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**The Highland Council**  
**No. 7 2019/2020**

Minutes of Meeting of the Highland Council held in the Council Chamber, Council Headquarters, Glenurquhart Road, Inverness on Thursday, 31 October 2019 at 10.35am.

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

**Present:**

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

**In Attendance:**

Chief Executive	ECO, Resources & Finance
ECO, Transformation & Economy	ECO, Health & Social Care
ECO, Performance & Governance	ECO, Infrastructure & Environment
ECO, Customer & Communities	

**Mr B Lobban in the Chair**

Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of Mrs J Barclay, Mr I Brown, Mrs G Campbell-Sinclair, Mr H Morrison, Mr I Ramon, Mr A Rhind and Ms M Smith.

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

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

Item 15 – Mr A Jarvie (Non-Financial)

Prior to the commencement of the formal business, the Convener confirmed that in future the original electronic email containing the agenda/papers for the full Council meeting would be updated as close to the actual meeting as possible if necessary in order to include any late reports. This would hopefully avoid the current situation whereby late reports were circulated when received (and separately) and Members sometimes ended up having multiple additional papers to consider as opposed to one complete set of Council papers for the meeting.

Also, at this point, Ms E Knox paid tribute to the achievements of one of her constituents, Ms Tina Marshall from Kiltarlity, and specifically her outstanding contribution to shinty whereby she had been breaking boundaries for a number of years as a player, coach and official and, on 14 and 21 September 2019, had become the first ever woman to officiate at a Camanachd Cup Final. The week after, she had also been a goal judge at the Strathdearn Cup Final which was another milestone. As such, her illustrious shinty career had spanned four decades and she had played for the Lovat Youth Team, the Strathglass Ladies team and the Lovat Ladies team. She had also won the Challenge Cup with Strathglass and the League and the Cup double with Lovat.

## **3. 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 5 September, the scheduled Meeting held on 5 September and the Special Council Meeting (Planning) held on 12 September as contained in the Volume which had been circulated separately – which were **APPROVED**.

## **4. 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: -

Nairnshire Committee 11 September  
 Audit & Scrutiny Committee 19 September  
 Isle of Skye & Raasay Committee 30 September  
 Care, Learning & Housing Committee 10 October  
 Lochaber Committee (Special Meeting) 25 September  
 Environment, Development and Infrastructure Committee (Special Meeting) 24 October

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

## **Environment, Development and Infrastructure Committee**

### **\*Starred Item: Item 3: PP. 5: Off-Street Car Parking Policy Review**

It was **AGREED** that the Scheme of Delegation to Area Committees and necessary amendments would be confirmed at the December Council Meeting.

#### **5. Recruitment Panel - Executive Chief Officers Pannal Fastaidh – Prìomh Oifigearan Gnìomhach**

There had been circulated Minutes of Meetings of the Recruitment Panel as follows which were **NOTED**: -

Executive Chief Officer: Infrastructure and Environment, 4 October 2019  
Executive Chief Officer: Property and Housing, 11 October 2019.

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

There had been circulated Minutes of Meeting of the Valuation Joint Board held on 21 June 2019 (approved by the Board on 12 September 2019) which were **NOTED**.

#### **7. Community Planning Board Bòrd Dealbhadh Coimhearsnachd**

There had been circulated Minutes of Meeting of the Community Planning Board held on 20 June 2019 (approved by the Board on 3 October 2019) which were **NOTED**.

#### **8. Brexit Working Group Buidhean Obrach Brexit**

There had been circulated Minutes of Meetings of the Brexit Working Group held on 12 September, 1 and 23 October 2019 which were **APPROVED**.

#### **9. Membership of Committees, etc**

##### **Highland Licensing Committee/Highland Licensing Board**

It was **NOTED** that Mrs P Munro had confirmed her intention to step down as a Member of the Highland Licensing Committee and Highland Licensing Board.

On that basis, and following confirmation from Mr R Gale that he was now withdrawing from his nomination, it was **AGREED** that **Mr A Sinclair** should take the place on the Committee and the Board.

**10. Question Time**  
**Am Ceiste**

The following Questions had been received in line with Standing Order 11 –

**(i) Mr G Cruickshank**

**To the Leader of the Council**

“What steps is the Council taking to mark the 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the ending of the Second World War?”

The response had been circulated.

In terms of a supplementary question, and on the basis that during the first half of the previous century Britain had been instrumental in the liberation of continental Europe from dictatorships, it was queried whether this was starting again.

In response, it was confirmed that this was an issue for individual reflection.

**(ii) Mr A Jarvie**

**To the Chair of the Care, Learning & Housing Committee**

“When did the council last assess all land it owns for housing suitability and what was the outcome of this?”

The response had been circulated.

In terms of a supplementary question, it was queried as to how many homes could be built on the Council owned land which had been identified and, if there was land that was uneconomical for the Council or its partners to develop, could this land be sold to private developers.

In response, it was confirmed that several potential sites had been identified in various areas across the Council and in some areas housing had already been built but some other sites had not been progressed due to a variety of reasons. However, the Council continued to investigate all potentially suitable surplus sites in high demand areas. Further information could be provided on the exact number of homes which had been built over the last 10 years on Council owned sites and on the feasibility of land being sold to private developers for development.

**(iii) Mr A Jarvie**

**To the Chair of the Care, Learning & Housing Committee**

“Item 7 of the Care, Learning and Housing Committee papers on 10/10/19 stated that, in this financial year, 30 children had been either prevented from going out to or had been returned from out of authority placements. Of these 30 children, how many were returned from placements which they had been in for more than 6 months?”

The response had been circulated.

In terms of a supplementary question, it was queried as to whether the Education Service had the capacity to deal with the children being returned from out of authority placements and was able to meet their educational needs.

In response, it was confirmed that the Education Service had the capacity to meet their educational needs but that sufficient time was required to effectively plan each placement to ensure that it was appropriate for each young person returning to the Highlands. Further, assurance could be given that no child would be returned to the Highlands unless the Council could fully meet their needs, particularly in regard to education.

**(iv) Mr J McGillivray**

**To the Leader of the Council**

“In the current round of Leader funding, the Highland area was allocated £6,904,041.00 to dispense on community, co-operation and farm diversification projects. To date, as the schedule draws to a close, a total distribution of £6,803,254.40 has been approved supporting total eligible costs of £15,150,482.11. In view of the significant bureaucratic challenges associated with the current Leader process, do you agree that this represents a highly commendable effort by the LAG and LAP teams and especially the dedicated and diligent Council staff assigned to this Leader Programme?”

The response had been circulated.

(There was no supplementary question).

**(v) Mr J McGillivray**

**To the Leader of the Council**

“The Coastal Communities Fund is now open and has £1.29 million to disperse around community projects as determined by Highland Council as ultimate authority. Do you agree that, in the interests of fairness and equality of adjudication, the present experienced Leader team should be directly assigned to support, monitor, assess and audit the many anticipated community bids to this funding pot?”

The response had been circulated.

In terms of a supplementary question, it was queried as to under what name the Coastal Communities Fund now operated.

In response, it was confirmed that the Coastal Communities Fund was now defunct. However, there would be ongoing revenue funding from the Crown Estates Fund and a report would be submitted to the next Full Council meeting in December 2019 on how the £1.29m which had been awarded would be distributed. There would also be a report to the Environment, Development and Infrastructure Committee on Thursday, 7 November which would be addressing the development of projects in Dornoch.

**(vi) Mr K Gowans**

**To the Leader of the Council**

“The Community Council elections have been delayed as an attempt by this Council to compensate for the lack of communication around Community Council Elections and subsequent lack of engagement. An unintended consequence of delay is that many Community Councils will not be in position to meet the response deadlines as Statutory Consultees for Planning Applications.

A Senior Planning Officer stated to me that any delay “isn’t feasible” and “(we) need to continue to progress applications”. In many cases this will mean an important layer of local democracy is stripped away. Therefore, it would be prudent to allow an extension of the response deadline for all planning applications, to allow time for new Community Councils to be set-up and to respond to planning applications.

What provision has been made to ensure it is possible for all Community Councils in Highland to fulfil their role as Statutory Consultees in planning and retain their ability to comment on applications during this period of transition?”

The response had been circulated.

(There was no supplementary question).

**(vii) Mr S Mackie**

**To the Chair of the Care, Learning & Housing Committee**

“In light of the Scottish Government’s decision to abandon plans for a mandatory named person scheme for every child in Scotland, underpinned by law, only localised policies such as those used in Highland are now practiced.

Given the reaffirmation from the Education Secretary that these voluntary programmes will take place only where Councils and Health Boards wish to provide them and parents wish to use them, do you believe that the Council’s scheme has the support of parents, our staff who must carry out the scheme, our health board partners and our Local Authority?”

The response had been circulated.

In terms of a supplementary question, it was queried as to whether there was support for the request for a full and open review of the Council’s voluntary scheme to ensure that in Highland there was a policy fit for purpose for the most vulnerable children but which also had the full support of constituent stakeholders, Elected Members, staff, partners and most importantly the Highland public.

In response, it was confirmed that the intention was to report on this matter to either the next Care, Learning and Housing Committee or the following Education Committee and in this regard an assurance was given that the scheme would be evaluated and reviewed in light of the Scottish Government’s decision

**(viii) Mr R MacWilliam**

**To the Leader of the Council**

“What efforts are currently being made to maximise income from EU funding from capital project schemes?”

The response had been circulated.

In terms of a supplementary question, and on the basis that advantage had not been taken of the European Commission’s recent round of funding under its WiFi4EU scheme for the eligible areas of Ross & Cromarty, Inverness & Nairn, Lochaber and Badenoch & Strathspey, it was queried whether there was any other funding which had not been claimed for the Highlands.

In response, it was confirmed that a response would be forwarded to Mr MacWilliam with further information on this issue in due course.

**(ix) Mr R MacWilliam**

**To the Leader of the Council**

“What work is being undertaken to prepare for the ban on parking on pavements as contained in the Transport (Scotland) Bill?”

The response had been circulated.

In terms of a supplementary question, it was queried as to whether there would be full Member engagement in the process for determining which roads by necessity would be exempt from the ban on parking on pavements under the Transport (Scotland) Bill.

In response, it was confirmed that there would be full Member engagement in this process and that currently further guidelines were awaited in terms of how this was to be implemented.

