard.

Thereafter, the Committee:-

- i. **AGREED** that the Council would continue to participate in joint discussion with COSLA and other Councils considering Rent Pressure Zone Applications;
- ii. **AGREED** to promoting the existing right of individual private rented tenants to challenge rent increases by requesting an independent assessment by Rent Officers; and
- iii. **NOTED** that officers would monitor the emerging Planning (Scotland) Bill 2018 in relation to potential changes to legislation for short term holiday lets, and would arrange discussion with Local Members where there were likely to be implications.

7. Care and Learning Revenue Budget Monitoring 2018/19 Sgrùdadh Buidseit Teachd-a-steach a' Chùrain agus an Ionnsachaidh 2018/19

Declarations of Interest: Mr A Jarvie, Mr D Macpherson and Ms L Munro declared non-financial interests in this item as Directors of High Life Highland but, having applied the test outlined in Paragraphs 5.2 and 5.3 of the Councillors' Code of Conduct, concluded that their interests did not preclude their involvement in the discussion.

There had been circulated Report No CLH/04/19 dated 16 January 2019 by the Interim Director of Care and Learning.

During discussion, the following issues were raised:-

- concern was expressed that if, as part of the management actions to reduce non-essential spend, schools were not permitted to spend, they might, at the end of the financial year, have a greater underspend than the 5% permitted in terms of Devolved School Management (DSM). It was emphasised that the purpose of DSM was to allow schools to control how their budget was spent, within the constraints of a 5% overspend or underspend. If schools wanted to maintain an underspend for planning purposes in future years they should be allowed to do so and, in the view of some Members, for the Council to take the money back would be reprehensible. Other Members added that DSM needed to be clearly defined, understood and reported on, and there was an opportunity to put robust evaluation and monitoring in place. There needed to be clear rules in terms of what was and was not acceptable and, where a school wanted to save money for a specific project, it should be in the School Improvement Plan or flagged at an early stage;
- information was sought, and provided, on the difference between the year to date spend and the projected outturn in respect of the Schools General and Other Leisure Services budgets. It having been explained that the variance in respect of the Schools General budget related to grant income from the Scottish Government that would be claimed at the year end, including Pupil Equity Funding (PEF) and Scottish Attainment Challenge (SAC) monies, it was requested that PEF and SAC funding be reported separately in future. Members added that they would like to see the evidence that the funding had led to improved educational outcomes and closed the attainment gap;
- clarification having been sought, and provided, regarding the corporate savings in respect of Insurance and Procurement, and the associated ragging, Members suggested that consideration be given to a better way of presenting the figures;
- out of authority placements for Looked After Children was a significant factor in the overspend for the current year. However, recruitment controls had prevented the Council's new unit near Strathpeffer from being staffed, which would have saved a significant amount of money. Whilst recognising the need to manage the recruitment of staff it was suggested that, going forward, it was necessary to recruit where it would lead to savings;
- services for Looked After Children had been an area of concern for many years, and the best solutions were services provided in Highland. The need to provide care packages that were relevant to a child's needs and improved outcomes was emphasised, as was the need to take a more hands-on approach to corporate parenting. Rather than placing children in the central belt, it was suggested that the provision of local secure accommodation be explored with neighbouring authorities such as the Island Councils, Moray, Aberdeenshire and Aberdeen City. Mainstreaming everything from day one and moving forward in a different way was key to addressing the overspend that continually arose in this area. The interim Director clarified that secure care was commissioned centrally for Scotland and placements were not ring-fenced to the authority responsible for the secure unit;
- many meetings could be carried out effectively by email or Skype and support was expressed for the travel restrictions that had been put in place. However, it was requested that the money saved be reinvested in exploring alternative ways of holding meetings and improving digital infrastructure;
- constituents had expressed concern that small schools were going to be closed and an assurance was sought that that was not the case;

- parents in Mallaig and Fort William were concerned regarding teacher shortages. However, Head Teachers and Parent Council Chairs had done a good job of explaining the position the Council was in and the corrective actions that had been taken; and
- a recent Parent Council meeting in Fort William had brought to light that the heating system in Lochaber High School had broken down in November and had not yet been repaired. The school had reverted back to the old boiler system and had reportedly used 55,000 litres of fuel at a cost of £20-£30k, which was equivalent to the cost of repairing the biomass boiler. This was not a good use of money and impacted on the Council's carbon footprint, and it was requested that it be looked into as a matter of urgency. The Interim Director of Care and Learning explained that she was not aware of the issue and undertook to follow it up and report back to Councillor A Henderson, although it was highlighted that the remedy might not sit with the Care and Learning Service.

Thereafter, the Committee:-

- NOTED** the revenue budget projected overspend position for the year to 31 December 2018 and the actions being taken with regard to the budget position;
- AGREED** the transfer of budget, and revision to the Service Delivery Contract with High Life Highland, relating to the funding for Lochalsh Leisure Centre; and
- AGREED** that Pupil Equity and Scottish Attainment Challenge Funding be reported separately in future.

In terms of Standing Order 9, the Committee **AGREED** to consider item 11 at this stage.

11. Placement Services Change Programme Update Cunntas às Ùr mu Atharrachaidhean do Sheirbheisean Socrachaidh

Declaration 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 his involvement in the discussion.

There had been circulated Report No CLH/08/19 dated 31 December 2018 by the Interim Director of Care and Learning.

During discussion, the following issues were raised:-

- it was requested that, in a year's time, an anonymised report be provided on the young people who had returned to Highland and how this had affected them;
- being brought up in a loving home could reduce the impact of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) and the need for more foster carers was emphasised. In that regard, reference was made to instances of potential foster carers choosing to enter an arrangement with private sector organisations or charities as they were able to offer greater financial incentives and it was suggested that this be looked into;
- whilst welcoming the fact that the number of children that had returned to Highland was broadly in line with the initial target, concern was expressed that a great number were still being placed out of authority and information was sought on how many of those placements were because there were not sufficiently experienced foster carers in Highland or there was not capacity;

- local authorities that paid their foster carers more tended to have more carers in reserve. Highland was the lowest paying authority for multiple children and it was suggested that this could be simply addressed by a spend to save initiative. Bringing a young person back to Highland led not only to significant savings but to better long-term outcomes for the young person;
- the pain and trauma young people experienced on being separated from their family and friends and taken away from where they lived was unimaginable and it was necessary to prevent it wherever possible;
- the process to become a foster carer took a long time and consideration needed to be given to whether there was any way of speeding it up;
- the Chair explained that consideration was being given to providing a suite of training for Members including corporate parenting, fostering and adoption, and ACEs;
- if appropriate solutions were not put in place, Looked After Children were more likely to have poor health outcomes, experience mental health issues, be unemployed and go to prison. It was therefore in everyone's interest that foster carers were appointed to look after these children and ensure that their outcomes, aspirations and opportunities were the same as other children. A multi-agency approach was essential. However, the Council needed to be the catalyst and start paying the appropriate rate to sustain and retain foster carers. The need for a mechanism such as a change fund was emphasised and the Depute Leader undertook to liaise with the Leader in that regard;
- some parents had difficulty coping and needed more help and it was suggested that opportunities for respite provision be explored. The Chair confirmed that the Change Programme would explore all possible means of keeping children appropriately in Highland;
- the Council had a duty of care for Looked After Children and it was important to ensure that those living in smaller communities were not stigmatised;
- nationally, 65% of the 1% of children who were in care ended up in prison, which was a shameful statistic;
- the need to support the officers involved in implementing the Change Programme was emphasised;
- the real success of the Change Programme would lie in communities;
- on the point being raised, the Interim Director of Care and Learning confirmed that a RAG rated Action Plan was in place;
- the need for early intervention to reduce the societal costs associated with Looked After Children was emphasised;
- Members expressed their appreciation of foster carers in Highland, as well as the communities that rallied round and welcomed the children in their care; and
- the Leader commented that children were placed outwith Highland for a variety of reasons. Sometimes it was because specialist provision, such as secure accommodation, was required. However, often it was for reasons that could be addressed locally, such as foster carers or an educational package not being in place. She maintained that imaginative educational packages could be provided locally that would turn Looked After Children's lives around, and she had discussed the matter with the Interim Head of Education. She welcomed the Chair's comments regarding training, and commented that staff required training too. The most important thing the Council did was provide services for the most vulnerable in society and it had a responsibility to improve outcomes for Looked After Children. She referred to the recent Members' seminar and emphasised the need to develop some of the ideas discussed and come forward with a

Corporate Plan where the Council's commitment to Looked After Children was at the forefront.

Thereafter, the Chair having commended the Change Programme and the efforts of the staff involved, the Committee:-

- i. scrutinised and **NOTED** the progress to date against the Programme Plan; and
- ii. **AGREED** that an anonymised report be provided regarding young people who had returned to Highland and how this had affected them.

In terms of Standing Order 9, the Committee **AGREED** to consider item 13 at this stage.

13. Partnership with the Third Sector Com-pàirteachas leis an Treas Roinn

Declarations of Interest: Mr A Christie and Ms E Knox declared non-financial interests as a Director of Highland Third Sector Interface and a Non-Executive Director of Children in the Highlands Information Point respectively 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.

There had been circulated Report No CLH/10/19 dated 7 January 2019 by the Interim Director of Care and Learning.

Ms J Douglas, Chief Executive, Care and Learning Alliance, and Ms G Newman, Policy Lead, Highland Children's Forum, gave a presentation in amplification of the report during which they detailed the wide range of work undertaken by the Third Sector Children and Families Group and how it contributed to the health, wellbeing, education and sustainability of the Highlands. The collaborative approach was vital and contributed to the work carried out by the Council. It was able to attract money otherwise unavailable through Highland Council and, in the past year, this had totalled £700k. To demonstrate the value of the Third Sector, Ms Anne Watmough, a Parent Carer, explained the services which had helped her and her son and the experience of an HNC student, Hayley, of the support she had received was conveyed to Members.

During discussion, the following issues were raised:-

- Members welcomed the value that the Third Sector added and acknowledged that they had and continued to be integral in the provision of services to users, now more than ever. In recognising this, an undertaking had been given that Third Sector representatives would meet the Council's Chief Executive on a regular basis;
- having carried out the Commissioned Services review, it was apparent that the benefit of Third Sector services brought to individuals and families could not solely be measured in monetary terms;
- it was important to blend services and work together towards common objectives;
- given the financial pressures on local government it was necessary to focus on delivering services in a more effective and efficient way;
- the Third Sector brought additionality insofar as, unlike the Council, they were able to access funding, fund raise and engage with volunteers;

- hearing the services users experiences had brought to life the impact of what the Third Sector did; and
- TYKES (The Young Karers East Sutherland), a well-established organisation, now supported 93 young people. Given the small population of the area this highlighted the extent of the problem. Many of those young people who had used their services had already gone on to Tertiary education, joined the fire service etc. A background was provided as to what had led to TYKES having a standing item on the then District Partnership and now the local Community Partnership. It was important to encourage Members, through local Community Partnerships, to embrace the Third Sector so that vulnerable young people were given a voice in a forum where it would make a difference.

The Committee **NOTED** that the report addressed the agreement of the Council to continue to have dialogue with the Highland Third Sector Interface and other stakeholders.

8. Adult Social Care Update Cunntas às Ùr mu Chùram Shòisealta Inbheach

Declaration 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 his involvement in the discussion.

There had been circulated Report No CLH/05/19 dated 21 December 2018 by the Interim Director of Care and Learning.

The Committee **NOTED** the contents of the report and the highlighted items from the Adult Services Development and Scrutiny Sub-Committee and the Health and Social Care Working Group.

9. Update on the Northern Alliance Regional Improvement Collaborative Cunntas às Ùr mu Chaidreachas Leasachaidh Roinneil a' Cho-chòrdaidh a Tuath

There had been circulated Report No CLH/06/19 dated 21 December 2018 by the Interim Director of Care and Learning.

During discussion, the following issues were raised:-

- as it had been some time since Members had received any information, a report was requested on 1 +2 Modern Languages in Highland;
- similarly a report was requested on progress regarding IT provision in education, including eSgoil and Virtual Academy;
- further information was sought as to the equalities work stream and, given that they had asked that there was some way of identifying and supporting group practice in schools, it was hoped that young people could be involved;
- investing in Primaries 1-3 had maximum benefit and a collaborative approach by parents, teachers, carers etc would enhance the skills of young people and go towards avoiding problems later in life;
- it was important to encourage parents to teach literacy and numeracy to their children at home;

- an update in a future report on the Community Learning and Development work stream would be welcomed; and
- poverty in rural areas was often more difficult to detect than in urban areas and, in taking forward the Rural Poverty work stream, use should be made of the excellent work already undertaken by the Council's Welfare Benefit team and that they might be best placed to lead on this area of work.

