

The Highland Council

Minutes of Special Meeting of the **City of Inverness Area Committee** held in the Council Chamber, Town House, Inverness on Thursday 25 April 2019 at 10.00 am.

Present:

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

Officials in Attendance:

Mr D Haas, Inverness City Area Manager, Chief Executive's Office
Mr S Black, Director of Development and Infrastructure
Ms F McNally, ICATN Programme Manager
Ms N Wallace, Environment Manager
Mr N Young, Transport Planning Officer
Ms F MacBain, Committee Administrator, Chief Executive's Office
Mr N MacRae, Managing Director, Hitrans

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 Mr R Balfour, Miss J Campbell, Mrs G Campbell-Sinclair, Mr K Gowans, and Mr A Graham.

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

Item 3 – Mr A Christie (non-financial)

**3. Accessing Inverness Project
Inntrigeadh Inbhir Nis**

Mr A Christie declared a non-financial interest in this item as a Director of the 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 Report No. CIA/18/19 dated 10 April 2019 from the Programme Manager, Inverness City Active Travel Network/HiTRANS/Highland Council.

A presentation was provided giving further detail, as requested by the Committee on 21 February 2019, on the opportunity through Sustrans to develop Academy Street, with the West Link Phase 2 and the Scottish Stations Fund providing an opportunity to unlock a further potential £4.8m of investment if an appropriate application was made by the deadline of 1 May 2019.

Particular reference was made to the 'You said, We Did' consultation and the Equalities Impact Assessment (EQIA), which was at an early stage and would be expanded as the project developed. It was emphasised the entire project was at an early stage and final designs would be brought back to the Committee in due course. Schemes in other cities were in competition for the funds.

In the interim, £75k of Developer Contributions had been obtained to create a fund for Community Services to address issues at the worst part of Academy Street (approximately from the Station to the crossing at Falcon Square).

Details of early design issues were provided, including the objectives of the scheme, wider pavements, narrowing of the road, kerb heights, planned consultation and engagement, and the proposed next steps.

During discussion the following issues were considered:

- it was important to have a good quality design that improved lives and traffic flow and did not create a barrier to driving in town;
- it would be helpful to facilitate third sector organisations meeting as a group;
- specific suggestions included the retention of a right turn onto Struther's Lane, and the inclusion of an indicative number of signalled crossings;
- officers were thanked for the additional detail and presentation;
- the two absent Members of Central Ward should be contacted about the good news of £75k of developer contributions to make shorter term improvements to Academy Street;
- several Members made reference to concerns about the numbers of crossings that would be included in the scheme, with some being content to see final numbers and proposed locations at the next design stage, and others preferring to seek a commitment to retaining the same number of controlled crossings on Academy Street. Traffic modelling for this was suggested and officers explained that normally traffic modelling to determine the detail of crossing points was more useful and cost efficient at a later stage in the design process;
- regular updates on the project were requested, either to the Committee or as briefings to Ward Business Meetings, ensuring Central Ward Members were kept fully up to date. It was pointed out that other Inverness Wards were equally affected by city centre issues;
- the inclusion of businesses in the EQIA was welcomed;
- it was important that street furniture, such as advertising placards, were controlled for safety and appearance;

- the importance of getting the design right was emphasised, as was the need for inclusive communication and engagement with all stakeholders before and during the process;
- the need to improve Academy Street not only for locals but for tourists was emphasised;
- concerns raised included the number of cyclists on pavements creating a safety hazard for the disabled, the infirm, the elderly and for young children;
- clarification was sought and received on a concern raised during the consultation on the design of wide pavements to assist people walking or cycling alone at night;
- disabled parking was a key issue in any design;
- the proposed consultation group was welcomed;
- while this was a long term improvement project, Mr B Boyd offered to discuss outwith the meeting his suggestions for some shorter term improvements that could be made, including to the road condition;
- a key challenge in designing this type of project was balancing the needs of often competing interest groups;
- the importance of reliable and regular transport links in and out of the city was emphasised;
- assurance was provided that technical issues such as bus turning requirements would be taken into account; and
- a brief explanation was provided on the reasons why the Council had not bid to purchase a particular building in the city centre.

Following further discussion, the Committee adjourned from 11.25am until 11.35am to consider the wording of a potential amendment.

Mrs C Caddick, seconded by Mr G Ross, **moved** the recommendations as detailed in the report. Mr R McWilliam, seconded by Mr A Jarvie, **moved as an amendment** the recommendations as detailed in the report with the additional recommendation as follows:

‘Agree that the design will maintain the current number of controlled crossings on Academy Street, and commits the council to otherwise engage closely with all appropriate interest groups to maximise inclusivity in the design process.’

The City Manager advised the Committee that while they were able to vote on the amendment, it was against the advice of officers as the specification of a set number of controlled crossings in the final design could jeopardise the application for funding from going forward. An amended wording was suggested, however Mr McWilliam indicated that he wished to retain the wording of his amendment and, on a vote being taken, the **MOTION** received 12 votes and the **AMENDMENT** received 4 votes, and the **MOTION** was therefore **CARRIED**, the votes having been cast as follows:-

For the Motion:

Mrs C Caddick, Mrs H Carmichael, Mr A Christie, Mr G Cruickshank, Mrs M Davidson, Mr J Gray, Mrs I MacKenzie, Mr D MacPherson, Mrs E McAllister, Mrs T Robertson, Mr G Ross, Mr C Smith

For the Amendment:

Mr B Boyd, Mr A Jarvie, Ms E Knox, Mr R McWilliam

The meeting ended at 11.50am