**(x) Ms K Currie**

**To the Leader of the Council**

“Can you give an update on your lobbying activity of the Scottish Government to establish new nuclear power stations in the Highlands?”

The response had been circulated.

In terms of a supplementary question, it was queried as to whether the Administration was firmly committed to the policies of KIMO in relation to nuclear issues and the impact on the environment.

In response, it was confirmed that KIMO’s policies would be examined in detail and a response forwarded to Ms Currie thereafter.

**(xi) Mr A Jarvie**

**To the Leader of the Council**

“Next month will mark the halfway point for this Council term. At the outset, Members heard of your Administration’s exciting localism plans. As we near this halfway mark, communities tell me they do not feel they have experienced the bold vision which was once set out.

Can you provide a timetable for your plans and what we can expect by the end of this term?”

The response had been circulated.

In terms of a supplementary question, it was queried whether it was possible to give 3 or 4 examples of local activity taking place in communities with Local Member involvement in the Inverness South Ward

In response, it was confirmed that the local community in Strathdearn were heavily involved in many local projects and there were similar levels of activity in other rural parts of the area.

**(xii) Ms E Knox**

**To the Chair of the Care, Learning & Housing Committee/Chair of Environment, Development & Infrastructure Committee**

At Full Council on 27 June 2019, I highlighted serious issues with the Stagecoach school bus services. I was reassured that the Public Transport Team had received an improvement plan from the company.

After no signs of improvement this school year, my constituents in Beauly and Kirkhill are relieved to hear their Charleston Academy bus service will revert to the popular local bus company D&E Coaches next term; the Stagecoach contract having been terminated. However, parents in Struy, Kiltarlity, Hughton, Croachy, Farr and other villages in my Ward continue to express significant concerns about the safety and reliability of the Stagecoach school bus service and they have asked why their service hasn't also reverted to D&E Coaches.

It is hoped that the Highland Council recouped all or part of the cost of the terminated school bus contract in respect of the Beauly/Kirkhill to Charleston school service and that penalty clauses are being enforced in relation to continuing issues with the remaining school bus services contract.

In answer to my supplementary question about bus safety, I was advised that the Leader of the Council had contacted the Traffic Commissioner about safety concerns and that my request to introduce regular inspections of school buses would be considered.

I look forward to hearing from the Leader about the outcome of her discussions with the Traffic Commissioner and I'd like to ask what steps have been taken to introduce safety inspections on school buses?"

The response had been circulated.

In terms of a supplementary question, it was queried as to whether information could be provided on the steps being taken to introduce safety inspections on school buses.

In response, it was confirmed that this was part of the current contract and was being monitored by Officers. As such, there was no action which could be taken unless it was found that this was not being undertaken to a satisfactory level.

**(xiii) Mrs G Campbell-Sinclair**

**To the Leader of the Council**

"Several years ago, the Council signed a Covenant with the Armed Forces. Could you advise me what has been achieved from this over the years i.e. what actual material outcomes have there been other than inviting each other to official events?"

The response had been circulated.

On the basis that Mrs Campbell-Sinclair was not present at the meeting, there was

no supplementary question.

However, it was agreed that the response should be circulated to all Members of the Council.

## 11. Notices of Motion Brathan Glusaid

The following Notices of Motion had been received in accordance with Standing Order 12 –

(i) That the Highland Council publish, as a matter of extreme urgency and as a courtesy to both Elected Members and Highland citizens, the following details:

An overview of the Highland Council's response to Brexit:

- Issues most likely to require a Civil Contingencies response on Day 1 or soon after, including transport, community safety and medicines;
- How the Highland Council plan to protect our vulnerable communities;
- How the Highland Council plan to support businesses and the Highland economy;
- How the Highland Council will support the Rural Economy, including Fisheries and Agriculture and the Environment;
- Labour Market Interventions in terms of employability and skills support and the sourcing of staff if there is a significant drop in EU national workers available for employment; and
- How the Highland Council plans to protect citizens' rights and international connections.

Signed: Ms K Currie Mr R MacWilliam

During discussion, Members raised the following issues: -

- this was an extremely important issue and as such it was imperative that all Members of the Council had full knowledge of the current position across the Council, including the likelihood of 'worst case scenarios' and associated staffing impact/implications;
- it was appreciated that some information in this regard was sensitive and as such could not be shared but it was felt that Members within other Local Authorities had received more information in this regard to date;
- information issued from the Scottish Government had confirmed that the Highland Council area was at high risk in the current circumstances and there was therefore an urgent need for Members to be updated on all potential future outcomes;
- Local Members were best placed to keep their local communities as up to date as possible on the current situation and it was therefore essential that they received regular communication and briefings from Council Officers; and
- it had to also be accepted that the Chief Executive was not at liberty to publish some confidential information but all non-sensitive information was already published on the Council Website and links had also been provided to the Scottish Government Website in this regard.

At this point, Mr A Christie, seconded by Mr J Gray, **MOVED** a Procedural Motion that the Council should now move to the vote without any further discussion on this item.

On a vote being taken on the Procedural Motion, there were 38 votes in favour and 18 votes against, with 7 abstentions, and the Motion was therefore **CARRIED**, the votes having been cast as follows:-

**For the Procedural Motion:**

Mrs C Wilson, Mr J Gordon, Mr R Balfour, Mrs M Paterson, Miss J Campbell, Mr G Ross, Mrs B McAllister, Mrs D MacKay, Mr G Cruickshank, Mr D Macpherson, Mr B Thompson, Mr W MacKay, Mr J Finlayson, Mr T Heggie, Mr M Finlayson, Ms L Munro, Mr D Rixson, Mr A Graham, Mrs T Robertson, Mrs I MacKenzie, Mr D MacLeod, Mr M Reiss, Mrs F Robertson, Mrs I Campbell, Mrs A MacLean, Mrs C Caddick, Mr G Adam, Mr R Gale, Mr B Lobban, Mrs H Carmichael, Mrs M Davidson, Mr A MacKinnon, Mr A Henderson, Mr A Christie, Mr J Gray, Mr R MacDonald, Mr J McGillivray and Ms N Sinclair.

**Against the Procedural Motion:**

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

**Abstentions:**

Mr A Sinclair, Mr C Smith, Mr D MacKay, Mr S Mackie, Mr A Jarvie, Mr J Bruce and Mr P Sagers.

Thereafter, Ms K Currie, seconded by Mr R MacWilliam, **MOVED** the terms of the Notice of Motion as detailed.

As an **AMENDMENT**, the Convener, seconded by Mr A Christie, moved that this matter had been dealt with and no further information was required at this time but going forward such information as was required and was allowable for the Chief Executive to share with Members would be shared.

On a vote being taken, the **MOTION** received 19 votes and the **AMENDMENT** received 44 votes, with 1 abstention, and the **MOTION** was therefore **CARRIED**, the votes having been cast as follows:-

**For the Motion:**

Mr R MacWilliam, Ms K Currie, Mr B Boyd, Mr K Gowans, Mr C MacLeod, Mr B Allan, Ms E Knox, Mr D Louden, Mr A MacInnes, Mr C Fraser, Mrs L MacDonald, Mrs M Cockburn, Mr K Rosie, Mrs P Munro, Mr G MacKenzie, Dr I Cockburn, Mr R Bremner, Mr J Gray and Mr N McLean.

**For the Amendment:**

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

**Abstention:**

Mr A Baxter.

**Decision**

The Council **AGREED** the following amended Notice of Motion: -

That this matter had been dealt with and no further information was required at this time but going forward such information as was required and was allowable for the Chief Executive to share with Members would be shared.

**(ii) Developer Contributions**

Current guidance on developer contributions gives a discount on the per house contributions for developments of three or fewer houses. However, this allows large developers to build 5+ bedroom luxury homes and pay just a fraction of the contributions which other developments would otherwise pay. The current guidance gives this scale of developments up to an 80% reduction on the required contribution for various identified needs, including schools. In areas of high education demand, a large three home development which has the potential bring over a dozen children into a catchment area would only attract a contribution low enough to build a new school place equivalent to just 0.3 children – there has already been development of this type which has gained planning permission and could potentially create a £247,000 funding shortfall for those new school places.

The Council therefore asks the Planning and Development Service to revise this policy, to hold a Members' Seminar and take a report forward to the Environment, Development & Infrastructure Committee to end the practice of large discounts for these kind of developments; but still including a reasonable and proportionate discount for the smaller scale developments, in order to capture the appropriate funds.

Signed: Mr A Jarvie Mr A Baxter

During discussion, Members raised the following issues: -

- this Notice of Motion had been submitted with the aim of closing the 'loophole' which existed within the current policy and specifically to address the level of developer contributions for developments of three or fewer houses;
- it was also felt that there was a requirement for a Members' Seminar to be arranged in order to allow Members to discuss this issue with Officers and consider alternative future options in this regard;
- whilst not disagreeing with the principle behind the Notice of Motion, it was suggested that there was a need for a degree of caution on this matter as the current policy was evolving and covered the whole of the Highlands. As such, it could create problems if a new proposal for one specific issue was put in place without due consideration of the possible implications for the whole area;
- it would perhaps be more appropriate to conduct a review of the issues which had been raised rather than changing the current policy at this stage;
- there were also concerns about the possible implications on areas in the west of the Highlands, specifically in terms of the first paragraph of the proposed motion; and
- there was also a need to review the subject of developer contributions more widely and this had to include how future waste was to be dealt with across the Highland area.

**Decision**

The Council **AGREED** the following amended Notice of Motion: -

The Council asks the Planning & Development Service to review (with Member involvement) this policy, to hold a Members' Seminar and take a report forward to the Environment, Development & Infrastructure Committee.

**12. Change Strategy and Change Fund Phase 5**

There had been circulated Report No. HC/51/19 dated 20 October 2019 by the Chief Executive.