The Committee:-

NOTED:-

- i. the progress of the Northern Alliance Regional Improvement Plan (Phase 2);
- ii. that a grant of up to £1,086,067 had been allocated to the Northern Alliance to enhance the Regional Improvement Collaborative's activities and capacity building;

and **AGREED:-**

- iii. a report be submitted to the Committee's next meeting on 1 +2 Modern Languages in Highland;
- iv. a report be provided on IT provision in schools, including eSgoil and Virtual Academy, at the same time as the Senior Phase Strategy Work; and
- v. information on Community Learning and Development work streams be included in future reports.

10. Care & Learning and Housing & Building Maintenance Remit and Responsibilities
Raon-ùghdarrais agus Dleastanasan Cùraim & Ionnsachaidh agus Taigheadais & Cumail Suas Thogalaichean

There had been circulated joint Report No CLH/07/19 dated 11 January 2019 by the Interim Director of Care and Learning and the Director of Community Services.

The Committee **NOTED** the remit and responsibilities of the Care and Learning Directorate and the Housing and Building Maintenance element of the Community Services Directorate, and therefore the implications for agenda-setting of the Care, Learning and Housing Committee.

12. Statutory Consultation – Gaelic Medium Catchment Proposals for Mallaig Primary School
Co-chomhairle Reachdail – Molaidhean Sgìrean Sgoile Foghlam tron Ghàidhlig airson Bun-Sgoil Mhalaig

There had been circulated Report No CLH/09/19 dated 20 December 2018 by the Interim Director of Care and Learning.

Whilst acknowledging the practicalities involved in providing Gaelic Medium Education (GME), it was suggested that technology could be used to enable schools on the Small Isles to also have access to GME.

The Committee **AGREED:-**

- i. to proceed to statutory consultation on the basis of the Proposal attached to the report; and
- ii. to consider how technology might enable Gaelic Medium Education to be provided to schools on the Small Isles.

14. Sustainable Education in Highland Communities: Update

Foghlam Seasmhach ann an Coimhearsnachdan na Gàidhealtachd: Cunntas às Ùr

There had been circulated Report No CLH/11/19 dated 21 December 2018 by the Interim Director of Care and Learning.

Confirmation was sought, and provided, that the purpose of stage 4 of the plan was to ensure those ASGs detailed were subject to the same scrutiny as the others and it was not intended as a mechanism to review major decisions.

The Committee otherwise **APPROVED**:-

- i. the Three Year Plan for review of the remaining Associated School Groups;
- ii. the meeting/engagement process and schedule; and
- iii. the Action Plan for review of Inverness High School Associated School Group.

15. Key Developments in Criminal Justice Social Work Services

Prìomh Leasachaidhean ann an Seirbheisean Obair-shòisealta Ceartas Eucoireach

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

There had been circulated Report No CLH/12/19 dated 3 January 2019 by the Interim Director of Care and Learning.

During discussion, the following issues were raised:-

- an update was sought, and provided, as to current developments regarding the provision of HMP Highland. In this regard concern was expressed that a new prison in Highland would have to compete with the provision of a new prison in Strathclyde;
- it was suggested that the Criminal Justice Board might wish to consider the Violence Reduction Unit model; and
- an explanation was sought as to why recruitment was taking place for men's, women's and children's workers when there was currently a recruitment freeze. In response it was explained that these posts were part of the Caledonian System, a programme aimed at changing the behaviour of domestic abuse perpetrators funded by the Scottish Government, and the financing of these posts were ringfenced. It was hoped the programme would "go-live" in May/June 2019.

The Committee **NOTED** the report.

16. Complaints Review Committee Outcome Toradh Comataidh Ath-sgrùdaidh nan Gearanan

There had been circulated joint Report No CLH/13/19 dated 31 December 2018 by the Depute Chief Executive and Director of Corporate Resources, and the Interim Director of Care and Learning.

The Committee **NOTED**:-

- i. that the Complaints Review Committee met to consider the case and the findings; and
- ii. there were no recommendations made by the Complaints Review Committee.

17. Minutes Geàrr-chunntas

Declaration of Interest: Mr A Christie declared a financial interest in item 17iv 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 Alcohol and Drugs Partnership Strategy Group – 4 September 2018;
- ii. **NOTED** the Minutes of the Highland Community Justice Partnership – 12 September 2018;
- iii. **NOTED** the Minutes of the Highland Child Protection Committee – 4 October 2018; and
- iv. **APPROVED** the Minutes of the Adult Services Development and Scrutiny Sub-Committee – 30 November 2018.

The meeting concluded at 2.10 pm.

The Highland Council

Minutes of Meeting of the **Ross and Cromarty Committee** held in the Chamber, Council Offices, Dingwall on Wednesday, 30 January 2019 at 10.30 am.

Present:

Mr G Adam	Mr G MacKenzie
Mrs J Barclay	Mrs A MacLean
Mrs I Campbell	Mr D MacLeod
Dr I Cockburn	Ms P Munro
Mr M Finlayson	Mrs M Paterson
Mr C Fraser	Mr A Rhind
Mr D Louden	Mrs F Robertson (Chair)
Mr A MacInnes	Ms M Smith

Officials in Attendance:

Mr C Howell, Head of Infrastructure
 Mr J Robertson, Programme Manager City/Region Deal
 Mr I Moncrieff, Roads Operations Manager, Skye, Ross and Cromarty
 Mr S Dalgarno, Development Plans Manager
 Mr D Martin, Care and Learning Manager (North)
 Mr D Kennedy, Access Officer
 Mr C Simpson, Principal Tourism and Film Officer
 Ms S Wood, Education Quality Improvement Manager (Mid Area)
 Ms H Ross, Senior Ward Manager, Chief Executive's Office
 Mr R Bain, Ward Manager, Chief Executive's Office
 Ms D Agnew, Ward Manager, Chief Executive's Office
 Ms S Tarrant, Public Relations Officer
 Mrs A MacArthur, Administrative Assistant, Chief Executive's Office

Also in Attendance:

Chief Inspector I MacLelland, North Area Commander, Police Scotland

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

Preliminaries

The Chair and Members welcomed Mr Alexander MacInnes, newly appointed Councillor for Ward 5 Wester Ross, Strathpeffer and Lochalsh to the meeting.

Good News Items:

Congratulations to the Muir of Ord Hall which had been refurbished with improved insulation, replaced windows and doors and a better heating system, this was a great achievement.

Congratulations also to the Cromarty Care Project Cycling Without Age – Trishaws which had been set up in Cromarty.

Business

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

Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of Mr A MacKinnon who had other Council business. Ms I Campbell and Mr A MacInnes both tendered apologies for a late arrival due to inclement weather.

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

There were no declarations of interest.

3. **Minutes** **Geàrr-chunntas**

The Committee **NOTED** the Minutes of the last meeting which had been held on 1 November 2018 and had been approved by The Highland Council on 13 December 2018.

4. **Police – Area Performance Summary** **Poilis – Geàrr-chunntas Dèanadais Sgìreil**

There had been circulated Report No RC/001/18 dated 16 January 2019 by the North Area Commander. The Area Commander circulated cards for the Members on the Suicide Intervention and Prevention Programme.

During discussion, Members raised several issues including the following:-

- could an update be given on a number of anti-social behaviour incidents that occurred in Dingwall, the Area Commander responded that these were being looked into and where the youths involved had been identified, letters had been sent to their parents who had not always been aware of the incidents;
- there appeared to be a high number of vehicles stopped in the Road Traffic Operations/Campaigns, the Area Commander confirmed that this was higher than normal and was due to robust enforcement;
- pleased to see that the Police had worked with the Post Office and intercepted drug packages coming into the area;
- there had been a welcome reduction in speeding but Members had concerns about the increased speeding through 20 mph zones especially in Avoch, and speeding on the Cullicudden straight and through Munloch;
- in relation to the Tain bypass, a letter had been received from Transport Scotland who would be starting a consultation on the 50 mph speed limit, and Members would look for support from the Police;
- the Mulbuie School Parent Council had just reformed and with Ferintosh Community Council were looking to see an extension to the 20 mph speed limit in the Mulbuie School area;

- was there any pro-active work undertaken so that shops monitor their doors to catch shoplifters. The Area Commander reassured Members that CCTV was a great help and these people rarely got away with their crime, the Highland area was seen as being robust in dealing with shoplifting crime; and
- whilst in Santander on holiday it was seen that they had a novel method of reducing speeding, if speed signs were ignored and the driver continued to speed traffic lights would go red and the driver and following traffic would be stopped for five minutes, it was in many rural villages and went a long way to reducing speeding traffic.

The Committee **NOTED** progress made against the objectives set within the Highland and Islands Local Policing Plan 2017 – 2020 Year 2, attached as Annex **A** to this report, for the period covering 1 April 2018 - 31 December 2018;

5. Wider Tourism including NC500 Turasachd san Fharsaingeachd a' gabhail a-steach NC500

A presentation was given by Colin Simpson, Principal Tourism and Film Officer.

The Chair and Members thanked Mr Simpson for his informative presentation and during discussion, Members made the following comments:-

- information and maps should be provided Highland-wide on sites available for emptying septic waste from motor homes and caravans; and
- Members looked forward to signs on every toilet to inform people not to empty their waste at the toilets but to go to the nearest facility for this. These maps could be made available on line and passed to motorhome companies.
- it was requested that a copy of the presentation be circulated to Members.

The Committee **NOTED** the presentation.

6. Area Priorities Prìomhachasan Sgìreil

There had been circulated Report No RC/002/19 dated 21 January 2019 by the Acting Head of Policy.

The Committee, following scrutiny, **NOTED** the actions and outcomes that had been achieved in relation to the Area Priorities as set out in Appendix 1.

7. Update on the Inverness and Highland City-Region Deal Cunntas às Ùr mu Chùmhnant Baile-Roinne Inbhir Nis agus na Gàidhealtachd

There had been circulated Report No RC/003/19 dated 15 January 2019 by the Director of Development and Infrastructure.

During discussion, Members raised a number of queries including the following:-

- was there a timeline for the Highland Science Academy and when would members be informed that it was to come to Dingwall. The Programme Manager advised that the decision was imminent but an eight week consultation had to take place first;
- was there any indication on the timeline for the development of the old landfill site in Dingwall, this was a big area that could be developed. The landfill site had not been used in approximately 30 years. The landfill site in Inverness was now a haven for wildlife. It would be approximately 20/30 years before the site could be developed with buildings and there was an opportunity now to develop the site for wildlife as had been done in Inverness. The Programme Manager indicated that he would pass the Members' query to colleagues in Development and Infrastructure to investigate likely timescales;
- was there money that could be used for feasibility studies outwith Inverness, because it would be advantageous if money could be released from the City Region Deal for a feasibility study on the railway in Evanton and other feasibility studies;
- with so many officers working on Inverness projects, was there officer capacity available for projects elsewhere?;
- who forms the Scrutiny Board and how can new business cases or projects be put forward?;
- in answer to a question on fit houses, although the company installing these had gone out of business the technology was still there;

In the course of the discussion the following points were also made:

- all funding coming into the Council area was to be welcomed but looking at the map that had been circulated members noted that little was outwith the City area;
- the Programme Manager responded that an audit of City Region deals was taking place nationally which would look at how the money had been spent within the areas, there was an imbalance but Inverness was the city and economic engine for the Highlands;
- HIE used to be charged with supporting the periphery but this was not now happening;
- in relation to transport, road dualling from Tore to the North was desperately required;
- other smaller airports in the North could be looked at and feasibility studies undertaken ie Tain, Dornoch and Wick;
- services needed to be provided in rural communities if people are to be encouraged to live there and there was concern that too much had become centralised and this should be reflected in the rural implications section;
- there was concern that while the Council had successfully requested the City Deal to be widened to include the region, the only aspect that had been rolled out to the areas was the digital aspect and that was where the fit homes fitted in, there had been talk of a rural deal which we may benefit from in the future;

- Members expressed unhappiness about the Inverness centric nature of the existing deal and asked that when the Project Board reviewed and planned for the future they take into account the need for a more equitable share when the programme was rolled out;
- Wester Ross was the biggest Council ward in Europe and the fibre sites were very disappointing and only happening in military bases;
- given the concerns and frustrations expressed by Members the Chair suggested that Members contact her with their concerns and the Chair would then write to the Leader of the Council to make sure the concerns of the Ross and Cromarty Committee are heard and brought to the attention of the Council.

The Committee **AGREED** that Members contact the Chair with their concerns and the Chair will then write to the Leader of the Council to make sure the concerns of the Ross and Cromarty Committee are heard and brought to the attention of the Council.

8. **Roads Maintenance Programme 2019/20** **Prògram Càradh Rathaidean 2019/20**

There had been circulated Report No RC/004/19 dated 14 January 2019 by the Director of Community Services.

During discussion, Members raised several issues including the following:-

- there was slight slippage on the top road into the field at the Fairy Glen and the drainage needed work, offlets could be seen and water was travelling across the road;
- the drainage off the road was also an issue at Jemimaville; and
- the Black Isle ward did not have a reserve scheme for the Capital Programme and requested the Roads Operations Manager visit to agree items.