During discussion, Members raised the following issues:-

- it was felt that there was a need for more information in respect of the proposal for the Trusted Trader Scheme within Phase 5 of the Change Fund;
- there was a need to correct the figures which had been provided on the CP5 project (Education Transformation), specifically in relation to the overall target to deliver savings of £4.3m and improvements, and also to provide further detail for Local Members on schools which were in their areas;
- in regard to the CP7 project (Placement Services Change Programme, including Fostering and Adoption), this was a budget which had been continually underspent in previous years and this had to be examined to avoid a repetition in future;
- as a priority, and with reference to the issues which had been raised earlier in relation to the Trusted Trader Scheme, a structure should be put in place for the Change Fund whereby proposals were discussed/considered at Committee level before coming to the full Council for decision in future. In this regard, it was agreed that a more detailed report on the Trusted Trader Scheme would be submitted to the next Corporate Resources Committee meeting;
- there would be a need for more detailed information on all issues relating to Additional Support Needs in particular (CP8 project) as there were likely to be very difficult decisions to be taken in this respect in future;
- it would be advantageous if the local knowledge which was available was taken into account in relation to proposals for the Trusted Trader Scheme;
- in regard to the CP2 project (Grey Fleet), excellent savings had already been identified by staff and there was now a need to also survey Members to identify areas of best practice and the potential for self-improvement;
- there was a need for further detail on the CP14 project (Workforce Planning);
- there had been no mention within the report of Foster Care Allowances and there was a need for update in this regard;
- it would be helpful if more detail could be provided on the CP6 project (Early Learning and Childcare), specifically in relation to the proposed delivery of savings of £2.5m and improvements;
- in regard to the CP9 project (Service Income), there was a need for further detail in respect of the delivery of £700k savings which had been detailed;
- it would be helpful if links were included in future reports to Council to identify information previously provided at Strategic Committee level on specific issues; and
- the confirmation that further detailed reports would follow in relation to Additional Support Needs was welcomed.

**Decision**

Members **NOTED** the progress being made to implement the projects that formed the Council's Change Programme and the progress being made on delivering the committed actions from Phases 1- 4 of the Council's Change Fund.

Members **AGREED** the bid to Phase 5 of the Council's Change Fund to further support the transformation activity being undertaken throughout the Council – on the basis that a further detailed report would be submitted to the Corporate Resources Committee in this regard.

It was also **AGREED** that links would be provided in future reports to Council to include the detailed information previously submitted at Strategic Committee level on specific issues.

### **13. Redesign of Highland Council – Update from the Board Cunntas às Ùr mu Ath-dhealbhadh**

There had been circulated Report No. HC/52/19 dated 18 October 2019 by the Chief Executive.

During discussion, Members raised the following issues:-

- there was a need to thank the Officers for the excellent work which had been undertaken over recent years;
- this was a good time to review the work which had been completed and also the new projects which had been listed in the report;
- it would be helpful if more Members became involved in the work of the Board in future;
- the aim would be to have reviews completed/analysis of results undertaken within a quicker timescale in future;
- the work of the Board had provided an excellent 'learning process' for Members, particularly through the Workshops;
- a significant level of work on car parking charges had been completed and this had been very beneficial for all concerned;
- consideration could perhaps be given to a review of the current process which required to be followed for Blue Badges, specifically to try to reduce/streamline the application process if possible;
- a number of frontline staff had expressed an interest in becoming involved in the work of the Board and this should be followed up wherever possible in future;
- in relation to the review of catering services, consideration should be given to involving young people, perhaps through the Youth Parliament; and
- all areas of good practice which had been recognised as part of previous reviews should be carried forward to as many future reviews as possible.

**Decision**

Members **NOTED** the progress on Council Redesign work as detailed.

Members also **AGREED** to the proposed series of Rapid Reviews as set out in the report.

#### 14. Review of Amenity Services Ath-sgrùdadh air Seirbheisean Goireis

There had been circulated Report No. HC/53/19 dated 22 October 2019 by the Executive Chief Officer (Customer and Communities).

During discussion, Members raised the following issues:-

- there was an urgent need to consider any future changes in respect of grass cutting now in order to be ready for the 2020 growing season;
- working with staff and local communities would be essential in terms of collating any ideas for future changes;
- it was important to ensure that appropriate standards were maintained in respect of grass cutting across the area;
- whilst noting the proposal for a business case on weed killing to be produced as part of a wider review of amenity services, it was felt that there was a need for more urgency in terms of addressing both the legal and safety issues which had been identified in respect of the use of glyphosate;
- in relation to the proposed review of play area provision, it was suggested that this should also include information in respect of community asset transfers which had already been undertaken;
- there had been a significant number of complaints and serious concerns raised across the Highland Council area in respect of grass cutting in the current year;
- there was a need to consider tree planting across the area as part of the future review;
- it was noted that in a service context, and with specific reference to feedback on amenity services from the most recent national household survey, the Council had been ranked 23<sup>rd</sup> out of 32 Councils, with comparable costs showing that the Council were in the top quartile (ranked 5<sup>th</sup> lowest) at £7,535 per 1000 population;
- the review would also consider the work undertaken across different teams, including roads staff, street cleaning staff, facilities management staff and those staff commissioned through the Housing Service and the core paths team, and this was welcomed;
- it would be helpful if Local Members could be involved/briefed on discussions in relation to local play areas in their Wards;
- in regard to grass cutting, it had to be recognised that this was important not just for local residents but also visitors to the Highlands;
- there was concern about play areas and specifically in instances where the play equipment had been removed by the Council with no prior notice;
- amenity grass cutting had been taken over by a local organisation in Nairnshire and this was currently working well for the area;
- members of the public should be involved in future discussions regarding the continued use of glyphosate;
- the high level of complaints received in relation to grass cutting was not a reflection on the staff involved who were often working under difficult circumstances and it would be important for this to be conveyed to them;
- there had to be a consistent model across the Highlands in relation to play area provision and as such there was a need to identify all those play areas currently in Council ownership;
- it would be important to consider discussing amenity areas with developers in order to try to identify possible future solutions;

- the proposed review of amenity services, which was to be overseen by the Redesign Board, would be very challenging and it was suggested that this might take considerably longer than currently envisaged;
- there was a need for consideration to be given to the equipment currently being provided for staff;
- it had to be accepted that Burial Grounds and Cemeteries had to be dealt with differently and, in this respect, it was also suggested that a review should be undertaken of their Management Rules which were currently not consistent across the Highlands;
- it had been noted that verge cutting on rural roads in particular had decreased and in this regard it was suggested that consideration should be given to local solutions wherever possible, such as farmers cutting verges in specific areas;
- in terms of future tree planting, it would be important for trees to be the right size without too much future maintenance required;
- liaison should be undertaken with SNH wherever possible on specific issues, such as any action which could contribute to butterfly conservation;
- it had to be recognised that community participation was required both now and in the future and one positive benefit from this was in relation to mental health;
- the Scottish Government had published information on a pollinator strategy and it was suggested that details of this should be contained on the Council Website;
- community payback currently worked well in the Tain area and it was hoped that this could be replicated elsewhere;
- the localism agenda, and specifically encouraging partnership working wherever possible, would be key to future success; and
- it had to be acknowledged that previous reductions in the Community Services budget had been agreed by the full Council and it was the duty of all Members to liaise with Community Planning Partners and their local communities to discuss possible future solutions.

### **Decision**

Members **AGREED** the proposed review of amenity services with the review to be overseen by the Redesign Board and recommendations made in time for planning for the 2020 growing season.

#### **15. Inverness and Highland City Region Deal Aithisg Bhliadhnaile a' Chùmhnaint Bhaile Roinne**

**Declaration of Interest** – Mr A Jarvie declared a non-financial interest in this item as a Director 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 his interest did not preclude him from taking part in the discussion.

There had been circulated Report No. HC/54/19 dated 14 October 2019 by the Executive Chief Officer (Transformation and Economy).

During discussion, Members raised the following issues:-

- this had been a year of really good progress on a number of issues and as such thanks were conveyed to the Officers involved;
- there was also a need to highlight the contributions from the Chair and Vice Chair of the Audit & Scrutiny Committee;

- the extent of the projects which had been completed across the Highland area was welcomed but it was important to also note the areas which had not as yet had any projects delivered;
- there had been real interest and commitment in local areas since the completion of projects and it was important that this was continued;
- the provision and quality of affordable housing had helped to retain young people in the Highlands and this was of great significance;
- it was hoped that the provision of FIT housing could be expanded in future wherever possible;
- digital service provision had been a source of some frustration in the past but it had to be acknowledged that this was now improving;
- in respect of finances, and specifically the detailed spend against projects as at 31 March 2019, there was some concern at the rate of spend and it was hoped that this could be accelerated wherever possible in future;
- there was a need for a focus on the western areas of the Highlands and in this regard the Local Members in Ward 5 in particular would appreciate details of any future plans for investment as a matter of urgency;
- there was a need to also review the current arrangements for Town Centre Wi-Fi which it was not felt was operating satisfactorily at present in many areas;
- it would be helpful if additional projects could be added to the list where current projects were not progressing as originally planned;
- there was a need for a report to be submitted to a future meeting in relation to the expected outcomes from the Northern Innovation Hub;
- whilst the excellent work to date was very welcomed by all concerned, it would be important to now identify what was achievable in Phase 2 and in this respect it was suggested that there should also be a strong focus on northern areas of the Highlands in future;
- in regard to digital, it was anticipated that conclusion of the tendering for R100 would provide a mechanism for partners to determine firm proposals for spend and this would be especially important for those areas who currently did not have any provision in this respect;
- it would be imperative for future funding to be spent in a timely and efficient manner and in this regard it was suggested that Members should discuss potential local projects at Ward Business Meetings in the first instance and convey comments to the relevant Officials thereafter as part of the future process; and
- it would be important for a Seminar to be arranged for Members in the New Year in order to discuss and take forward the issues which had been raised at this meeting.

### **Decision**

The Council: -

- (i) **NOTED** progress with the City Region Deal during 2018/19 as detailed;
- (ii) **AGREED** the publication of the Annual Report on the Council's Website; and
- (iii) **AGREED** that a Seminar would be arranged for Members in the New Year.

### **16. Results from the Citizens' Panel 2018/19 Performance & Attitudes Survey Aithisg Bhliadhnaidh Coileanaidh Phoblaich**

There had been circulated Report No. HC/55/19 dated 16 October 2019 by the Chief Executive.