Members thanked the Roads Operations Manager for his visits to the Ward Meetings which had been very helpful.

The Committee:

- i. **APPROVED** the proposed 2019/20 Roads Maintenance Programme for Ross and Cromarty; and
- ii. **AGREED** that the Roads Operations Manager visit the Black Isle Ward Business Meeting to agree a reserve scheme for any additional monies that become available for their area.

9. **Development Infrastructure Dingwall** **Bun-structar Leasachaidh Inbhir Pheofharain**

There had been circulated Report No RC/005/19 dated 11 January 2019 by the Director of Development and Infrastructure.

During discussion, a Member read from a prepared statement to raise the following points:-

- officers should be commended for the report;
- the Kinnairdie Link Road had been taken out of the capital plan even though the first phase had already started and development of more houses could not be undertaken without the KLR. Had the earlier Capital Plan come into action Dingwall would be releasing 470 houses for building as opposed to the 150 that were being released;
- due to health and safety concerns no banners and bunting could be put up for the gala in the summer; the Christmas lights unable to go up for the same reason; the canal bridge in Dingwall closed due to health and safety concerns; the Macdonald Tower closed due to health and safety concerns; St Clements School visited two to three years ago by the previous Chief Executive who had been ashamed at the state of the school in this day and age and had said the school had to be a priority;
- parking charge proposals to be imposed without consultation and without establishment of ownership of sites and a year on we are no further forward with some that have been imposed elsewhere in Highland and that have not realised the income intended; and
- the Community Council in Dingwall had undertaken a considerable amount of work on some projects;
- Members expressed sympathy and frustration at the lack of funds to build new roads under the Capital Plan, except for those in Inverness City under the City/Region deal.

The Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** that full delivery of the housing allocations contained in the IMFLDP of c 470 additional residential homes is still predicated on the delivery of KLR;
- ii. **APPROVED** the updated threshold for the delivery of housing development in advance of the KLR to allow construction of 150 additional houses, subject to the actions set out in sub paragraph iii;
- iii. **AGREED** the actions for mitigating the transport impacts of developments in Dingwall, as detailed in section 5 of the report, including:-
 - A. short term improvements to key junctions including early delivery of schemes (see section 5A);
 - B. Traffic management measures (see section 5B); and
 - C. Active travel infrastructure requirements (see section 5C);
- iv. **APPROVED** the early delivery of the junction improvements identified in paragraph 5.1 at Bridgend Avenue Junction (see figure 1) and Dochcarty Road Junction (see figure 2), and the traffic signal works at Mart Road Junction identified in paragraph 5.2;
- v. **AGREED** for the contents of this report to become a material consideration for relevant planning applications and pre-application advice noting that this represents an update to development requirements set out in pages 75 - 79 of the IMFLDP;

- vi. **NOTED** that detailed consideration of development and associated mitigation measures will be undertaken as planning applications are submitted – informed by this report and the associated transport study, (which shall be made public) and taking account of any implemented traffic mitigation measures; and
- vii. **AGREED** that by investing in the above infrastructure improvements the Council is enabling future housing development and will therefore seek reasonable and proportionate developer contributions from these developments towards their funding including developments approved after the construction of infrastructure improvements.

10. West Highland and Islands Amended Core Paths Plan, Wester Ross and Lochalsh Areas
Plana Phrìomh Cheuman Atharraichte na Gàidhealtachd an Iar agus nan Eilean, Sgìrean Rois an Iar agus Loch Aillse

There had been circulated Report No RC/006/19 dated 16 January 2019 by the Director of Development and Infrastructure.

The Committee **AGREED** that the approval of the Wester Ross and Lochalsh areas of the West Highland and Islands be delegated to the Director of Development and Infrastructure in consultation with the Area Chair and local Ward Members, the Plan then to be published for formal consultation.

11. Education Scotland Reports
Sgrùdaidhean le Foghlam Alba

There had been circulated Report No RC/007/19 dated 19 January 2019 by the Interim Director of Care and Learning.

The Committee **NOTED** the content of the report.

12. Educational Trusts
Urrasan Foghlaim

There had been circulated Report No RC/008/19 dated 30 January 2019 by the Interim Director of Care and Learning.

Members **APPROVED** an increase of carry forward funding from £1000 to £5000 in order to allow the granting of funds at the end of the academic session for school prizes and bursaries.

13. Common Good Funds
Maoin Maith Choitchinn

There had been circulated Reports Nos RC/009/19 – RC/013/19 dated 18 January 2019 by the Depute Chief Executive and Director of Corporate Resources and Acting Head of Policy which provided information on the following Common Good Funds:-

- a. Cromarty Common Good Fund RC/009/19
- b. Dingwall Common Good Fund RC/010/19
- c. Fortrose and Rosemarkie Common Good Fund RC/011/19
- d. Invergordon Common Good Fund RC/012/19
- e. Tain Common Good Fund RC/013/19

The Committee:

- i. **NOTED** the Quarter 3 monitoring statement for the Common Good Funds and to consider and approve the proposed 2019/20 budget for the funds as shown in Appendix 2 of each report;
- ii. **AGREED** for the Tain Common Good Fund that the Market Street stall lease with Ross-shire CAB be continued for a further 5 year period on current terms which include a rental of less than market value
- iii. **AGREED** to delegate a decision for the Tain Common Good Fund re the potential use of grazing land for solar panels to the Acting Head of Policy in consultation with the Area Chair and Local Members.

Members thanked the Ward Managers for the work they put into these reports.

The meeting ended at 12.45 pm.

The Highland Council

Minutes of Meeting of the **Environment, Development and Infrastructure Committee** held in the Council Chamber, Council Headquarters, Glenurquhart Road, Inverness on Thursday, 31 January 2019 at 10.30 am.

Present:

Mr R Balfour (am only)	Ms A MacLean
Mrs J Barclay	Mr D MacLeod
Mrs I Campbell (substitute)	Mr D MacPherson
Miss J Campbell	Mr R MacWilliam
Dr I Cockburn	Mr H Morrison
Mr J Gordon	Mr D Rixson
Mr J Gray	Mrs T Robertson
Mr A Henderson	Mr K Rosie (by video conference)
Mr R Laird	Mr A Sinclair (by video conference)
Mrs L MacDonald	Mr C Smith
Mr W MacKay (by video conference)	

Non-Members also present:

Mr R Bremner (by video conference)	Mr S Mackie (by video conference)
Mrs H Carmichael	Mr A MacInnes
Mr D Mackay	Mr J McGillivray (by video conference)

In attendance:

Mr S Black, Director of Development and Infrastructure
 Ms C Campbell, Head of Performance and Resources, Community Services
 Mr D Goldie, Head of Housing and Building Maintenance, Community Services
 Mr C Howell, Head of Infrastructure, Development and Infrastructure Service
 Mr D Jones, Acting Head of Development Management, Development and Infrastructure Service
 Mr F MacDonald, Head of Property Services, Development and Infrastructure Service
 Mr A Maguire, Head of Development and Regeneration, Development and Infrastructure Service
 Mr B Porter, Head of Resources, Care, Learning and Housing Manager
 Ms N Wallace, Acting Head of Planning and Environment, Development and Infrastructure Service
 Mr A Summers, Head of Environmental and Amenity Services, Community Services
 Ms T Urry, Head of Roads and Transport, Community Services
 Mr S Dalgarno, Development Plans Manager, Development and Infrastructure Service
 Mr R Campbell, Estate Strategy Manager, Care, Learning and Housing Manager
 Mr A McCann, Economy and Regeneration Manager, Development and Infrastructure Service
 Mr J McHardy, Housing Development Manager, Development & Infrastructure Service
 Mr M Mitchell, Finance Manager (Community Services/Development and Infrastructure), Corporate Resources
 Mr P Mascarenhas, Community and Democratic Engagement Manager, Chief Executive's Service
 Mr A Yates, Environmental Health Manager, Community Services
 Mr M Atkinson, Research Officer, Development and Infrastructure Service

Miss J MacLennan, Principal Administrator, Chief Executive's Office
 Mr S Taylor, Administrative Assistant, Chief Executive's Office

Also in attendance:

Ms K Land, Corporate Affairs (Networks), Scottish and Southern Energy (Item 4)
 Mr A Morrison, Customer and Community Manager, Scottish and Southern Energy (Item 4)

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

Mr A Henderson in the Chair

Business

**1. Apologies for Absence
 Leisgeulan**

Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of Ms K Currie, Mr M Finlayson, Mr C Fraser and Mr I Ramon.

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

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

Item 6 – Mr D Rixson (non-financial)

Item 9 – Miss J Campbell, Mr J Gray and Mr R MacWilliam and Mr D Rixson (all non-financial)

Item 25 – Mr D Rixson (non-financial)

**3. Good News
 Naidheachdan Matha**

The Committee **NOTED** the items of Good News.

**4. Presentation – Scottish and Southern Energy (SSE)
 Taisbeanadh – Scottish and Southern Energy (SSE)**

A presentation was given by Mr Alec Morrison, Customer and Community Manager, Scottish and Southern Energy providing information on the development of a business plan in relation to RIIO-T2. He explained that Revenue Incentive Innovation Outputs (RIIO) was Ofgem's performance-based framework to set the price controls for Network Operators in the UK and that RIIO-T2 set out a 5 year price control covering the period 2021/22 - 2025/26. It was estimated that an investment of £3bn in RIIO-T2 would be made and would generate between 0.5 – 7.5GW of connected renewable energy. He drew attention to the current and likely future energy needs of the North of Scotland and advised that the RIIO-T2 business plan would take this in to consideration. In concluding his presentation, Mr Morrison outlined the timetable for drafting of the business plan which it was anticipated would be concluded in December 2019.

During discussion, Members made the following comments:-

- confirmation was sought, and received, that comments made by Members would be fed into the consultation process;
- greater recognition was required of the significant contribution the Highlands made in terms of production of electricity and the lack of reinvestment from this in the area;
- it was emphasised that wider contributions should be invested from the development of energy in the area towards the overall infrastructure which was required to facilitate these developments;
- in highlighting an increase in fuel poverty in the Highlands and the consumption of energy produced in the area by central Scotland, it was emphasised that communities should benefit locally from the energy being produced in their area;
- further information was sought, and received, regarding how developments in Wester Ross could benefit from the proposed business plan;
- Caithness had not benefitted from the energy developments which had been constructed in the area and that more power came into Caithness from developments in Orkney;
- in highlighting the ongoing development of Community Planning Partnerships, it was emphasised that partner agencies should be consulted on the proposed business plan; and
- careful consideration was required of the capacity currently available in the Highlands for the production of energy in light of issues arising from developments such as the Beauly to Denny line.

The Chair having thanked Mr Morrison for his presentation, the Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the presentation; and
- ii. **AGREED** that the presentation be circulated to Members.

5. Development and Infrastructure Service Revenue Budget - Monitoring to 31 December 2018
Sgrùdadh Buidseat Teachd-a-steach Seirbheis an Leasachaidh is a' Bhun-structair – Sgrùdadh gu 31 Dùbhlachd 2018

There had been circulated Report No. EDI/01/19 dated 14 January 2019 by the Director of Development and Infrastructure.

The Committee **APPROVED** the revenue monitoring position for the period 1 April to 31 December 2018 and the actions which had been put in place to manage the budget over the remainder of the financial year.

6. Capital Expenditure Monitoring to 31 December 2018
Aithisg Sgrùdaidh Caiteachais Chalpa gu 31 Dùbhlachd 2018

Declaration of Interest – Mr D Rixson, as a Board Member of Lochaber Housing Association, declared a non-financial interest in respect of this item but, having applied the test outlined in Paragraphs 5.2 and 5.3 of the Councillors' Code of Conduct, concluded that his interest did not preclude him from taking part in the discussion.

There had been circulated Report No. EDI/02/19 dated 21 January 2019 by the Director of Development and Infrastructure.

During discussion, Members made the following comments:-

- in highlighting a £106k spend on equipment required for the roll-out of Decriminalised Parking Enforcement, it was confirmed that this spend was not specifically for the installation of new machines in car parks;
- disappointment was expressed that only three projects in Wester Ross, Strathpeffer and Lochalsh (Ward 5) were contained within the capital programme;
- the progress of works in relation to a pedestrian crossing on Nairn High Street and a pathway on King Street was highlighted;
- reassurance was sought, and received, that efforts were being made to ensure that works in relation to the B9090 White Bridge would be completed in June and that discussions were currently ongoing with Scottish Water to recover the costs which had arisen from delays in construction;
- the proposed allocation of capital funding towards works in relation to the stabilisation of rocks at Strome ferry was welcomed;
- in welcoming the proposed formation of a Cross Party Options Selection Group in relation to the Strome ferry Bypass, confirmation was sought, and received, that the first meeting of the Group would take place as soon as possible after confirmation of the Group's membership by full Council in March;
- it was suggested that the selection of a preferred route for the Strome ferry Bypass should take into consideration the depth and length of the road and that discussion with Scotrail and Network Rail on the progression of a long term solution was required;
- in response to a suggestion that greater cross-party representation was required on the proposed Options Selection Group in relation to the Strome ferry Bypass, the Chair considered the proposed membership of the group to be appropriate;
- the proposed budget allocation for stabilisation works at the Kinloch Hourn landslip was welcomed; and
- further information was sought, and received, regarding the repayment of Inverness Airport Business Park Ltd's Loan Stock, during which, it was highlighted that a Co-operative distribution centre had recently been established and a new hotel was currently under construction at the business park.

The Committee **APPROVED**:-

- i. the capital expenditure monitoring position for the period 1 April 2018 to 31 December 2018;
- ii. an additional budget allocation of £2.185m for rock stabilisation works at Strome ferry;
- iii. a budget allocation of £0.925m for stabilisation works at the Kinloch Hourn landslip; and
- * iv. the Membership of a Cross Party Options Selection Group to consider the recommendation of the preferred long term solution for a bypass at Strome ferry.

The Committee **NOTED** the outcome of the assessment of Inverness Airport Business Park Ltd's 2017/18 Annual Accounts and the implications for repayment of the Council's outstanding Loan Stock.

**7. Planning Performance Framework and Quarter 3 Performance Review
Frèam Coileanadh Dealbhaidh agus Ath-sgrùdadh Coileanaidh Cairteal 3**

There had been circulated Report No. EDI/03/19 dated 11 January 2019 by the Director of Development and Infrastructure.

During discussion, Members made the following comments:-

- in relation to enforcement activity, concern was expressed that the percentage of cases being taken up which had been served with notices was lower than in the previous year and a request was made that further detail regarding the number of breaches and the cases which had been resolved be presented in future reports;
- concern was expressed that developers who disregarded planning conditions were often encouraged to submit a retrospective application for permission whilst it was considered that the original permission should be adhered to; and
- feedback received from the Scottish Government on the Council's Planning Performance Framework for 2017/18 had indicated an excellent performance by the Council.

Thereafter, the Committee **NOTED** the performance updates for the Development Management, Building Standards, Development Plans, Transport Planning, Performance and Environment teams.

**8. Development Plans Newsletter
Cuairt-litir Phlanaichean Leasachaidh**

There had been circulated Report No EDI/04/19 dated 14 January 2019 by the Director of Development and Infrastructure.

A presentation was given providing information on housing delivery and the health and vibrancy of town centres, during which monitoring and forecasting information was shown within interactive 'Storymaps' software in relation to Housing Land Audit, Housing Completions and Town Centre Health Checks and were available to view via the Council's website.

During discussion, Members made the following comments:-

- In order for local Members to gain a wider appreciation of other potential developments in the surrounding area when determining applications, it was suggested that consultation take place with local Members so that a wider appreciation of the key issues arising from the Inner Moray Firth Local Development Plan (IMFLDP) could be made when determining planning applications;
- in highlighting the Inverness East Development Brief and traffic patterns in and around the University of the Highlands and Islands campus, it was

suggested that a review into how transport assumptions were established should be undertaken;

- in welcoming the availability of the interactive ‘Storymaps’ to be accessed by the public, it was queried as to whether training could be provided to Members on how to use the software so that feedback and updates could be provided at Ward business meetings;
- concern was expressed that an increase in housing development in rural areas had also led to an increase in parents using alternative routes for school runs, such as through Mulbuie for Ben Wyvis Primary, and that the views expressed by local residents should be considered;
- the importance of engaging with communities at an early stage when undertaking reviews of development plans was emphasised, in particular when changes to housing allocations were being proposed;
- in suggesting that a review of the Council’s own planning policies, in particular the Housing in the Countryside Guidance, should be undertaken, further information was sought, and received, regarding the other areas of policy which would be reviewed under the Regional Development Plan;
- clarification was sought, and received, regarding the figures presented within the ‘Storymaps’ in relation to projected housing allocation numbers in Inverness;
- it was highlighted that Transport Scotland had been consulted on the Fort William 2040 review;
- it was also highlighted that every household in the local area had been sent a card providing details of the West Highland and Islands Local Development Plan and the active engagement undertaken with the local community was commended;
- confirmation was sought, and received, that the ‘Storymaps’ were updated regularly to take into consideration the progress of building projects;
- in highlighting the work currently being forward with the Caithness Partnership Plan, it was emphasised that there was an opportunity to discuss with partner agencies the short and long term solution with regards to transport infrastructure and town centre regeneration; and
- in welcoming the opportunity for Members and local communities to engage with the development plan process, it was emphasised that there was a need to ensure that appropriate staff resource could be made available to undertake consultation in local areas.

The Committee:-

- i. **APPROVED** the 2018 Development Plans Newsletter at Appendix 1 of the report for publication and submission to Scottish Ministers as the Council’s 2019 Development Plan Scheme; and
- ii. **NOTED** the timescales for Member and community input to documents that might be relevant or of interest to the communities and areas that they cover.

9. Economy and Regeneration Eaconamaidh agus Ath-ùrachadh

Declarations of Interest – Miss J Campbell, Mr J Gray and Mr R MacWilliam, as Members of Inverness City Heritage Trust and the Academy Street Townscape Heritage Project, declared non-financial

interests in respect of this item but, having applied the test outlined in Paragraphs 5.2 and 5.3 of the Councillors' Code of Conduct, concluded that their interests did not preclude them from taking part in the discussion.

There had been circulated Report No EDI/05/19 dated 16 January 2019 by the Director of Development and Infrastructure.

During discussion, Members made the following comments:-

- in 2017 tourism had generated £1.2bn towards the Highland economy;
- in highlighting the work of Business Gateway and Highland Opportunity (Investments) Limited, the creation of job opportunities in rural areas by small business was welcomed;
- further information was sought, and received, regarding the submission of Stage 2 applications to the Regeneration Capital Grant Fund (RCGF);
- the interest and demand expressed by local communities and projects towards the RCGF should emphasise to the Scottish Government that it was a welcome funding opportunity;
- in highlighting the economic benefit of tourism to rural areas, it was emphasised that the six projects currently being funded by the RCGF would help to attract tourists to the area; and
- in welcoming the submission of a number of Stage 2 applications to the RCGF, a request was made for further information regarding the timescale for delivery of projects currently being managed by the Economy and Regeneration team which had already received funding from the RCGF.

The Committee **NOTED** the key developments highlighted during quarter 3 and emerging activity.

10. Local Employability Model Modail So-fhastachd Ionadail

There had been circulated Report No EDI/06/19 dated 15 January 2019 by the Director of Development and Infrastructure.

During discussion, Members made the following comments:-

- further information was sought, and received, regarding the difference between inactive citizens who were seeking to get back into work and citizens who were claiming out of work benefits;
- in highlighting the demographics of the Highland area and the impact this had on employability, it was emphasised that the Council, in partnership with other agencies, should seek to clearly identify the employment needs and opportunities required and encourage the retention of specific skills;
- whilst employment levels could be considered high in the Highlands, there was also a high level of poverty in the area due to a variety of factors, such as under-employment and a lack of a stable employment, which made employment uneconomic for some people;
- it was suggested that closer partnership work with agencies was required to produce skilled workers for which there was currently demand for within the public and private sector;

- it was emphasised that age should not be a barrier for older people getting into work and that access to employment as people got older was a key issue; and
- further information was sought, and received, regarding the work the Council undertook with community planning partnerships in relation to employment.

Thereafter, the Committee:-

- NOTED** the Employability Partnership Working Framework agreed between the Scottish Government and Scottish Local Government;
- NOTED** the findings of the Scottish Government Review of Employability Services, and specifically the proposal to introduce a new local employability delivery model managed collaboratively between Scottish Government and Local Government from April 2019; and
- AGREED** to work with the Scottish Government and partners to design, resource and deliver a new Highland Employability Service.

11. Drumnadrochit Flood Protection Scheme Sgeama Dìon Thuiltean Dhruim na Drochaid

There had been circulated Report No EDI/07/19 dated 22 January 2019 by the Director of Development and Infrastructure.

The Committee **NOTED** the drawings and description of Operations for the Drumnadrochit Scheme and **APPROVED** the publication of these for formal consultation.

12. Beinn Tharsuinn Windfarm Community Limited Coimhearsnachd Tuathanas Gaoithe na Beinne Tarsainn Eta

There had been circulated Report No EDI/08/19 dated 14 January 2019 by the Director of Development and Infrastructure.

The Committee:-

- NOTED** the activities of Beinn Tharsuinn Windfarm Community Limited; and
- AGREED** to accept, on behalf of The Highland Council, the Financial Statement of Beinn Tharsuinn Windfarm Community Limited for the year ending 31 March 2018.

13. Scottish Government/Historic Environment Scotland Consultations on Draft Historic Environment Policy and Scotland's Forest strategy 2019-2029

Co-chomhairlean mu Dhreachd Phoileasaidh Àrainneachd Eachdraidheil agus Ro-innleachd Choille na h-Alba 2019–2029 aig Riaghaltas na h-Alba/Àrainneachd Eachdraidheil na h-Alba

There had been circulated Report No EDI/09/19 dated 7 January 2019 by the Director of Development and Infrastructure.

During discussion, Members made the following comments:-

- in acknowledging that the Council had only been made aware of the consultations at a late stage, it was suggested that future consultations requiring responses from Members outwith the timeframe for Committee approval should be forwarded to Members to enable comments to be passed onto officers for inclusion with the Council's response;
- intangible heritage could include place names as these had a physical presence on road signs and could often be subject to debate as to the correct Gaelic spelling;
- shinty should also be included within the response as an example of the Highland's intangible heritage;
- in relation to societal change, it was highlighted that older people participated in a number of aspects of the historic environment such as local history societies and that consideration should be made of issues arising in relation to access to historical sites for older people;
- there were a number of questions contained within the Scottish Forestry Strategy 2019-2029 consultation which had not been responded to; and
- concern was expressed that the Council's response to the Draft Historic Environment Policy did not reflect the Council's own policies on sustainable economic development, natural heritage and community participation.

In reply, the Director of Development and Infrastructure advised that the responses to the consultations could be redrafted, taking into account comments made by Members and resubmitted for approval.

The Committee **AGREED** to **HOMOLOGATE** the responses to Historic Environment Scotland's Historic Environment Policy and the Scottish Government's Scottish Forestry Strategy, subject to the inclusion of Members' comments.

14. Community Services Revenue Budget Monitoring Report – 1 April to 31 December 2018
Aithisg Sgrùdaidh Teachd-a-steach nan Seirbheisean Coimhearsnachd – 1 Giblean gu 31 Dùbhlachd 2018

There had been circulated Report No EDI/10/19 dated 22 January 2019 by the Director of Community Services.

During discussion, Members made the following comments:-

- considerable progress had been made in reducing the Service's overspend;
- further detail was sought as to what exactly the expenditure on safety barriers had been intended to be used for and why it had now been deferred;
- there was a £850k and a £631k shortfall in income for the Car Parking and Public Conveniences headings respectively, two areas which should have been delivered from the budget agreed for 2018/19. Going forward, it was hoped there would be thorough consultation before such proposals were included in future budget calculations;
- the delays in implementing charges for Public Conveniences and Car Park charges was having a detrimental effect on other areas of the Service;

- part of the increase in the Public Conveniences budget pressure was attributed to increase costs and details of these were requested;
- an explanation was sought, and received, as to how the outturn for Disaggregated Area Budgets were calculated. In this connection, the reason why the Inverness budget had been cut by £61k from 30 September to 31 December 2108 was also questioned;
- the budgets for Subsidies and Concessionary Fares, School Transport and Ground Maintenance had increased significantly since the Committee's last meeting and details as to why this had happened were sought, and provided; and
- due to the breakdown of the second pavement tractor, there was now only one tractor for the Thurso area. Calls were made for the replacement tractor to be provided as soon as possible.

The Committee **APPROVED** the revenue budget monitoring report for 1 April to 31 December 2018.

15. Community Services Performance Report – 1 April to 31 December 2018
Aithisg Coileanaidh nan Seirbheisean Coimhearsnachd – 1 Giblean gu 31 Dùbhlachd 2018

There had been circulated Report No EDI/11/19 dated 22 January 2019 by the Director of Community Services.

During discussion, Members made the following comments:-

- the Chairman drew Members attention to the number of sample inspections undertaken in Quarter 3 where the target had been exceeded;
- information was sought, and received, as to how the Service monitored the effectiveness of pothole repairs. If repairs needed to be revisited then this would suggest that the most efficient approach had not been adopted at that specific location;
- the spray injection method provided a more durable pothole repair as had been evidenced on the A82; and
- it was disappointing that the percentage of household waste composted had reduced in Quarter 3.

The Committee scrutinised and **NOTED** the information provided on Community Services performance from 1 April to 31 December 2018.

16. Strategic Timber Transport Fund: Status of 2018/19 Projects and Future Bids
Maoin Còmhdhail Fiodha Ro-innleachdail: Inbhe Phròiseactan 2018/19 agus Tairgsean an Ama ri Teachd

There had been circulated Report No EDI/12/19 dated 10 January 2019 by the Director of Community Services.