During discussion, Members raised the following issues:-

- the negative scoring in respect of road repairs and potholes was very disappointing;
- there was concern that the net satisfaction score in respect of the Council 'involving people in how it spends its money' was -31% and further information was needed in terms of how it was planned to make improvements to this and other issues with a similar rating in the report;
- it was always disappointing to receive a negative rating on any issue or service being provided by the Council but improvement actions were always considered in such instances. It was also the case that there were a considerable number of positive ratings within the report on other issues and this should also be acknowledged;
- the reduction in the level of hate crime in the area was welcomed;
- this was a very useful report and specifically it should be noted that High Life Highland had received very positive ratings for the services which were being delivered;
- it was a concern that not all members of the Citizens' Panel had responded to the survey and consideration should be given as to whether there was a need to refresh the membership at some future point;
- in terms of the overall satisfaction with Council services, this had decreased from 87% in 2014 to 63% in 2019 and this was a concern;
- net satisfaction with Burials and Cremations had decreased from 65% in 2018 to 49% in 2019 and this was very worrying;
- net satisfaction with Care at Home services had also decreased from 29% in 2018 to 9% in 2019 and again this was a real concern;
- in light of the reduction in funding to the Council over time, thanks should be conveyed to all staff for the services still being provided at a time of decreasing resources; and
- there was a need for a strong focus on the Primary Education satisfaction rating which had decreased from 75% in 2017 to 62% in 2018 and was now 53% in 2019.

### **Decision**

The Council **NOTED** the key findings of the feedback from the Citizens' Panel from the current year's survey.

The Council also **AGREED** the follow up action to communicate the results set out in the report and to await further analysis and reports as outlined.

### **17. EU Funding Maoineachadh an Aonaidh Eòrpaich**

There had been circulated Report No. HC/56/19 dated 22 October 2019 by the Executive Chief Officer, Transformation and Economy.

During discussion on the current situation regarding performance and the potential re-allocation of funds, and specifically the proposal from the Scottish Government for re-allocation of some of the Highlands & Islands reserve to areas within the rest of Scotland, it was suggested that it would be beneficial if Members could have a briefing on this issue at an early date.

Also, in relation to the European Structural Investment Fund (ESIF) programmes which had been detailed within the report, it was highlighted that EU funds had been

used significantly in the past to support projects across the Highlands. As such, the level of access which the Council would have to such funds in future was now unclear and it was stressed that it was therefore essential that all Members of the Council worked together to ensure that projects were ready to take early advantage of any future funding which might become available.

### **Decision**

Members **NOTED** the current situation with EU Funds, performance and the potential re-allocation of funds and that the Council was continuing to lobby the Scottish Government on this issue.

## **18. Organisational Transformation and Transition**

There had been circulated Report No. HC/57/19 dated 16 October 2019 by the Chief Executive.

During discussion, Members raised the following issues:-

- it was noted that proposals for the senior management structure of the Education Service would come forward for consideration by Members at the December Council meeting and this was welcomed;
- the leadership arrangements and culture of any organisation were key to its success on both a local and national level and in this regard it would be important for the post of Chief Operating Officer/Depute Chief Executive to be filled as soon as was possible;
- there was a need for further information on the current roles of the new Executive Chief Officers, specifically within a management context; and
- it would be important for there to be clarity on which Officer was to have responsibility for taking forward issues in relation to Gaelic in future.

### **Decision**

The Council **NOTED** the progress which had been made, the transitional arrangements that had been put in place and the indicative timescales for the permanent structure being established.

It was also **AGREED** that a Members' Seminar should take place on 13 November 2019.

## **19. Governance Review Ath-sgrùdadh Riaghlachais**

There had been circulated Report No. HC/58/19 dated 25 October 2019 by the Chief Executive.

In this respect, and with specific reference to the need to report revenue monitoring against the existing Service structure to allow Members to exercise scrutiny of budget expenditure and the delivery of Service savings, it was highlighted that each of the detailed existing Service budget out-turns would be reported to the Corporate Resources Committee in February 2020, alongside the corporate revenue monitoring position, and the papers for this meeting would be issued to all Members of the Council.

During discussion, Members raised the following issues:-

- thanks should be conveyed to the Officers concerned for the work which had been undertaken on the report;
- in relation to the proposed amalgamation of the Commercial and Redesign Boards, it was agreed that the sentence in Paragraph 6.2.2. of the report which proposed that 'this would be underpinned by the ELT-led Change Programme Board to ensure that projects and initiatives agreed by the new Member Board are prioritised, resources and delivered' should be removed;
- there was some disappointment that the Commercial Board was being combined with the Redesign Board but it was recognised that there could be advantages in enabling projects to be implemented more quickly in future;
- it was agreed that the proposed 'Health, Care & Wellbeing Committee' should be re-named the 'Health, Social Care & Wellbeing Committee';
- the proposed introduction of a 'Wellbeing Joint Sub-Committee' was welcomed; and
- it was highlighted that all Members from Ward 5 were in agreement that recommendations should come forward to the next full Council meeting in respect of new Local Committee structure(s).

### **Decision**

The Council **AGREED** the following: -

- i. the establishment of the undernoted 6 Strategic Committees:
  - Corporate Resources
  - Education
  - Housing and Property
  - Economy and Infrastructure
  - Health, Social Care & Wellbeing
  - Communities and Places
- ii. the new Committee arrangements should come into force in January 2020;
- iii. membership of Strategic Committees should be changed to 18;
- iv. further work should be undertaken to standardise the naming and operation of Boards, Sub Committees and Working Groups and brought back for further Member consideration;
- v. a new Board should be established to take the place of the Redesign Board and Commercial Board, combining the best features of both with refreshed membership;
- vi. the name of the Gaelic Strategy and Implementation Group should be changed to the Gaelic Committee;
- vii. hard copy committee papers should be provided for Members of the requisite Committees (and for all Members in the case of Council) in addition to being available online. An opt-out option to be available. Papers not to be posted;
- viii. the detailed remits of the Strategic Committees should be brought forward for approval at the December Council meeting as part of the reviewed Scheme of Delegation. Members should continue to have the opportunity to feed into the development of these over the intervening period;
- ix. discussions should continue to be held with the Members of the Ross and Cromarty Committee regarding their Local Committee structure/s, with the aim to bring recommendations forward for approval by the Council in December;
- x. the Council to commit to undertaking CIPFA accreditation, the costs of the first phase to be met within existing budgets; and
- xi. that Paragraph 6.2.2 should be removed from the report.

**20. Timetable of Meetings for 2020**  
**Clàr-ama Choinneamhan airson 2020**

There had been circulated Proposed Timetable of Meetings for 2020 which was **AGREED**.

It was also **AGREED** that, if it became necessary, the use of Mondays and Fridays for the scheduling of Committee meetings should be re-considered in future.

**21. Draft Terms of Reference - Climate Change Panel**  
**Atharrachadh Gnàth-shìde**

There had been circulated Report No. HC/59/19 dated 15 October 2019 by the Executive Chief Officer, Environment & Development.

In regard, there had also been circulated Minutes of Meeting of the Climate Change Panel held on 17 October 2019 which were **APPROVED**.

During discussion, Members raised the following issues:-

- it had been a long process to get to the point of being able to present the Terms of Reference for the Climate Change Panel and thanks were conveyed to all those who had contributed to this work;
- there was now a need for all Members of the Council to work within their communities to tackle the issues associated with the climate change emergency wherever and whenever possible;
- it had to be recognised that this was a real emergency situation and the Council would be scrutinised and held to account in terms of the action taken and the measures put in place to address this issue;
- it was questioned as to whether it was appropriate to give priority to the references to 'appropriate commercial opportunities' and 'maximising income' within the first paragraph of the Terms of Reference or whether they should have been contained later in the document;
- on the basis that this was an issue which transcended political balance, it was suggested that consideration should be given as to whether it was appropriate for the membership of the Climate Change Panel to remain politically balanced which had the effect of excluding some Members who were not part of larger political groups;
- in response to the above point, it was highlighted that all meetings were open to all Members of the Council if they wished to attend. There had been a huge commitment from the Members of the Climate Change Panel and an immediate focus on resourcing issues which had been worked on over a number of years as well as taking forward new ideas and accelerating action wherever possible in this regard;
- it was stressed that 'commercial opportunities' and 'maximising income' were essential in terms of taking forward action in respect of climate change as it would be impossible to do this from within current resources; and
- there would be opportunities available within all business sectors across the Highlands in terms of addressing the climate change emergency and it was imperative that the Council, along with partners, maintained a strong focus on the important issues in this respect.

**Decision**

The Council **AGREED** the draft Terms of Reference as circulated.

## 22. Timetable of Meetings 2019 – Change to date of Full Council meeting

It was **NOTED** that that a General Election had now been called for Thursday, 12 December 2019 which was the scheduled date for the next Council meeting.

On that basis, the Convener, seconded by Mr A Christie, **MOVED** that the Council meeting should now be held on Monday, 9 December 2019.

As an **AMENDMENT**, Dr I Cockburn, seconded by Mr K Gowans, moved that the Council meeting should be held on either the 16, 17 or 18 December 2019.

On a vote being taken, the **MOTION** received 30 votes and the **AMENDMENT** received 20 votes, with 1 abstention, and the **MOTION** was therefore **CARRIED**, the votes having been cast as follows:-

### **For the Motion:**

Mr G Ross, Miss J Campbell, Mr M Finlayson, Mr R Balfour, Mrs D MacKay, Mr G Cruickshank, Mr D Macpherson, Mr B Thompson, Mr W MacKay, Mr J Finlayson, Mr T Heggie, Ms L Munro, Mrs T Robertson, Mr M Reiss, Mrs F Robertson, Mrs I Campbell, Mrs A MacLean, Mrs C Caddick, Mr G Adam, Mr R Gale, Mr A Jarvie, Mr J Bruce, Mr P Saggars, Mr B Lobban, Mrs M Davidson, Mr A MacKinnon, Mr A Henderson, Mr A Christie, Ms N Sinclair and Mr J McGillivray.

### **For the Amendment:**

Mr D Loudon, Mrs M Paterson, Mr R MacWilliam, Ms K Currie, Mr B Boyd, Mr K Gowans, Mr C MacLeod, Mr A Baxter, Mr C Smith, Mr B Allan, Ms E Knox, Mr A MacInnes, Mr C Fraser, Mrs L MacDonald, Mrs I MacKenzie, Mr S Mackie, Mr K Rosie, Mrs P Munro, Dr I Cockburn and Mr R Bremner.

### **Abstention:**

Mr D Rixson

### **Decision**

It was **AGREED** that the Full Council Meeting previously scheduled for Thursday, 12 December 2019 should now be held on Monday, 9 December 2019.

## 23. Deeds Executed Sgrìobhainnean Lagha a Bhuilicheadh

It was **NOTED** that a list of deeds and other documents executed on behalf of the Council since the meeting held on 5 September 2019 was available in the Members' Library and on the Council's Website.