During discussion, Members made the following comments:-

The Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the delivery of the 2018/19 programme of works including the additional works delivered using the Strategic Timber Transport Scheme (STTS) underspend as shown in Appendix 1;
- ii. **NOTED** the preparatory work for bids to be made to the 2019/20 STTS Fund;
- iii. **AGREED** that, should STTF match funding bids be unsuccessful, any residual match funding would be reallocated across the Areas using the Road Condition Survey parameters, with scheme selection being decided by Members at local Area level; and
- iv. **AGREED** that subject to the availability of funds as decided at the annual budget setting stage and the continuation of the national STTS programme, up to £0.5M be allocated under the road structural (capital) funding as match funding for future years.

17. Review of Management Rules for Cemeteries and Kilvean Crematorium Ath-sgrùdadh air Riaghailtean Stiùiridh airson Chladhan agus Luathreachan Chille Bheathain

There had been circulated Report No EDI/13/19 dated 31 January 2019 by the Director of Community Services.

During discussion, Members made the following comments:-

- Funeral Directors would be involved in the consultation;
- the main changes to the Management Rules should be highlighted;
- there had been an unfortunate experience when a visit to Kilvean Crematorium had found the Memorial Chapel closed. Any difference to opening hours needed to be advertised in advance;
- confirmation was sought if it was possible to purchase a single lair for cremated remains;
- it was suggested that the Council should take some responsibility for the damage caused to memorials caused by subsidence in cemeteries;
- where cemeteries were full it was important to negotiate with land owners so that they can be extended;
- it was recognised that dealing with bereaved relatives could often be emotive, putting pressure on officers, and the revision of Management Rules would mean all were dealt with equally;
- the public had a different expectation in relation to the upkeep of cemeteries and a review was necessary to ensure that there was sufficient operational resources to deliver;
- addition forms of memorials could impinge on grass cutting; and
- to avoid confusion during the consultation there needed to be some demarcation between the two sets of Management Rules.

The Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the contents of the report;
- ii. **APPROVED** the review of the Management Rules, subject to a suitable method of numerology being used through the appendices, given the potential for confusion; and
- iii. **AGREED** that consultation with relevant stakeholders takes place regarding the review.

18. Joint Health Protection Plan Co-Phlana Dion Slàinte

There had been circulated Report No EDI/14/19 dated 11 January 2019 by the Director of Community Services.

During discussion, Members made the following comments:-

- the Environmental Health team was held in high regard, not only within the Council but across other agencies; and
- the priority to minimise the risk to the public from Lyme Disease was welcomed. It was important to make everyone aware, particularly tourists, of the dangers associated with tick bites. There had been some consideration given to providing maps of area where ticks were especially bad but it was thought this might discourage visitors from specific area. Nevertheless, Lyme Disease was a serious illness and it was important that the public took the necessary precautions.

The Committee **APPROVED** the review of the Joint Health Protection Plan 2019-2020.

19. Environmental Health Improvement Plan Plana Leasachaidh Slàinte Àrainneachd

There had been circulated Report No EDI/15/19 dated 11 January 2019 by the Director of Community Services.

During discussion, Members made the following comments:-

- year on year the number of routine service requests had increased and had doubled from 4,413 in 2013 to 8,779 in 2017 during a time when the workforce had reduced. This highlighted the need to support the service;
- the use of graduate interns was welcomed and further information was sought as to the areas of work they were involved with;
- the proposals for service improvement were the issues that were commonly heard by Members at Community Council meetings. To deliver these it was important to acknowledge the benefit of partnership working;
- consideration should be given if there were areas of work which the service could levy a charge;
- the loss of the Food Standards Agency's Official Shellfish sampling contract was disappointing;
- it was questioned if the number of dogs had increased;
- despite the small size of the team, it had still managed to address issues with large corporations. An example of this was the work that had been undertaken with Scottish and Southern Energy to introduce noise screening work at the Wester Balblair sub-station near Beaully, solving what had become locally known as the "Beaully Buzz";
- the introduction of an Abandoned Vehicles policy in May 2019 was welcomed. However, this was a wide area of work and it was therefore vital to work with different Services and agencies to tackle this problem. An example of this was of Abandoned Vehicle on HRA land where it was suggested it might be more appropriate for this to be funded from the

general fund given that many of the vehicles were the property of owner occupiers; and

- many HRA car parks were now simply being used as storage areas for abandoned vehicles.

The Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the updated Environmental Health improvement plan; and
- ii. **AGREED** the proposals for redesign and improvement projects.

20. Environmental Health Investigation Protocol for Dog Barking Complaints Pròtacal Sgrùdaidh Slàinte Àrainneachd airson Ghearanan mu Choin a' Comhartaich

There had been circulated Report No EDI/16/19 dated 14 January 2019 by the Director of Community Services.

Having suggested that the process might be revisited with a view to truncating it, the Committee otherwise **APPROVED** the revised investigation protocol as detailed within the report.

21. Minutes Geàrr-chunntas

The Committee **NOTED** Minutes of the Planning Applications Committees (PAC) for:-

- i. North PAC – 16 October 2018;
- ii. South PAC – 23 October 2018;

and **APPROVED**:-

- iii. Harbours Management Board Minutes of 15 November 2018; and
- iv. Waste Strategy Working Group Minutes of 7 December 2018.

22. Exclusion of the Public Às-dùnadh a' Phobail

The Committee **RESOLVED** that, under Section 50A(4) of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973, the public be excluded from the meeting for the following items on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Part 1 of Schedule 7A of the Act, the relevant paragraphs being shown.

23. Land and Property Fearann is Cuid-seilbhe

Paragraphs 6 and 9

There had been circulated to Members only Report No. EDI/17/19 dated 23 January 2019 by the Director of Development and Infrastructure.

Following discussion, the Committee **APPROVED** the recommendations contained within the report.

**24. Property Transactions Monitoring Report
Aithisg Sgrùdaidh Ghnothachasan Seilbhe**

Paragraphs 6 and 9

There had been circulated to Members only Report No. EDI/18/19 dated 14 January 2019 by the Director of Development and Infrastructure.

Following discussion, the Committee **NOTED** the monitoring statements for General Fund and Property Account transactions as approved by the Head of Development and Regeneration under delegated authority as well the Budgeted Sales for 2018/19 and beyond.

**25. Housing Development Initiatives
Iomairtean Leasachaidh Taigheadais**

Declaration of Interest – Mr D Rixson, as a Board Member of Lochaber Housing Association, declared a non-financial interest in respect of this item but, having applied the test outlined in Paragraphs 5.2 and 5.3 of the Councillors’ Code of Conduct, concluded that his interest did not preclude him from taking part in the discussion.

Paragraphs 6 and 9

There had been circulated to Members only Report No. EDI/19/19 dated 23 January 2019 by the Director of Development and Infrastructure.

The Committee **APPROVED** the recommendations contained within the report.

26. Community Asset Transfer Request

Paragraphs 6 & 9

There had been circulated to Members only Report No. EDI/20/19 dated 25 January 2019 by the Director of Development and Infrastructure.

The Committee **APPROVED** the recommendations contained within the report subject to an amendment regarding the terms of the lease.

The meeting ended at 3.30 pm.

The Highland Council

Minutes of Meeting of the **Badenoch and Strathspey Area Committee** held in the Courtroom, Grantown Courthouse, Grantown-on-Spey on 11 February 2019 at 10.30 am.

Present:

Mr J Bruce
Mrs M Cockburn

Ms P Hadley
Mr B Lobban

In attendance:

Ms L Cowie, Ward Manager (Nairn, Badenoch and Strathspey), Chief Executive's Office
Mr R Porteous, Roads Operations Manager (Lochaber, Nairn and Badenoch and Strathspey)
Mr R MacLeod, Principal Housing Officer
Ms F MacBain, Committee Administrator, Chief Executive's Office

Also in attendance:

Ms S Smith, Head of Business Development, Highlands and Islands Enterprise (Item 3)
Mr K Rodgers, Head of Finance and Project Manager, NHS Highland (Item 4)
Ms A Phimister, Area Manager, NHS Highland (Item 4)
Inspector V Tough (Item 6)

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

Mr B Lobban in the Chair

Business

1. Apologies for Absence Leisgeulan

There were no apologies for absence.

2. Declarations of Interest Foillseachaidhean Com-pàirt

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

Item 3 – Ms P Hadley (financial)
Item 3 – Mr B Lobban (financial)
Item 5 – Ms P Hadley (financial)
Item 9 – Ms P Hadley (financial)

3. Cairngorm Mountain An Càrn Gorm

Declarations of Interest:

Mr B Lobban declared a financial interest in this item as a Director of Cairngorm Mountain Scotland Ltd but having applied the test outlined in Paragraphs 5.2 and 5.3 of the Councillors' Code of Conduct, concluded that as this was a verbal update his interest did not preclude him from taking part in the discussion.

Ms P Hadley declared a financial interest in this item as a member of the Cairngorm National Park Authority Board but, in terms of the dispensation granted by the Standards Commission, remained to take part in the discussion.

A verbal update was provided on operations at Cairngorm Mountain by Ms Susan Smith, Head of Business Development, Highlands and Islands Enterprise during which the Committee was advised of the chain of events that had taken place after the appointment of financial administrators in November 2018. Priorities had been the protection of jobs and business including minimising any disadvantage to the supply chain, and for this reason it had been decided in the interim that the organisation required to be taken forward by the public rather than private sector, and Cairngorm Mountain (Scotland) Ltd had been created. Details of the Company Directors were provided, a business plan was being developed and 3 key aims - set up, stabilisation and turnaround - were explained, as were the complexities, risks and challenges of managing a mountain-based business with ageing infrastructure. HIE's role was strategic rather than operational and work was being undertaken with the Health and Safety Executive in relation to the infrastructure, particularly the closed funicular railway, repairs to which would require a Scottish Government decision on funding.

During discussion the following issues were considered:

- scope for summer business activity was severely restricted while the funicular railway was out of action. An engineer's report was due by the start of March 2019, after which design, procurement and costs issues would be considered;
- there were approximately 72 employees, with most of those who usually worked in the Ptarmigan restaurant deployed to other activities. It was hoped the restaurant would be opened during any periods when there was sufficient snow for skiing; and
- the administrators had prescriptive legal processes to follow with regard to the company finances, creditors and debtors.

The Committee **NOTED** the update and **AGREED** that a further briefing for Members be arranged.

4. NHS Highland: Healthcare in Badenoch and Strathspey NHS na Gàidhealtachd: Cùram-slàinte ann am Bàideanach agus Srath Spè

An overview of the Delivery of Home Care Services in Badenoch and Strathspey was provided by Mr Kenny Rodgers, Head of Finance and Project Manager, and Ms Alison Phimister, Area Manager, NHS Highland. An update was also given on progress of the ongoing Redesign of Services including the new hospital project, with it being confirmed that the land for the development

had now been purchased. The full business case would be going to the Scottish Government in May 2019, with the aim of starting work on the ground in July 2019.

During discussion, the following issues were considered:

- further design work was still anticipated in relation to the GP practices, and the funding arrangements for the maintenance of practices which were owned by the NHS versus those whose premises were privately owned were detailed;
- a newsletter was planned for every household in March 2019;
- the model of community care was challenging in rural areas due to workforce shortages, an ageing workforce, and travel distances. The policy to transition to independent sector provision of care at home, rather than in-house, with an in-house focus on enablement, was summarised. When the new service model had been implemented, NHS Highland had been providing 543 hours of in-house care at home per week, whereas in the last week 550 hours had been provided by the independent sector, and a further 180 of in-house hours on enablement. Details were also provided on current levels of waiting for service, some of which were people delayed in hospital;
- concern was expressed about recruitment shortages and the possible inability of the independent sector to cover all areas. Having 3 independent sector care providers operating in the B&S area meant that although they were trying to recruit from the same pool of potential staff, if one or more operators were to exit the market, cover could be provided by the other operators;
- age was not a barrier to recruitment although the role of carer could be physically challenging at times; and
- information was sought and provided on recruitment efforts.

The Committee **NOTED** the update.

**5. Cairngorm National Park Authority Proposed Local Development Plan
Plana Leasachaidh Ionadail ga Mholadh le Ùghdarras Pàirc Nàiseanta a'
Mhonaidd Ruaidh**

Declaration of Interest - Ms P Hadley declared a financial interest in this item as a member of the Cairngorm National Park Authority Board but, in terms of the dispensation granted by the Standards Commission, remained to take part in the discussion.

It was considered essential a response from local Members was formulated in addition to the Council's response, and a meeting was required with an appropriate planning officer to facilitate this. The Chair suggested Councillor Caddick be invited to the meeting.

The Committee:

- **NOTED** that the Cairngorm National Park Authority had launched the consultation on its next Local Development Plan on Friday 25 January 2019. The new Local Development Plan would direct development within the Cairngorms National Park area for the period 2020-2025 and into the

longer term; and **AGREED** to arrange for local Councillors and Carolyn Caddick to meet with appropriate officers to consider and respond to the consultation in tandem with the Highland Council's response as Local Authority.