The meeting ended at 4.30pm.

## The Highland Council

Minutes of Meeting of the **Lochaber Committee** held in **Council Chambers, Council Offices, Charles Kennedy Building, Achintore Road, Fort William, on Wednesday, 6 November, 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 R Porteous, Roads Operations Manager, Community Services  
Mr M Bain, Project Manager, Corran Ferry, Community Services  
Mr S Dalgarno, Development Plan Manager, Development & Infrastructure (by VC)  
Mr D Chisholm, Planner (Development Plans), Development & Infrastructure (by VC)  
Ms M Cameron, Principal Housing Officer, Community Services  
Mr A Lawrie, Principal Repairs Officer (Lochaber)  
Ms D Sutton, Amenities Manager (South), Community Services (by VC)  
Mr D Esson, Quality Improvement Manager, West, Care and Learning Service  
Mr A MacInnes, Administrative Assistant, Chief Executive's Service

### Also in attendance:-

Group Commander F Nixon, Scottish Fire and Rescue Service  
Station Commander, C Robb, Scottish Fire and Rescue Service

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

### Mr A Baxter - Chairman

### Business

#### 1. Apologies for Absence Leisgeulan

An apology for absence was intimated on behalf of Mr B Allan.

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

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

Item 8 – Mr D Rixson (non financial)

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

There was circulated Report No LA/27/19 by the Local Senior Officer for Highland.

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

- It was encouraging to see improvements in station availability. The Scottish Fire and Rescue Service's efforts in giving recruitment a high profile was extremely welcomed and commended. Recognition was also given to the Employers of fire personnel who allowed their staff time off from their main employment to attend fire service duties.
- It was explained that following the Grenfell incident, the SFRS and The Highland Council undertook a survey of Highland Council properties to see if there were any cladding in properties similar to that used in the Grenfell Tower and none was found. A report on this had been produced to reflect that this action had been undertaken and a copy of this would be forwarded to the Committee. Further, there were no high rise buildings in The Highland Council area. However, there were tall buildings in the area, and in Fort William specific high rise training would be given to Fire personnel so that they were familiar with the procedures to be undertaken in the event of an incident.

Thereafter, the Committee **NOTED**:-

i the Area Performance Report; and

ii that a briefing paper published by Highland Council on a review of Insulation products used in new build and refurbishment housing projects, following the Grenfell Tower incident, would be circulated to Members.

**4. Annual Area Capital Update Report  
Aithisg Bhliadhnaì Calpa Sgìreil**

Due to Officer illness, this item was deferred until the next meeting in February, 2020.

**5. West Highlands and Islands Local Development Plan – Action Programme  
Plana Leasachadh Ionadail na Gàidhealtachd an Iar agus nan Eilean – Prògram  
Lìbhrigidh**

There was circulated Report No. LA/29/19 by the Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure and Environment.

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

- It was queried what the process was for Area Committees to ask for additional items to be included or deleted in the Action Programme, as in Fort William there was a need for a new Football pitch in Upper Achintore. It was explained that the role of the Action Programme was to document the aspirations that the Community was seeking to deliver and the facilities that were required. It was not necessarily the Council's role to vet the suitability of any projects, but for the Action Programme to act as a co-ordination tool for projects for the future of the Community. The Action Programme had taken account of the aspiration of the Community Partnership to have a community space in the Upper Achintore area. This item had also been taken account of in the Fort William 2040 process. If there were other items that the Committee wished to see included in the Action Programme, Officers would record these.
- It was queried how developer contributions were decided if there was more than one suitable project. Specific reference was made to developer contributions likely to be sought from development at Upper Achintore. It was explained that Officers could provide advice to Members on how Developer contributions could

be used in compliance with the policy set by the Scottish Government. Advice could also be provided on which projects in the Action Programme should be prioritised for developer contributions. A process was to be put in place whereby Area Committees would be asked to give their views on what projects should be prioritised for money received from Developer contributions.

- In relation to the Inverloch Castle Estate attention was drawn to the sensitivity in the Community around the Estate as it was an extremely iconic area;
- There seemed to be practical difficulties in implementing District heating networks, but in terms of climate change awareness such networks should be considered. It was explained that there were difficulties nationally in implementing these types of schemes. It was hoped that the Council would support lobbying for the new National Planning Framework and Scottish Planning Policy to better reflect and assist local Councils in delivering sustainable climate conscious sources of energy for the future.
- In relation to possible upgrades and developments at the Nevis Centre, it was highlighted that there was a desire in the Community for an Arts facility in the area, for example a performing arts or visual arts facility. There was a gap in provision for this type of facility in the area and the Committee wished to see this reflected in the Action Programme and that this facility should act as a Hub for other arts facilities across the area.
- It was suggested that Officers contact the Development Officer for the Isle of Rum community led land use plan for further information on this project.

Thereafter, the Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** that the Local Development Plan has been adopted;
- ii. **APPROVED** the Action Programme in Appendix 1;
- iii. **NOTED** the intended arrangements for ongoing monitoring and review of the Action Programme (as set out in Section 6 of the report); and
- iv. **NOTED** the aspiration of the Community for an Arts facility for the area to be added to the Action Programme.

## **6. Grounds Maintenance Season 2019 Ràith Obair-gleidhidh Raointean 2019**

There was circulated Report No. LA/30/19 by the Executive Chief Officer Customer and Communities.

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

- It was queried what the reason was for the failure rate in inspection rates for Ward 21 Lochaber compared to the neighbouring Ward and what remedial action was to be taken. It was explained that employees carried out self monitoring of standards so that they could undertake inspections in the course of normal duties. Therefore, more inspections could have been completed in Ward 21 compared to the neighbouring Ward simply because more employees were in Ward 21 undertaking normal duties during the period. Overall, there was still a high level of satisfaction from inspections for Ward 21.
- It was advised that the Grounds Maintenance Service review needed to be completed by end of February, 2020 so that the revised service standards could be implemented in time for the new season in April. Therefore, the Community Council consultation on the review would require to be undertaken during the month of January. It was requested that once the consultation on the review of

service standards had been completed, the outcome be reported back to the next meeting of the Committee in February, 2020.

- There was to be a Highland wide review of Amenity Services and the scope of this review was currently being developed.
- Reference was made to the problem of weeds in some urban areas and the different methods to control weeds. In this respect, it was requested that a presentation to the Parks Advisory Group providing an update on alternative arrangements following the Council decision to cease the use of glyphosate for weed killing be circulated to Members.
- It was advised that there had not been a consistent approach to the maintenance of play areas that had been taken over by Community Groups and this had caused some problems. Play areas were within the scope of the Amenity Services review.
- It was confirmed that burial grounds would be included in the Amenity Services review. It was also requested that there be more inspections around burial grounds particularly in the Ardnamurchan area as it was felt the wrong machinery was being used in their maintenance, to the extent that flowers were being cut and headstones were not being cleaned after grass cutting. An undertaking was given to look at these issues and report back to Ward 21 Members.

Thereafter, the Committee:-

- (i) **NOTED** the performance management information;
- (ii) **AGREED** to review service standards in partnership with other stakeholders during the winter season, and that the outcome of the review be reported back to the next meeting of the Committee in February, 2020;
- (iii) **NOTED** that a presentation by the Amenities Manager (South) to the Parks Advisory Group providing an update on alternative arrangements following the Council decision to cease the use of glyphosate for weed killing, would be circulated to Members; and
- (iv) **NOTED** that grounds maintenance issues in the Ardnamurchan area would be looked into and the outcome of this reported back to Ward 21 Members.

## 7. Corran Ferry Service Update Cunntas às Ùr mu Sheirbheis Aiseag a' Chorrain

There was circulated Report No. LA/31/19 by the Executive Chief Officer, Customer & Communities.

Following an operations update for the Corran Ferry Service by the Roads Operations Manager the following main points were raised by Members:-

- It was noted that the refit of the MV Corran including a steering upgrade was all on target and it was expected that the MV Corran would be back into service around the end of November, 2019. It was requested that a media communication be issued confirming timescales for the completion of the refit of MV Corran.
- The Lochaline pier upgrade seemed to be far more substantial than anticipated and may have an impact of increased traffic using the Corran Ferry. It was requested that Members be informed once the impact of the upgrade on traffic was known.
- A review of signage at both slipways was being undertaken. HITRANS funding may be available for digital signage at both slipways for the ferry service updates. Also, it was suggested that opportunities for generating income through

advertising on digital signage at the Corran slipway would be included in the review.

- The Budget Leader and Chief Executive had stated that there were no plans to increase fares on the Corran Ferry next year and this was welcomed;
- The additional ferry services provided during the road closure in the summer was commended. The public communication of service updates at that time was also acknowledged. It was highlighted that the Corran Ferry crew received an award for their kindness to the Community at the recent Highland Council Quality Awards.
- The ferry service was operated on an income versus operating costs basis. However, this did not include other overheads such as management costs. The Council also received Grant Aided Expenditure (GAE) from the Scottish Government and the Council prioritised where this money would be spent. If the Corran Ferry required significant expenditure on it, this would be funded from GAE. If the ferry service was transferred to a non profit organisation then the Council would no longer expect to receive the GAE allocated for supporting the Service.
- It was noted that the Council's corporate view on the Road Equivalent Tariff (RET) would be sent to Transport Scotland. Within Lochaber it had an isolated peninsula with the Knoydart to Western Isles ferry service probably Scotland's most expensive ferry service. It was confirmed that this issue would be reflected in the Council's submission.

Thereafter, the Committee:-

- i **NOTED** the content of the report;
- ii **AGREED** that a media communication be issued confirming timescales for the completion of the refit of MV Corran;
- iii **NOTED** that the Lochaline pier upgrade may have an impact on increased traffic using the Corran Ferry. Members were to be informed once the impact was known;
- iv **NOTED** that improved signage was being reviewed. Also, that digital signage at both slipways and opportunities for generating income through advertising on digital signage at the Corran slipway would be included in the review.

## 8. Housing Performance Report Aithisg Choileanaidh Taigheadais

**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 was circulated Report No LA/32/19 by the Executive Chief Officer, Customer & Communities.

It was requested that Officers attend a Ward Business meeting to discuss the report in more detail and in particular the issue of housing voids.

The Housing team were commended for the work undertaken in Malliag in relation to Environmental Improvements. Also, it was welcomed that times to complete housing repairs in Lochaber compared favourably with the Highland average.