6. Police – Area Performance Summary Poileas – Geàrr-chunntas air Coileanadh Sgireil

There had been circulated Report No BSAC/01/19 dated 28 January 2019 by the Area Commander.

During discussion, the following issues were considered:

- Inspector Tough would attend the Badenoch and Strathspey Community Council Forum on 5 March 2019 as part of the aim to continue to engage with communities;
- attention was drawn to reports of speed alerts flashing even when vehicles were travelling below 30 mph;
- reference was made to national drug testing initiatives, noting that it would be helpful to have roadside tests;
- information was sought and provided on the types of items being shoplifted, which had increased significantly;
- reasons for drops in house-breaking were sought and included the possibility of a group operating in an area then moving on;
- recent activity with drug sniffer dogs had been in response to intelligence received;
- increased reporting of historical sexual crimes could be the result of improved support for victims. It was clarified that, for example, one person accused of eight crimes would count as eight incidents;
- the current police staffing situation was adequate though always challenging, and reference was made to the changing nature of policing due to internet issues; and
- the appropriate use of 101 was urged.

The Committee **NOTED** progress made against the objectives set within the Highland and Islands Local Policing Plan 2017-20 Year 2, attached as Annex A to the report, for the period covering 1 April 2018 to 31 December 2018.

7. Kingussie Associated School Group Overview Tar-sealladh air Buidheann Sgoiltean Co-cheangailte Cheann Ghiùthsaidh

There had been circulated Report No BSAC/02/19 dated 31 January 2019 by the South Area Care & Learning Manager.

It was unfortunate that due to unforeseen absence no officer was present to speak to the report. Members were asked to raise any questions out-with the meeting and it was requested that a similar report for the other ASG was sought for the next meeting, with the appropriate officer to attend a Ward Business Meeting in the meantime.

The Committee:

- **NOTED** the information in relation to the schools within the Kingussie Associated School Group (ASG) and to note the achievements from Session 2017/18; and
- **AGREED** that a similar report for the other Area ASG be submitted to the next meeting of the Committee and to invite the report writer to a Ward Business Meeting prior to the next Committee meeting.

8. **Roads Maintenance Programme 2019/20** **Prògram Càradh Rathaidean 2019/20**

There had been circulated Report No BSAC/03/19 by dated 24 January 2019 by the Director of Community Services.

During discussion the following issues were considered:

- in future the programme should be discussed at a Ward Business Meeting prior to coming to the Area Committee;
- information was sought and provided on the different types and costs of road surface dressing, and attention was drawn to the challenging budget situation. Approximately 1/40 of the road network was being redressed annually, but with the dressing lasting on average ten years, it would be preferable if 1/10 of the network was tackled every year;
- information was sought and provided on the process for alerting the Roads department to new developments via the Transport Planning Manager and on the processes for road adoptions and road construction consents. Staff shortage was a concern in this regard;
- a ragging system was suggested for road conditions and it was pointed out that the condition of individual roads could change rapidly, especially after a spell of severe weather, and attention was drawn to the Scottish Road Maintenance Condition Survey (SRMCS); and
- concern was expressed there was insufficient budget for structural maintenance for bridges and attention was drawn to the £180k capital budget into which Areas could bid for additional funds.

The Committee **APPROVED** the proposed 2019/20 Roads Maintenance Programme for the Badenoch & Strathspey Area.

9. **Housing Performance Report – 1 April 2018 to 31 December 2018** **Aithisg Coileanaidh Taigheadais – I Giblean 2018 gu 31 Dùbhlachd 2018**

Declaration of Interest – Ms P Hadley declared a financial interest in this item as a Council house tenant but, in terms of the dispensation granted by the Standards Commission, remained in the room to participate in the discussion.

There had been circulated Report No BSAC/04/19 dated 11 February 2019 by the Director of Community Services.

In response to a request from Members at a previous meeting, an analysis of homelessness statistics was provided. There had been a decrease in the number of presentations in Quarter 3 of 2018/19, with the most common reason being relationship breakdown in family homes, this affecting seven households.

Most homeless presentations were single people, with the remainder comprising two couple and a single parent household.

During discussion the following issues were considered:

- information was sought and provided on the percentage of vacant houses becoming lettable, which was consistent at 6-8% and in line with the Highland average. New builds could impact on these figures;
- the Housing team was commended for the numbers of tenancies that were being sustained for over a year. This was a challenge in the Area because of the relatively high levels of transient employment; and
- concern was expressed about the repairs performance and this would be investigated. Rurality was a challenge in this regard, particularly because B&S was a non-contract area where contractors often had to be negotiated with individually, and the redesign team was giving consideration to this. Specific information could be provided out-with the meeting if required.

The Committee **NOTED** the information provided on housing performance for the period 1 April 2018 to 31 December 2018.

10. Minutes Geàrr-chunntas

There had been circulated and **NOTED** Minutes of Meeting of the Badenoch and Strathspey Area Committee held on 14 November 2018 which were approved by the Council on 13 December 2018.

The meeting concluded at 12.15 pm.

**The Highland Council
Caithness Committee**

Minutes of Meeting of the Caithness Committee held in Wick Town Hall, Bridge Street, Wick, on Wednesday, 20 February 2019 at 10.00am.

Present:

Mr R Bremner
Mr D Mackay
Mr W Mackay
Mr S Mackie

Mr M Reiss
Mr K Rosie
Mr A Sinclair
Ms N Sinclair

Officials in attendance:

Mr A Macmanus, Ward Manager, Chief Executive's Office
Ms L MacKellaich, Road Safety Officer, Community Services
Mr R Bamfield, Additional Support Needs Manager, Care and Learning Service
Ms M Ross, Principal Housing Officer, Community Services
Mr M Dent, Access Officer, Development & Infrastructure Service
Ms A Macrae, Committee Administrator, Chief Executive's Office

Also in Attendance:

Chief Inspector I MacLelland, North Area Commander, Police Scotland

**1. Apologies for Absence
Liesgeulan**

There were no apologies for absence.

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

There were no declarations of interest.

**3. 20mph Speed Limit Implementation Wick
Cur an Gnìomh Casg Astair 20msu ann an Inbhir Ùige**

There had been circulated Report No CC/01/19 dated 4 February 2019 by the Director of Community Services.

In discussion, concern was expressed that the public consultation on the proposed 20mph speed limit in Wick had been carried out over the Christmas and New Year period, and as such there was a question as to whether the public had been aware and given a sufficient opportunity to respond given the low number of responses received. A range of feedback was being received from the public, and therefore consideration should be given to allowing a further period of consultation, including drop in sessions in the daytime and evening for members of the public. This would also allow any potential alternative options to be fully evaluated.

Thereafter, a point was raised in regard to the collision statistics for Wick. The Road Safety Officer reported that over the period 2013 to 2016, ten accidents had been recorded one of which had been assessed as 'serious', nine as 'slight', and three of which had involved pedestrians. This was a relatively high number of incidents compared to other areas in Highland. She confirmed that these figures

did not include non-injurious accidents and advised that she would arrange for Members to be circulated with a copy of the statistics.

Thereafter, Members raised a number of issues including the following key points:-

- the final four objections highlighted relevant points in relation to the proposal;
- the focus should be on installing more 20mph signs around schools in Wick on the basis that they had been shown to be effective in slowing drivers down;
- highlighting the health benefits associated with the introduction of 20mph speed limits in terms of encouraging more walking and cycling;
- one of the aims of the proposal was to lower the risks for vulnerable road users, however the evidence suggested that 20mph signs would not be adhered to and there was a question as to whether this was the best use of resources;
- the potential to consider other methods of improving road safety such as flashing signs and speed humps;
- inconsistencies in regard to the application of the proposal given there was a proliferation of routes on the Pulteneytown side compared to the other side of Wick where there was a concentration of urban housing around the area of Noss Primary School;
- there were also a number of other routes and areas not included on the map which would benefit from a 20mph limit and therefore an extension to the consultation period would allow these routes to be considered;
- given that average speeds in Wick had been assessed to be in the region of 22mph, there was an argument that the situation was already self-regulating;
- concern as to how a 20mph speed limit would be enforced going forward;
- an acknowledgement that housing schemes had become more desirable to live in as a result of the introduction of 20mph speed limits and that safety should be a paramount consideration in relation to the proposal;
- the proposal was a blunt instrument and there should be more focus on targeting schools and housing estates, and installing more speed signs rather than applying a blanket 20mph limit;
- the area around Noss Primary School should be included on the map so that the public could see the full extent of the network in Wick; and
- concern that the scheme would result in a proliferation of signage in Wick.

The Road Safety Officer explained that the area around Noss Primary School was already a designated 20mph limit and therefore had not been included in the map appended to the report. At a recent meeting held locally, agreement had been reached that this area would be signed and lined correctly, and the scheme was currently being designed, details of which she provided. She advised that Transport Scotland had declined the offer to be involved in the scheme in respect of the trunk road.

Thereafter, reference was made to a number of outstanding traffic management and safer routes to schools issues in Ward 2: Thurso and North West Caithness and how these could be addressed through a joined up approach to identify pinch points and potential sources of funding. In response to a question, the Road Safety Officer confirmed that as a first step she would be willing to meet with the local Members to consider the issues in Ward 2.

Following further discussion, the Committee **AGREED** to:-

- i. note the background to the proposed 20mph speed limit order for Wick and the representations received;
- ii. defer the making of the Road Traffic Regulation Order to allow a further period of public consultation to be undertaken, including drop in sessions for members of the public and
- iii. defer the intention to carry out after speed counts to determine effectiveness of the new reduced speed limit pending a final decision being taken by the Committee on the proposal..

4. Police – Area Performance Summary Poileas – Geàrr-chunntas air Coileanadh Sgìreil

There had been circulated Report No CC/02/19 dated 6 February 2019 by the North Area Commander.

In discussion, Members raised the following issues:-

- the presentation given on Operation Cedar to a recent Caithness Community Partnership meeting and a recent event held at Pulteneytown People’s Project on the issue of drugs were welcomed;
- good progress was being made through the shared approach being adopted by Caithness Community Partnership in relation to drugs issues in the area;
- the importance of raising awareness in the public arena and encouraging the Council and other agencies to discuss the issues around drugs, the substances being used, changing habits and the impact on communities to provide communities with a better understanding of the issues;
- the above approach would help breakdown the stigma around drugs, feed into a better sense of safety and wellbeing in the area and may secure more assistance from communities in tackling the problem. The Chief Inspector advised that going forward he would contact Members in relation to the media opportunities to raise the profile of enforcement successes and other initiatives in the area;
- the importance of focusing on the provision of education for young drivers in the area;
- the good relationship between Operation Cedar and the licensing trade and various ongoing initiatives was welcomed;
- the potential to introduce the successful ‘Best Bar None’ scheme in licensed premises in Caithness;
- the importance of early interventions in terms of education and awareness raising of the issues around drugs in schools and changing attitudes within the community;
- linked to the above further information was sought and provided in relation to the roles of Police Scotland’s Preventions and Interventions Officer and Schools Liaison Officer in the area;
- in terms of reporting issues, the potential to build more local relationships and trust between the public and the Police, while acknowledging that some people preferred other forms of contact such as online or social media channels;
- the reduction in the number of offences for speeding, mobile phone and seat belt offences was welcomed;
- clarification was sought on the figures shown for stop/searches. The Chief Inspector advised that there had been a significant increase on the previous

year and undertook to ensure the information was more clearly presented in future reports;

- concern at the number of drinking driving offences recorded over the period with numbers returning to the levels prior to the drink driving limit being reduced;
- clarification was sought on the measures being taken by Police Scotland to tackle rural thefts in the area and to encourage the public to report suspicious activity;
- clarification was sought and provided in relation to the increase in the shop lifting statistics and any links with self service tills and food banks;
- the potential to have a small road traffic/drugs unit located in Caithness. The Chief Inspector reported that he would report back to Members on this issue; and
- an assurance was sought and provided that the Retail Park in Wick would be included in more patrol routes.

The Committee **NOTED** following scrutiny, progress made against the objectives set within the Highland and Islands Local Policing Plan 2017-20.

5. Wick Associated School Group Overview Sealladh Coitcheann air Buidheann Sgoiltean Co-cheangailte Inbhir Ùige

There had been circulated Report No CC/03/19 dated 12 February 2019 by the Director of Care and Learning.

In discussion, Members welcomed the improvements being achieved and sustained at Wick High School. In particular, the School was significantly below the national and Highland averages for exclusion rates and this reflected the work undertaken to ensure accessibility to educations for all pupils. In terms of the destinations of pupils, the number of pupils going on to further education was above the Scotland and Highland averages. In addition there was a zero figure for the numbers of unemployed not seeking. This was a good news story and Members commended the Head Teacher, staff and pupils on their continuing success.