It was advised that the last of the Syrian refugees had now left Lochaber. The Housing and Repairs team were commended for their assistance in working with the refugees to

meet their needs. What could have been a very troubling period for the refugees was made so much easier by the efforts of the Housing and Repairs team.

The Committee:-

i **NOTED** the information provided on housing performance in the period 1 April 2019 to 30 September 2019; and

ii **AGREED** that Officers attend a future Ward Business Meeting to discuss the report in more detail.

## 9. Education Scotland Report – Duror Primary School Report Aithisgean Foghlam Alba

There was circulated Report No. LA/33/19 by the Area Care and Learning Manager.

It was noted that the Education Scotland Report on Duror Primary School was very disappointing and had caused understandable upset and concern amongst parents and the Parent Council.

An update was provided on the action taken to support the School and to make sure that the improvements that the Education Scotland report identified were progressed. In this respect, as a matter of urgency an experienced Interim Head Teacher was appointed immediately to the School. The Head Teacher had worked with teaching staff and the Council to develop a detailed Action Plan which was encompassed in the school improvement plan. Work on the Action Plan had commenced and so far there had been very good progress made on the improvements that had been highlighted in the Education Scotland report.

It was requested that an update on progress with the Action Plan be provided at a Ward Business meeting in the New Year.

The Committee:-

i **NOTED** the Education Scotland report on Duror Primary School of 27 August 2019; and

ii **AGREED** that an update on progress with the Action Plan be provided at a Ward Business meeting in the New Year.

## 10. Street Naming Ainmeachadh Sràide

There was circulated Report No LA/34/19 by the Acting Head of Policy.

The Committee **APPROVED** 1 street name in Spean Bridge as Ferguson Court.

## 11. Minutes Geàrr-chunntas

The Committee **NOTED** for information:-

i Minutes of Meeting of the Lochaber Committee held on 29 August, 2019 which were approved by the Council on 5 September, 2019; and

ii Minutes of the Special Meeting of the Lochaber Committee held on 25 September, 2019 which were approved at the Council meeting on 31 October, 2019.

The meeting ended at 12 noon.

## The Highland Council

Minutes of Meeting of the **Ross and Cromarty Committee** held in the Chamber, Council Offices, Dingwall on Wednesday, 6 November 2019 at 10.30 am.

### Present:

Mrs J Barclay  
Dr I Cockburn  
Mr M Finlayson  
Mr C Fraser  
Mr D Louden

Mrs A MacLean  
Mr D MacLeod  
Ms P Munro  
Mrs M Paterson  
Mrs F Robertson

### Officials in Attendance:

Ms D Agnew, Ward Manager, Chief Executive's Office  
Mr R Bain, Ward Manager, Chief Executive's Office  
Mr J Holden, Housing Manager (North)  
Ms F MacBain, Committee Administrator, Chief Executive's Office  
Mr I Moncrieff, Roads Operations Manager, Community Services  
Mr T Stott, Principal Planner, Development & Infrastructure  
Ms H Ross, Senior Ward Manager, Chief Executive's Office  
Ms T Urry, Head of Roads & Transport, Community Services

### Also in Attendance:

Mr R Dibble, Station Commander, Scottish Fire and Rescue Service

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

### Mrs F Robertson in the Chair

#### 1. Apologies for Absence Leisgeulan

Apologies were intimated on behalf of Mr G Adam, Ms I Campbell, Mr A MacInnes, Mr G MacKenzie, Mr A MacKinnon and Ms M Smith.

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

There were none.

#### 3. Minutes Geàrr-chunntas

There had been circulated and were **NOTED** Minutes of the Ross and Cromarty Committee held on 14 August 2019, which had been approved by the Council on 5 September 2019.

**5. Scottish Fire and Rescue Service  
Seirbheis Smàlaidh is Teasairginn**

There had been circulated Report No RC/037/19 dated 21 October 2019 together with the Ross and Cromarty Performance Report by the Local Group Manager for the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS).

During discussion, the following issues were considered:

- SFRS representatives were asked to attend a Ward 5 Business Meeting in early 2020 to consider solutions to low station crew levels, and to consider information requested on wilful fire raising incidents in Wester Ross;
- The encouragement of home fire safety visits was welcomed, with Members invited to promote uptake;
- Margaret Paterson requested a breakdown of the areas of the reported 14 deliberate fires in Dingwall and Seaforth ward, and Pauline Munro requested a breakdown of 16 deliberate fires within the Cromarty Firth ward;
- The recruitment of female fire officers was welcomed and it was noted that improvements were required to Dingwall Fire Station to facilitate the employment of female officers in that location. Discussions had been undertaken in conjunction with the Council's Care and Learning Service to refurbish the station along with the addition of childcare facilities as part of a community hub, however this had stalled in 2018. An update on this would be sought by Angela MacLean from the Care & Learning Manager (Mid) on plans to hold a meeting about this, to which R&C members should be invited;
- Open Days were considered a useful recruitment tool, however plans to hold one in Dingwall had stalled along with the refurbishment discussions;
- Adverts in local newspapers were suggested as a means of attracting staff and volunteers;
- Information was sought and provided on the number of call-outs on 5 November 2019; and
- SFRS staff were thanked by Members for their work, often beyond the call of duty and of great value to their local communities.

The Committee:

- i. **NOTED** the Ross and Cromarty Performance Report;
- ii. **AGREED** to invite SFRS representatives to a Ward 5 Business meeting;
- iii. **AGREED** update on plans to hold a meeting to discuss improvements Dingwall Fire Station would be sought by Angela Maclean from the Care & Learning Manager (Mid) with R&C members to be invited to the meeting; and
- iv. **AGREED** Margaret Paterson and Pauline Munro be provided with information as detailed during discussion.

**6. West Highland and Islands Local Development Plan (WestPlan): Action Programme  
Plana Leasachadh Ionadail na Gàidhealtachd an Iar agus nan Eilean  
(Plana Siar): Prògram Gnìomh**

There had been circulated Report No RC/038/19 dated 23 October 2019 by the Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure and Environment.

During discussion, the following issues were considered:

- Concern was expressed at the number of Ward 5 projects that were no longer to be funded through the Council's capital programme, and reference was made to this being a reason for Ward 5's desire to operate as a separate Area within the Council. The Chair suggested the Ward 5 Members lobby the Council and the Scottish Government for more money for capital projects in their area; and
- It was clarified that the new linkspan at Uig would be used by Calmac ferries, it being too large for most other vessels.

The Committee:

- i. **NOTED** that the Local Development Plan has been adopted;
- ii. **APPROVED** the Action Programme in **Appendix 1**; and
- iii. **NOTED** the intended arrangements for ongoing monitoring and review of the Action Programme (as set out in Section 6).

## 7. **Applecross Community Land Use Plan Plana Cleachdadh Fearainn na Comraich**

There had been circulated Report No RC/039/19 dated 21 October 2019 by the Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure and Environment.

During discussion, the following issues were considered:

- The Plan was welcomed and local communities praised for their work in preparing it, with assistance from national planning advisors. It was hoped other communities would be able to undertake similar Plans and detailed guidance was due to be produced to facilitate this at a lower cost.
- In relation to the lack of Gaelic in the Plan, the Principal Planner would investigate whether the Council's Gaelic Translation Team could assist with this. The Chair suggested Members express any concerns about Gaelic usage to the Council's Gaelic Committee; and
- Clarity was sought and provided on the situation in relation to land availability for affordable housing, which had been agreed in principle, with the price still to be negotiated and the likely necessity for conditions relating to future sales.

The Committee:

- i. **NOTED** the thorough formulation and consultation processes used in the production of the Plan;
- ii. **APPROVED** the [Applecross Community Land Use Plan](#) as a material planning consideration for development management purposes; and
- iii. **AGREED** that the Plan and associated documentation be sent to Scottish Government seeking Ministers' clearance for the Council to adopt the Plan as statutory guidance supplementary to the recently adopted West Highland and Islands Local Development Plan; and
- iv. **AGREED** the Principal Planner investigate whether the Council's Gaelic Team could provide translation services for the titles and subtitles for the Plan.

## 8. Winter Maintenance Plan for 2019/20 Obair-gleidhidh Geamhraidh

There had been circulated Report No RC/040/19 dated 2 October 2019 by Executive Chief Officer Customer and Communities.

During discussion, the following issues were considered:

- It would be helpful if maps could be increased to A4 size prior to distribution to Community Councils, for ease of reading;
- Concern was expressed about the impact of moisture on salt and grit storage, particularly when it was for use by spreading machines as the flow, and therefore value for money, was reduced by high moisture content. Assurance was provided that there was a programme to replace salt storage facilities but progress was slower than would have been preferred. A brine / saline solution was being trialled in Inverness in conjunction with Bear Scotland and would be reported on in due course;
- Damaged or empty grit bins should be reported, via Members if necessary, to ensure prompt repair or replenishment. This could sometimes be slow to be undertaken and it was clarified that this was the result of pressure of work and to prioritise this might impact on other areas. Community Councils should be asked to monitor and report grit bin issues;
- Various sections of road were pointed out as being particularly troublesome, with particular reference to Route 7, the A832 Achnasheen to Garve, during extreme weather conditions, and attention was drawn to the agreed policy for road prioritisation;
- Composite maps showing weekend and weekday routes would be helpful and it was explained that work was underway to produce ward-level composite maps online and to introduce live tracking of gritters.
- An explanation was sought and provided on the equalisation of road treatments on Saturdays and Sundays, this being to mitigate difficulties on Monday mornings;
- Other specific questions about the routes could be addressed outwith the meeting, including Route 24 near Fortrose as requested by Mr C Fraser;
- Attention was drawn to the importance of managing public expectations in relation to winter maintenance, which had been discussed extensively at local level and through the relevant Headquarters Committees. The programme was not as comprehensive as in years gone by due to the Council's budget situation and members of the public were urged to alter their routines where possible during extreme weather events. Publicity could be provided through the Council's web site and on social media, and the input of the Community Planning Partnership could also be useful. It was acknowledged that changing routines was not always possible due to work commitments and the need to get children to school, which was particularly challenging in rural areas;
- Information was sought and provided on the two smaller gritters that had been purchased for Skye and Ross & Cromarty, which could be attached to pick-up trucks and were useful because their drivers did not require an HGV licence. They could spread at the same rate as the larger gritters but could not carry as large a load and could not accommodate a plough attachment; and

- Reference was made to the snowblower / Unimog that had been purchased by the Council in Badenoch & Strathspey, part-funded by HIE, and the Head of Roads & Transport offered to investigate whether this could be redeployed to R&C if not in use.