During further discussion, Members raised the following issues:-

- further information was sought and provided in relation to the context of the exclusion rates at Newton Park Primary School and the strategies being adopted in response;
- the need to update the status of the condition and suitability of the buildings at Wick High School and concern that the condition of some primary schools within the ASG may be deteriorating. The ASN Manager advised that he would ask the Education Quality Improvement Manager to respond to Members on these issues;
- the transfer of music tuition services to High Life Highland was a success story in terms of the numbers of pupils and instructors involved and had surpassed expectations as to what could be achieved including the potential to self-fund extra tuition. Accordingly, more detailed information on music tuition should be reflected in future reports;
- the significant increase in the number of customer visits to the East Caithness Community facilities which were formerly Wick Swimming Pool and Wick Library was welcomed and should be flagged up as good examples of change when consulting with communities on any future proposals to transform services;

- the need to follow up on concerns expressed by the ASN Manager that the new Wick campus did not have suitable accommodation for pupils who required to be educated separately from the mainstream setting and more generally the lack of accommodation for children with significant additional support needs of families moving into the area;
- the fact the quality of management and leadership at early years centres continued to be assessed 'good' or 'very good' was welcomed; and
- clarification was sought in regard to whether the early years centres could accommodate the number of applications for placements. It was confirmed that the Education Quality Improvement Manager would be asked to report back to Members on this issue;

The Committee **NOTED** following scrutiny, the content of the report.

**6. Housing Performance Report – 1 April 2018 to 31 December 2018
Aithisg Dèanadais Taigheadais – 1 Giblean 2018 to 31 Dùbhlachd 2018**

There had been circulated Report No CC/04/19 dated 20 February 2019 by the Director of Community Services.

In discussion, Members raised the following main points:-

- an explanation was sought and provided for the spike in the average time to complete emergency repairs in Quarter 1 of 2018/19, it being confirmed this had been due to staff absence;
- concern at the significant impact the number of void properties was having on housing performance figures for Caithness, noting this was an issue unique to Caithness;
- a proposal that the Committee request the Council to agree to an independent feasibility study being commissioned to identify the housing stock requirements in Caithness over the next 5 to 10 years and then review the options to address the issue of surplus stock, including the potential to sell those properties and allocate the monies to the HRA Capital Programme;
- Members would have the opportunity to have in depth discussion on the issues around void properties with the Head of Housing at their next Ward Business Meeting and therefore that the proposal for a starred item to the Council as detailed above be deferred pending those discussions;
- concern that the current number of voids was impacting on the ability to have new Council housing built in areas of demand in Caithness; and
- the need for a more joined up approach between Services in terms of the allocation of properties for example families moving into an area with children with significant additional support needs and demand for housing for probationary police officers/ Council employees.

The Committee **NOTED** following scrutiny, the information provided on housing performance in the period 1 April 2018 to 31 December 2018.

**7. Modified Core Paths Plan (Caithness and Sutherland) Amended
Plana Phrìomh Cheuman Mion-atharraichte (Gallaibh agus Cataibh)
Atharraichte**

There had been circulated Report No CC/05/19 dated 28 January 2019 by the Director of Development and Infrastructure.

The Committee **AGREED** to:-

- i. the submission of the amended Core Paths Plan to Scottish Ministers with outstanding objections to proposed core paths CA07.16(C) – John O’Groats – Ness of Duncansby (**Appendix 3**) and CA01.05(C) – Altnabreac – Forsinard (**Appendix 4**);
- ii. the modification of the amended Core Paths Plan to include further core paths CA10.18(C) and CA10.19(C) as shown on Map CA 13c Swiney Hill (**Appendix 2**); and
- iii. undertake a month long public consultation on the modifications to the Core Paths Plan (Caithness and Sutherland) Amended.

8. Minutes
Geàrr-chunntas

There were circulated and **NOTED** Minutes of the Caithness Committee held on 20 November 2019, which were approved by the Council on 13 December 2018.

The meeting ended at 12.40pm.

The Highland Council

Minutes of Meeting of the **City of Inverness Area Committee** held in the Council Chamber, Town House, Inverness on Thursday 21 February 2019 at 10.00 am.

Present:

Mr R Balfour	Mr A Jarvie
Mr B Boyd	Ms E Knox
Mr I Brown	Mr R Laird
Mrs C Caddick	Mrs I MacKenzie
Miss J Campbell	Mr D MacPherson
Mrs H Carmichael	Mr R MacWilliam
Mr A Christie	Mrs E McAllister
Mr G Cruickshank	Mrs T Robertson
Mrs M Davidson	Mr G Ross
Mr J Gray	Mr C Smith

Officials in Attendance:

Mr D Haas, Inverness City Area Manager, Chief Executive's Office
 Ms F McNally, ICATN Programme Manager, Development & Infrastructure
 Ms N Wallace, Environment Manager, Development & Infrastructure
 Mr S Eastaugh, Access Officer, Development & Infrastructure
 Ms T Urry, Head of Roads and Transport, Community Services
 Mr J Taylor, Roads Operations Manager (Inverness), Community Services
 Mr R Bartlett, Technician, Community Services
 Mr D Goldie, Head of Housing and Building Maintenance, Community Services
 Mrs S McKandie, Benefits & Welfare Manager, Corporate Resources Service
 Mrs L Dunn, Principal Administrator, Chief Executive's Office

Also in attendance:

Chief Inspector C Gough, Police Scotland
 Ms L Junor, Operations Manager, High Life Highland

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

Mrs H Carmichael in the Chair

Business

1. Apologies for Absence Leisgeulan

Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of Mrs G Campbell-Sinclair, Mr K Gowans and Mr A Graham.

2. Declarations of Interest Foillseachaidhean Com-pàirt

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

Item 5 – Miss J Campbell and Mr A Christie (non-financial)

Item 6 – Mr A Christie (non-financial)

Item 8 – Mr A Jarvie and Mr D Macpherson (non-financial)

Item 11 – Mr A Christie (non-financial)

Item 15 – Mr A Jarvie (non-financial)

3. **New Year's Honours** **Urraman na Bliadhna Ùire**

The Committee **NOTED** that the following individuals had been recognised in the New Year's Honours List:-

- Susan MacKenzie, OBE
- Ann Gloag, Dame

The Committee also **NOTED** that:-

- Highland pupil, Matthew Clark, had received a national award for Geography in SQA Highland Geography 2018 exam; and
- Inverness Town House had been commended in the UK Natural Stone Awards 2018 winning joint first place with the Palace of Westminster in the Repair and Restoration category.

4. **Police – Area Performance Summary** **Poileas – Geàrr-chunntas air Coileanadh Sgìreil**

There had been circulated Report No. CIA/1/19 dated 7 February 2019 by the Inverness Area Commander.

During discussion, Members raised the following issues:-

- Concern was expressed that there had been no reduction in the number of drink driving offences compared to the previous year and it was requested that a breakdown of the drink and drug driving offences be provided;
- A number of concerns were raised in regard to drug activity and the need for early and effective intervention was stressed. It was queried whether the increase in drug misuse offences was the result of more proactive policing or increasing drug activity;
- Concern was expressed at the level of shoplifting and further information was sought and provided on the support being provided to repeat offenders. Requests were made for further demographic information with a view to identifying and tackling the root causes of shoplifting;
- Assurance was sought and provided that vulnerable people, particularly children, were provided with strong multi-agency support in regard to domestic violence. The importance of supporting multi-agency partners to drive down this statistic and also sexual crimes was stressed;
- Confirmation was sought and provided that Police Scotland was preparing for potential crime spikes post BREXIT and that this structure would include a strand in regard to hate crimes; and

- There was a need to discuss the issues raised in the report in more detail as well as examining ways to enhance cross partner agency working to improve outcomes and it was suggested that a seminar would provide an opportunity for this.

Thereafter, the Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the progress made against the objectives set within the Highland and Islands Local Policing Plan 2017-20 Year 2, attached as Annex A to the report, for the period covering 1 April 2018 to 1 December 2018; and
 - ii. **AGREED** that:-
 - a. a breakdown of the drink and drug driving offences be provided to Councillor J Campbell;
 - b. an analytical profile be provided in regard shoplifting and circulated to Members; and
 - c. an Inverness Seminar be arranged in order to gain a better understanding of the local issues and how to improve outcomes.
- 5. Inverness Community Safety Partnership – Operation Respect City Centre 2018/19 Winter Festival Period Evaluation Report**
Com-pàirteachas Sàbhailteachd Coimhearsnachd Inbhir Nis – Aithisg Mheasaidh Ùine Fèis Geamhraidh 2018/19 ‘Operation Respect’ Meadhan a’ Bhaile

Declaration of Interest – Miss J Campbell declared a non-financial interest in this item as a Member of the Inverness Community Safety Partnership 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 from taking part in the discussion.

Mr A Christie declared a non-financial interest in this item as a Board Member of NHS Highland but, in terms of the dispensation granted by the Standards Commission, remained to participate in the discussion.

There had been circulated Joint Report No CIA/2/19 dated 21 January 2019 by the Inverness City Area Manager and the Inverness Area Commander (Highland and Islands Division, Police Scotland) Inverness BID, British Red Cross and Inverness Street Pastors.

During discussion Members commended the multi-agency working and recognised the valuable contributions by partners to ensuring enhanced community safety within the Inverness City Centre.

Thereafter, the Committee **NOTED** the evaluation available to date on the effectiveness of Operation Respect – City Centre for Winter 2018/19.

6. Accessing Inverness Inntrigeadh Inbhir Nis

Declaration of Interest – Mr A Christie declared a non-financial interest in this item as a Director of Highland and Islands Society for Blind People but, having applied the test outlined in Paragraphs 5.2 and 5.3 of the Councillors’ Code of Conduct, concluded that his interest did not preclude him from taking part in the discussion.

There had been circulated Joint Report No CIA/3/19 dated 13 February 2019 by the Director of Development & Infrastructure and the Hitrans Partnership Director.

Following a detailed presentation of the report, Members raised the following issues during discussion:-

- Although the overall concept of the project was welcome, Members expressed a number of concerns regarding the proposals including removal of the controlled crossings and realigning the pavement and road to the same level on Academy Street and the safety implications of these, particularly for vulnerable people such as members of the blind/partially sighted community. In addition, further concern was expressed at the impact of the proposals on buses (usage of which should be encouraged/increased) trying to join on to Academy Street if controlled crossings were removed thus reducing the likelihood of breaks in traffic. Even though pavement widening was welcome, concern was expressed at the removal of the filter lanes for right turning in order to facilitate this and it was felt that removal of these lanes would be detrimental on overall traffic flow. It was not felt that the proposals were helpful in terms of encouraging cyclists and it was highlighted that speeding was not an issue on Academy Street but that pollution was and this should be addressed;
- Concern was expressed at the lack of feedback within the report on the outcome of the consultation process. The importance of ensuring that consultees’ responses, particularly from vulnerable groups, had been listened to by demonstrating that they had influenced the outcome to ensure a design that was both inclusive and functional was emphasised. There was a need for an Equalities Impact Assessment to be undertaken as quickly as possible;
- A request was made to ensure that adequate cycle racks and storage were included within the design; and
- Overall, although supportive of the project, Members were not comfortable with the recommendations set out in the report and were of the view that further work had to be undertaken as a matter of priority in view of the deadline for submission of a funding application to Sustrans to progress the project to detailed design stage. On that basis it was recommended that the report should be noted at this stage pending a further report being submitted to a special meeting of the Committee indicating the outcome of the consultation process in a ‘You said we did’ format along with an Equalities Impact Assessment.

Thereafter, the Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the contents of the report, including the background to the Accessing Inverness project, community and stakeholder engagement, and consultation process;
- ii. **NOTED** that the outcome of the public consultation that closed on 1 February 2019 and **AGREED** that the outcome of this be reported back as swiftly as possible to Committee Members and the public on a 'You said, we did basis' along with an Equalities Impact Assessment; and
- iii. **AGREED** that a Special meeting of the Committee be arranged prior to the funding deadline to consider the aforementioned information.

At this point (12.15 pm), the meeting was adjourned and reconvened at 12.20 pm.

7. Inverness and Nairn Local Access Forum Appointments

Cur an Dreuchd gu Fòram Inntrigidh Ionadail Inbhir Nis agus Inbhir Narann

There had been circulated Joint Report No CIA/4/19 dated 7 February 2019 by the Director of Development and Infrastructure.

During discussion Members welcomed that the appointments process would be reviewed with a view to being more streamlined in future.

Thereafter, the Committee:-

- i. **APPROVED** the applications submitted to fill the Access Taker vacancy on the Local Access Forum;
- ii. **APPROVED** the appointment of the preferred candidate; and
- iii. **AGREED** a solution to selecting a preferred candidate should the Nairnshire Committee not endorse the same candidate.

8. Town House Tours

Cuairtean Taigh a' Bhaile

Declaration of Interest – Mr A Jarvie and Mr D Macpherson declared a non-financial interest in this item as directors of High Life Highland but, having applied the test outlined in Paragraphs 5.2 and 5.3 of the Councillors' Code of Conduct, concluded that their interest did not preclude them from taking part in the discussion.