The Committee:

- i. **APPROVED** the report;
- ii. **AGREED** to investigate the potential redeployment of the snowblower / Unimog in Badenoch and Strathspey; and
- iii. **AGREED** to discuss Route 24 near Fortrose with Mr C Fraser outwith the meeting

## 9. **Community Service Response to Dingwall Flood Events** **Freagairt na Seirbheis Coimhearsnachd do Thuiltean ann an Inbhir Pheofharain**

There had been circulated Report No RC/041/19 dated 30 October 2019 by the Executive Chief Officer, Customer and Communities.

During discussion, the following issues were considered:

- Staff were thanked for their considerable efforts during and after the flood events, with many going above and beyond requirements to assist the public. The drop-in sessions had been helpful;
- Properties outwith the Dingwall area had also been adversely affected;
- The responsibility lay with a house-owner to protect their home, and information was sought and provided of the responsibilities of the Council, particularly in relation to Council tenants. A summary was provided of lessons learnt to improve future practice;
- This report would also be considered by the Council's Environment, Development and Infrastructure Committee on 7 November 2019;
- Information was sought on possible actions home-owners could take to reduce insurance premiums and reference was made to the Scottish Flood Forum for this;
- Information was sought and provided on sandbag longevity and storage, and it was suggested that sandbags be stored in a central location during a flooding event to avoid residents having to travel to multiple locations to source them; and
- Information was sought and provided on work being undertaken to avoid or minimise any future events, as detailed in the report.

The Committee **NOTED**:

- the update on community engagement following the flooding events;
- the maintenance and improvement works undertaken and planned as set out in section 7 of the report; and
- that the EDI Committee is to consider the progress with a flood scheme for the area including investment in improvements to the flood plain between Fodderty and Peffrey railway crossing; new culverts under Strathpeffer Road and Docarty Road; a new flood wall at Bridgend;

widening of the existing channel behind Burns Crescent; improvements to the existing trash screen where the Boggan Burn (Knockbain Burn) enters the culvert just upstream of Blackwells Court and a new coarse debris screen in the upstream Boggan Burn (Knockbain Burn) catchment.

## 10. Housing Performance Report Aithisg Dèanadais a thaobh Taigheadais

There had been circulated Report No RC/042/19 dated 31 October 2019 by the Executive Chief Officer Customer and Communities which provided Members with information on how the Housing Section performed in relation to the Scottish Social Housing Charter and other performance indicators up to 30 September 2019.

During discussion, the following issues were considered:

- Concern was expressed at the high cost of window and door replacement for a number of Council properties that were Listed buildings, with details provided on the estimated costs. Discussions were underway with Historic Environment Scotland to source possible grants and future options would be brought back to the Committee;
- The significant increase in rent arrears in Tain and Easter Ross were partly a result of report timing issues in relation to the timing of payment of Universal credit, however the level of arrears overall was increasing and it was thought this was at least partially attributed to Universal Credit and general economic problems;
- Derek Louden requested information on when an area of paving in Mansfield Estate would be dealt with as part of the Environmental Work;
- Walkabouts were useful for Members to meet with residents and observe required improvements as well as completed ones. It was important that actions from walkabouts were tracked, and the tracker could be used at Resident Group meetings;
- If Members experienced difficulty getting through to staff by telephone due to staff and number changes, they were advised to contact the Principal Housing Officers;
- Concern was expressed about ongoing uncertainty about responsibility between the Housing Revenue Account and the General Fund in relation to car park maintenance, and a review was being undertaken;
- Clarity was sought and provided on the Council's responsibility in relation to facilities shared between Council and privately-owned properties;
- At times re-letting could be problematic due to low demand for a particular area; and
- A comprehensive gutter cleaning programme would be preventative maintenance and in response to suggestion of equipment that could be purchased to help with this, reference was made to the current rent increase consultation, which included a higher option, with the additional funds raised to be invested in programmes and equipment that would be beneficial to tenants, such as gutter cleaning.

The Committee **NOTED** the information provided on housing performance in the period from 1 April 2019 to 30 September 2019 and **AGREED** to provide Derek Louden the requested information on an area of paving slab on Mansfield Estate.

**11. Street Naming – New Housing Developments**  
**Ainmeachadh Sràide - Leasachaidhean Ùra Taigheadais**

There had been circulated Report No RC/043/19 dated 22 October 2019 by the Executive Chief Officer Communities and People concerning the creation of addresses, following consultation with the respective Community Councils and local Members, for new housing developments at Alness, Dingwall and Culbokie.

The Committee **APPROVED**:-

- i. 2 new street names for a development in Alness as Broom Crescent and Bracken Road;
- ii. 2 new names for a flatted development in Dingwall as Morganti House and Ross Buildings; and
- iii. 1 new street name for a development in Culbokie as Baluachrach.

**12. Common Good Funds**  
**Maoin Maith Choitichinn**

There had been circulated Reports Nos RC/044/19 – RC/048/19 dated 16, 17, 23 and 28 October 2019 by the Executive Chief Officer – Resources and Executive Chief Officer – Communities and People which provided information on the following Common Good Funds:-

- a. Cromarty Common Good Fund RC/044/19
- b. Dingwall Common Good Fund RC/045/19
- c. Fortrose and Rosemarkie Common Good Fund RC/046/19
- d. Invergordon Common Good Fund RC/047/19
- e. Tain Common Good Fund RC/048/19

The Committee **NOTED** the updated information provided in relation to each Fund.

In relation to the Invergordon Common Good Fund, the Committee:

- **NOTED** the position in relation to the Town Hall; and
- **NOTED** the position in relation to the ownership of the Bouchardon Bust of Sir John Gordon.

The meeting ended at 12.55pm.

## 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, 7 November 2019 at 10.30am.

### Present:

Mr R Balfour	Mr D Louden
Mr B Boyd	Mr W MacKay (by video conference)
Mr R Bremner (substitute)	Ms A MacLean
Miss J Campbell	Mr D MacLeod
Mrs H Carmichael	Mrs B McAllister (substitute)
Dr I Cockburn	Mr H Morrison
Mr C Fraser	Mr D Rixson
Mr J Gordon (am only)	Mrs T Robertson
Mr A Henderson	Mr A Sinclair
Mr B Lobban (substitute)	

### Non-Members also present:

Mr G Adam	Mr K Gowans
Mrs J Barclay	Mr J McGillivray (by video conference) (am only)
Mr J Bruce (am only)	Mr S Mackie (pm only)
Mrs I Campbell (am only)	Mr R MacWilliam (am only)
Mrs M Davidson (pm only)	Mr P Saggars
Mr R Gale (am only)	Mr B Thompson (by video conference)

### In attendance:

Mr S Black, Executive Chief Officer Transformation and Economy  
 Ms C McDiarmid, Executive Chief Officer Customer and Communities  
 Mr M MacLeod, Executive Chief Officer Environment 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 F MacDonald, Head of Property Services, Development and Infrastructure Service  
 Mr A Maguire, Head of Development and Regeneration, Development and Infrastructure Service  
 Ms T Urry, Head of roads and Transport, Community Services  
 Ms N Wallace, Acting Head of Planning and Environment, Development and Infrastructure Service  
 Mr R Gerring, Transport Planning Manager, Development and Infrastructure Service  
 Mr D Mudie, Area Planning Manager (South), Development and Infrastructure Service  
 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, Corporate Resources Service  
 Mr P Mascarenhas, Community and Democratic Engagement Manager, Chief Executive's Service  
 Mr R Pope, Policy and Programmes Manager, Community Services  
 Mr J Robertson, Programme Manager – City Region Deal, Chief Executive's Office  
 Mr A Yates, Environmental Health Manager, Community Services

Mr J Kelman, Principal Project Manager, Development & Infrastructure Service  
 Mr K Forbes, Property Manager (Estates), Development & Infrastructure Service  
 Mr S Graham, Project Manager, Chief Executive's Office  
 Mr K Masson, Climate Change Officer, Chief Executive's Office  
 Mr C Simpson, Principal Tourism and Film Officer, Development & Infrastructure Service  
 Mr T Stott, Principal Planner, Development & Infrastructure Service  
 Mr D Summers, Principal Transport Officer, Community Services  
 Mr A Fraser, Engineer, Development & Infrastructure Service  
 Miss J MacLennan, Principal Administrator, Chief Executive's Office  
 Miss M Murray, Committee Administrator, Chief Executive's Office

**Also in attendance:**

Mr C Taylor, Regional Leadership Director, VisitScotland  
 Mr S MacKellar, LDN Architects  
 Mr B Beattie, Creative Services

**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 Mr M Finlayson, Mr J Gray, Mrs L MacDonald, Mr D Macpherson, Mr I Ramon, Mr A Rhind, Mr K Rosie and Mr C Smith.

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

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

Item 4 – Mr A Henderson (non-financial)  
 Item 6 – Mr D Rixson (non-financial)  
 Item 8 – Mr D Louden (non-financial)  
 Item 14 – Mr R Bremner and Mr D Rixson (both non-financial)  
 Item 23 – Mr W Mackay (non-financial)

Mr A Henderson declared a non-financial interest in any item that might raise discussion on HITRANS as he was a Member of HITRANS 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.

**3. Good News  
Naidheachdan Matha**

There had been tabled a list of good news and outstanding achievements, which was **NOTED** by the Committee.

#### 4. VisitScotland – Tourism Presentation VisitAlba – Taisbeanadh Turasachd

**Declaration of Interest: Mr A Henderson declared a non-financial interest in this item as a Member of VisitScotland 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.**

Mr Chris Taylor, Regional Leadership Director, VisitScotland, gave a presentation on tourism in the Highlands.