There had been circulated Joint Report No. CIA/5/19 dated 5 February 2019 by the Inverness City Area Manager and Principal Cultural Manager High Life Highland.

During discussion it was clarified that:-

- a tour group could comprise of a maximum of 12 people with each tour averaging approximately 4/5 tourists; and
- tours were advertised across a number of platforms including Facebook, Twitter, Inverness Museums website and also via the Viewpoint.

The Chairman further reported that there had been approximately 800 attendees at the Town House Open Day and that this would continue as an annual event.

Thereafter, the Committee **NOTED** the contents of the report.

At this point (12.40pm), the meeting was adjourned for lunch and reconvened at 1.10 pm.

**9. Roads Maintenance Programme 2019/2020
Prògram Càradh Rathaidean 2019/2020**

There had been circulated Report No. CIA/6/19 dated 7 February 2019 by Director of Community Services.

During discussion, Members raised the following issues:-

- It was important that Members listened to the advice of the professional officers and on that basis it was essential that the surface dressing works commenced as soon as possible, as delaying these works resulted in increased costs, with discussions being held thereafter on how additional monies could be allocated on the roads distribution formula. Appreciation was expressed to the roads maintenance team for the considerable work that had been undertaken to date;
- Although the advice and expertise of officers was valued, concern was expressed that at the significant disparity of the budget allocation between the City of Inverness area and the rest of the Highlands. It was highlighted that the existing roads distribution formula was based on road length as opposed to usage which was a key factor that should also be taken into consideration. A number of other Members expressed a similar view that the existing formula was flawed and was in need of review, particularly as maintenance needs increased and the budget allocation lessened. It was suggested that the current system was too parochial and there was a need for an allocation formula for roads maintenance to be devised to better reflect infrastructure design, usage and actual maintenance costs. In addition, it was further highlighted that this issue of ensuring a fair allocation for the City of Inverness area had been raised last year and disappointment was expressed that the matter had not been further progressed;
- However, concern was expressed at the level of claims being levied against the Council for damage to cars as a result of the condition of some roads at present and it was therefore imperative that the surface dressing works, which was the most cost efficient method of repair, were undertaken as soon as possible;
- At present roads maintenance proposals were submitted on a ward basis for consideration at Ward Business Meetings, however the roads network crossed ward boundaries and it was therefore essential that Members collectively considered proposals on a City wide basis; and
- Key roads such as industrial estates were not being prioritised and consequently were in a desperate state of repair and this needed to be addressed.

Thereafter, Mrs M Davidson **MOVED** a **MOTION** seconded by the Provost that work begins immediately on the road maintenance programme for Inverness and Area as outlined in the report and to agree to additional discussion in Inverness on the application of the additional roads monies following the budget and any proposed changes in the Highland wide community services allocation formulas.

As an **AMENDMENT**, Mr A Christie seconded by Mr J Gray, moved that the report be noted and to agree that an urgent seminar be held with a special meeting of the Committee thereafter to approve the Roads Maintenance Programme 2019/20.

On a vote being taken, the **MOTION** received 7 votes and **AMENDMENT** received 13 votes with no abstentions and the **AMENDMENT** was therefore **CARRIED** the votes having been cast as follows:-

For the Motion:

Mr R Balfour, Mrs H Carmichael, Mr G Cruickshank, Mrs M Davidson, Ms E Knox, Mr D Macpherson and Mr G Ross,

For the Amendment:

Mr B Boyd, Mr I Brown, Mrs C Caddick, Miss J Campbell, Mr A Christie, Mr J Gray, Mr A Jarvie, Mr R Laird, Mr I Mackenzie, Mr R MacWilliam, Mrs E McAllister, Mrs T Robertson, and Mr C Smith.

Abstentions:

None

Decision

The Committee **NOTED** the report and **AGREED** that an urgent seminar be held with a special meeting of the Committee thereafter to approve the Roads Maintenance Programme 2019/20.

**10. Smithton Primary Safer Routes to School
Slighean nas Sàbhailte do Bhun-Sgoil Bhaile a' Ghobhainn**

There had been circulated Report No. CIA/7/19 dated 31 January 2019 by Director of Community Services.

During discussion Members welcomed the scheme acknowledging the enhancement that it would bring to the school environment. It was suggested that consideration should be given to installing barriers at both ends of the street in order to restrict traffic whilst the works were being completed.

Thereafter, the Committee **APPROVED** the traffic calming feature on Smithton Park.

11. Housing Performance Report – 1 April to 31 December 2018
Aithisg Dèanadais Taigheadais – 1 Giblean gu 31 Dùbhlachd 2018

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

There had been circulated Report No. CIA/8/19 dated 6 February 2019 by the Director of Community Services.

During discussion, Members raised the following issues:-

- It was highlighted that some local authorities in England were offering incentives for promptly vacating properties and it was requested that consideration should be given to implementing a similar scheme;
- Further information was requested on the reasons for voids as was a breakdown on the reasons for tenancy offers being refused;
- It was queried whether the Council could do more to help tenants address/avoid rent arrears; and
- Clarity was sought and provided on the Emergency Repairs benchmark.

Thereafter, the Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the information provided on Housing Performance for the period 1 April 2018 to 31 December 2018; and
- ii. **AGREED** that further information be provided to Councillor A Christie on a breakdown of the reasons for voids and a breakdown be provided to Councillor J Campbell on the reasons for tenancy offers being refused.

12. Inverness Common Good Fund: Discretionary Scheme for Winter Payments 2018/19 Interim Update
Maoin Mathas Coitcheann Inbhir Nis: Sgeama fo Ùghdarras airson Phàighidhean Geamhraidh 2018/19 Cunntas Eadar-amail

There had been circulated Joint Report No CIA/9/19 dated 8 February 2019 by the Depute Chief Executive/Director of Corporate Resources and the Inverness City Area Manager.

During discussion Members commended officers for implementing the Discretionary Scheme for Winter Payments and their proactive approach to ensuring maximum take-up.

Thereafter, the Committee;-

- i. **NOTED** the fairly significant increase in take-up of the scheme to date;
- ii. **NOTED** the ongoing measures that were being taken to ensure the scheme continued to be both effective and efficient; and

- iii. **AGREED** an annual recharge from 2019/20 in respect of the administrative overhead currently being absorbed by the Highland Council's Revenues & Customer Services section (as per the Budget Setting Report for 2019/20 on the agenda).

**13. Homologation of New Street Names
Aontachadh Ainmean Ùra Sràide**

There had been circulated Report No CIA/10/19 dated 25 January 2019 by the Acting Head of Policy and Reform.

During discussion, Members raised the following main issues:-

- Concern was expressed at the proposed street name of Cumberland Crescent which was felt to be insensitive and distasteful;
- There was an element of honour associated with street naming and it was therefore essential that names were selected following careful consideration;
- It was highlighted that the names had been considered and approved by the relevant community councils; and
- It was reported that Culchunaig Road already existed/was in use adjacent to Culloden Battlefield.

Thereafter, the Committee **AGREED TO HOMOLOGATE** the naming of new streets as set out in the report with the exception of Cumberland Crescent.

**14. Inverness Common Good Fund
Maoin Math Coitcheann Inbhir Nis**

**(a) Financial Monitoring
Sgrùdadh Ionmhasail**

There had been circulated Report No. CIA/11/19 dated 25 January 2019 by the Inverness City Area Manager.

The Committee **NOTED** the financial monitoring report to 3 January 2019 and that overall expenditure was within agreed budgets.

**(b) Budget Setting for 2019/20 and Capital Programme
Suidheachadh Buidseit airson 2019/20 agus Prògram**

There had been circulated Joint Report No CIA/12/19 dated 21 February 2019 by the Depute Chief Executive/Director of Corporate Resources and the Inverness City Area Manager.

In presenting the report, the Inverness City Area Manager proposed that in order to generate cost efficiencies, the installation of the new doors should be deferred to coincide with the planned mechanical and electrical works.

During discussion, confirmation was provided that an update would be provided to Councillor D Macpherson on the building at Upper Bridge Street.

Thereafter, the Committee:-

- i. **AGREED** the Common Good Fund budget for 2019/20 detailed within the report and appendices;
- ii. **AGREED** to maintain a general reserve of £2m and reallocate the remaining uncommitted sum of £1.6m to a Property Investment Fund;
- iii. **NOTED** that Officers would continue to monitor projected cash flow for the Common Good Fund, in particular through the Capital Projects Monitoring Report, with an emphasis on the utilisation of surplus revenue either within projects or as an opportunity for investment;
- iv. **AGREED** that the works to replace the entrance doors at Academy Street be deferred to coincide with the planned works to the Market Shopfronts; and
- v. **AGREED** that an update be provided to Councillor D Macpherson on the building at Upper Bridge Street.

(c) Grants and Capital Projects
Pròiseactan Tabhartais agus Calpa

There had been circulated Report No. CIA/13/19 dated 7 February 2019 by the Inverness City Area Manager. In this connection, there had also been circulated a copy of supporting documentation as Booklet A.

Thereafter, the Committee **APPROVED** the applications for funding and those from Inverness BID and **NOTED** the current status of capital projects.

(d) Investment Performance Summary Report
Geàrr-Aithisg mu Dhèanadas Tasgaidh

There had been circulated Report No. CIA/14/19 dated 11 January 2019 by the Depute Chief Executive/Director of Corporate Resources and Inverness City Area Manager.

Thereafter, the Committee **NOTED** the contents of the report.

(e) Events and Festivals – Outturn Report 2017/18
Tachartasan agus Fèisean – Aithisg Suidheachadh Deireannach 2017/18

There had been circulated Report No. Report No. CIA/15/19 dated 8 February 2019 by Inverness City Area Manager.

During discussion, Members raised the following issues:-

- Members welcomed the detailed financial breakdown and requested that this information continue to be provided on an annual basis;
- Concern was expressed at the level of money being spent on the Hogmanay event and it was queried whether spending such a significant sum on a single event was value for money. It was further suggested that a report should be undertaken examining the feasibility of charging for such an event as well as more collaborative working with partners with a view to the event being self-financing in the future;
- It was requested that consideration should be given to investing in new Christmas decorations for the City;

- The Chairman of the Events and Festivals Working Group highlighted that an excellent series of safe events had been delivered and Members acknowledged the benefits that these provided for locals as well as the wider positive impact on the economy of the City. Continuing he explained that the Group was endeavouring to operate more commercially, highlighting the success of a recently launched merchandising contract, but he requested support and patience to enable these measures to come to fruition; and
- It was recommended that there be more collaborative working with partner agencies in order to achieve economies of scale and it was confirmed that work had commenced in this regard.

Thereafter, the Committee **NOTED** the contents of the report.

15. Appointments to Outside Bodies Cur an Dreuchd gu Buidhnean on Taobh A-muigh

Declaration of Interest – Mr A Jarvie declared a non-financial interest in this item as a Board of Management Member of Highland Disability Sport 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 decision.

Following the resignation of Mrs B McAllister, the Committee **AGREED** the following appointments to Outside Bodies –

- Inverness Area Sports Council – Duncan Macpherson
- Highland Disability Sport – Andrew Jarvie
- Inverness Town Twinning – Bill Boyd

Following the resignation of Mr A Christie, the Committee **NOTED** to that a vacancy remained on the ICArts Working Group.

16. Minutes Geàrr-chunntas

The following Minutes had been circulated for noting or approval as appropriate:-

- Victorian Market Stakeholder Group held on 6 November 2018 and 8 January 2019 **NOTED**;
- City of Inverness Area Committee held on 22 November 2018 **NOTED**;
- Inverness Events and Festivals Working Group held on 3 December 2018 for **APPROVED**;
- Inverness City Arts Working Group held on 19 January 2019 **APPROVED** and
- Inverness Common Good Fund Grants Sub-Committee held on 28 January 2019 **APPROVED**.

Arising from the Victorian Market Stakeholder Group Minutes (Page 130), it was reported that in return for a modest fee it was feasible to ensure that the website was listed at the top of the first search engine page.

At this point (3.25 pm), the meeting was adjourned and reconvened at 3.30 pm.

**17. Exclusion of the Public
Às-dùnadh a' Phobail**

The Committee **RESOLVED** that, under Section 50A(4) of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973, the public should be excluded from the meeting during discussion of the following items on the grounds that they involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraphs 6 and 9 of Part 1 of Schedule 7A of the Act.

**18. Inverness Common Good Account Sites and Premises Transaction Report
Aithisg Gnothachais Làraich agus Togalaichean Chunntasan Maoin Math
Choitcheann Inbhir Nis**

There had been circulated to Members only Joint Report No CIA/16/19 dated 31 January 2019 by the Head of Development and Regeneration and the Property Manager (Estates).

The Committee **NOTED** the report and that a response would be provided on the query raised by Councillor T Robertson.

The meeting ended at 3.35 pm.