During discussion, the following issues were raised:-

- Members commended the presentation and, given that tourism was one of Highland’s main industries, requested that it be circulated to all Members of the Council;
- reference was made to the closure of Tourist Information Centres in Lochinver, Durness, Bettyhill, Thurso and Dornoch at a time when the North Coast 500 (NC500) continued to get busier, and information was sought, and provided, on job losses and how VisitScotland engaged with visitors when there was no Information Centre. It was added that VisitScotland was missing an opportunity in terms of the NC 500 and it was necessary to do better. Whilst it was acknowledged that the needs of tourists had changed, not everybody had gone digital and Tourist Information Centres were a one stop shop that had a wealth of knowledge, saved people a lot of time searching the internet and where people knew they could get merchandise;
- the “only in Scotland” tagline was welcomed but “especially in Scotland” was also suggested, New Year and Burns Suppers being examples of things Scotland did especially well;
- different areas of the Highlands had different attractions, and it would be helpful to see some of the statistics in the presentation broken down by Council area; and
- Scotland’s biggest appeal was its people and it would be good to see that incorporated more in VisitScotland’s marketing.

Thereafter, the Regional Leadership Director, VisitScotland, having responded to the points raised, the Committee **NOTED** the presentation and **AGREED** that it be circulated to all Members.

#### 5. Development and Infrastructure Service Revenue Budget 2019/2020 Buidseat Teachd-a-steach Seirbheis an Leasachaidh agus a’ Bhun-structair

There had been circulated Report No EDI/67/19 dated 22 October 2019 by the Executive Chief Officer - Transformation and Economy.

During discussion, concern was expressed regarding the ongoing use of staff vacancies as a savings measure. This was not getting to the crux of the matter and a request was made that it be looked into, and that future reports include information on what was being done to address the situation and an impact analysis.

Information was sought, and provided, on the centralisation of non-domestic rates budgets and the associated net increase in the overall budget for Development and Infrastructure; the Director and Business Team year to date spend of £0.823m, which did not appear to correspond with the year end estimate and variance; and how the Technical Design and Projects year to date spend of £10.553m would be reduced to achieve a year end variance of £7.598m.

Thereafter, the Committee **APPROVED** the revenue monitoring position for the period 1 April 2019 to 30 June 2019 and the actions which had been put in place to manage the budget over the remainder of the financial year.

## **6. Capital Expenditure Monitoring Report Aithisg Sgrùdaidh Caiteachais Chalpa**

**Declaration of Interest: Mr D Rixson declared a non-financial interest in this item as a Board Member of 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 the discussion.**

There had been circulated Report No EDI/68/19 by the Executive Chief Officer - Transformation and Economy.

During discussion, some Members reiterated previous concerns in relation to the Loan Stock Instrument with Inverness Airport Business Park Ltd (IABP), commenting that there appeared to be little or no possibility of the Loan Stock being repaid to the Council, despite the significant investment taking place. The situation could not be allowed to continue and that needed to be made plain to IABP. The park had lain empty for 14 years and whilst it was encouraging that there might be some development in the near future, there had been confidence in that regard before. There seemed to be no good reason why plans to repay the loan could not be accelerated and the sooner a repayment schedule was implemented the better. It was added that the slow start was not due to financial circumstances, and that the area was not appropriate for a business park. It was also suggested that the Council look into taking over IABP.

Other Members emphasised that the Loan Stock Instrument had been entered into as a long-term investment and it would take time to see a return. Whilst it was acknowledged that the park had lain vacant for many years, attention was drawn to the current developments set out in the report, particularly the Co-op Regional Distribution Centre which had opened in September 2018, the new Inverness Airport Hotel which was scheduled to open in December 2019, and the Scottish Distribution and Training Centre for Enercon Services UK, work on which had commenced in May 2019. More developments would follow and Members should be proud that the Council had invested in the area, which had opened up the airport to the A96 and enabled it to become an international airport.

Additionally, whilst welcoming the development taking place at the business park, Members commented that the buildings were over lit. The light pollution was a distraction to drivers and a request was made for more discreet lighting.

Other issues raised were as follows:-

- it was highlighted that there was no capital expenditure in Ward 5, which was the largest ward in the Council area;
- in relation to Early Learning and Childcare, an assurance was sought that the Scottish Government Capital Allocation of £21.687m would be spent within the time limit and was not in any danger of being lost. In addition, an update was sought on proposals for a joint venture with the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS) at Dingwall Fire Station. This had also been raised at the Ross and Cromarty Area Committee. It was explained that the Estates Strategy Manager had been working with the SFRS to see what could be achieved in Dingwall and an update would be provided to Councillor A MacLean on his return to work;
- with regard to the Dingwall flood events, thanks were expressed to the officers involved in the report that had been presented to the Ross and Cromarty Area Committee the previous day. The recommendation to today's Committee that £0.250m be allocated for improvement works at Knockbain Burn was welcomed. This was a good use of the underspend in respect of the Smithton and Culloden Flood Alleviation Scheme and would make a significant difference to the people of Dingwall; and
- in relation to Appendix 6 of the report, Members welcomed project updates being provided to the Committee rather than just Ward Members or Area Committees. It would be worthwhile to see what some of the schools looked like and it was queried whether there would be an opportunity for Members to visit. Merkinch Primary School was quite close to Council Headquarters and it was suggested that a visit could be tied in with a Committee meeting.

Thereafter, the Committee:-

- i. **APPROVED:-**
  - (a) the capital expenditure monitoring position for the period 1 April to 30 September 2019; and
  - (b) the allocation of £0.250m for improvement works at Knockbain Burn, Dingwall;
- ii. **NOTED** the outcome of the assessment of Inverness Airport Business Park Ltd's 2018/19 Annual Accounts and the implications for repayment of the Council's outstanding Loan Stock; and
- iii. **AGREED** that the report of light pollution at Inverness Airport Business Park be investigated.

## 7. Planning Performance Framework and Quarter 2 Performance Review Frèam Coileanaidh Dealbhaidh agus Ath-sgrùdadh Coileanaidh Cairteal 1

There had been circulated Report No EDI/69/19 dated 25 October 2019 by the Executive Chief Officer - Transformation and Economy.

The Committee **NOTED** the performance updates for the Planning and Environment Service.

## 8. Regeneration and Economy Ath-ùrachadh agus Eaconamaidh

**Declaration of Interest: Mr D Louden declared a non-financial interest in this item on the grounds that two applications came from his Ward and left the Chamber during the vote.**

There had been circulated Report No EDI/70/19 dated 22 October 2019 by the Executive Chief Officer - Transformation and Economy.

Additional information was sought on the Digital Boost programme and the alpha prototype with the remaining discussion focusing on the Town Centre Fund, with Members raising the following issues:-

- concern was expressed at how the criteria had been settled upon. At first, areas had been identified for possible funding and Members had encouraged communities to bring forward projects. Subsequently, the criteria had been tightened up and projects which communities had believed would enhance footfall were rejected. The applications at Ardersier, Inverness College UHI and North Kessock / Fortrose / Rosemarkie would all benefit peripheral communities;
- many small rural towns in Highland would never meet the 1k population criteria and Scottish Government therefore needed to take a different approach when assessing rural projects;
- the North Kessock car park was part of the town settlement area and was only separated from the centre in terms of its height. The project would provide a pedestrian gateway to North Kessock, improve signage and enhance the proposal to establish camper van facilities at the car park by granting foot access to the settlement. Referring to the Fortrose and Rosemarkie, this was commonly identified as one settlement and there was historical evidence that it was a joint burgh. A different way of looking at these projects was required rather than simply on a paper plan basis. These projects would enhance visitor experience not just in the Black Isle but in the wider Highlands and they had received considerable support from the communities involved and should therefore be approved. Rejecting these proposals on technicalities, it was argued, would damage the reputation of the Highland Council locally;
- advice was sought as to the risks associated to the Council if the Ardersier, Inverness College UHI and North Kessock / Fortrose / Rosemarkie projects were approved;
- some Members expressed concern at the process followed for the selection of projects in the City of Inverness and Area. An informal meeting had been called at short notice and, while a broad consensus was reached, some Members had been unable to attend due to prior meeting commitments. There was therefore, it was contended, a lack of clarity. Furthermore, for the projects that had been agreed, it was disputed if there was match funding in place and consequently it was proposed, to ensure clarity, agreement and governance, the prioritisation of funding for the Inverness projects should be deferred until the City of Inverness Area Committee had had an opportunity to formally and democratically debate them at its meeting on 21 November 2019, with their recommendations then being passed to the Town Centre Fund Working Group. In response, the tight timescale involved was highlighted

and, together with the summer Recess, there had not been a formal meeting of the City of Inverness Area at which worked up projects could have been considered, hence the need for the informal meeting instead. Regardless, there was consensus, give the timescales involved, that projects in other Areas should not be delayed; and

- the Town Centre Fund had made a considerable difference to towns such as Wick and Thurso and Members' expressed their appreciation to officers for their hard work and encouragement and to the Scottish Government for the funding. In these towns it was vital to attract people back into the town centre and for them to remain there to redress the decline. There were many empty buildings and a lot of unused floorspace and the regeneration was eagerly awaited by Members, businesses and the public.

Thereafter, as a **MOTION**, Dr I Cockburn, seconded by Mr A Henderson, moved the Inverness projects were deferred out of the approval process and be brought to the Inverness City of Inverness Area Committee to rank these projects and to bring these recommendations to the Town Centre Fund Working Group.

As an **AMENDMENT**, Mrs H Carmichael, seconded by Mrs B McAllister, moved that the Inverness projects proceed as agreed by the Town Centre Fund Working Group.

On a vote being taken, the **MOTION** received 15 votes and the **AMENDMENT** received 2 votes, with 1 abstention, and the **MOTION** was therefore **CARRIED**, the votes cast having been as follows:-

**For the Motion:**

Mr R Balfour, Mr B Boyd, Mr R Bremner, Dr I Cockburn, Mr B Lobban, Mr C Fraser, Mr J Gordon, Mr A Henderson, Mr W MacKay, Mrs A MacLean, Mr D MacLeod, Mr H Morrison, Mr D Rixson, Mrs T Robertson and Mr A Sinclair.

**For the Amendment:**

Mrs H Carmichael and Mrs B McAllister.

**Abstention:** Miss J Campbell

**Decision**

The Committee:-

- NOTED** the key developments highlighted during quarter 2 and emerging activity;
- AGREED** the applications for Town Centre Funding for the projects at North Kessock/Fortrose/Rosemarkie; and
- AGREED** the Inverness projects were deferred out of the approval process to be brought to the Inverness City of Inverness Area Committee to rank these projects and to bring these recommendations to the Town Centre Fund Working Group.

## 9. Inverness and Highland City Region Deal Update Cunntas às Ùr mu Chùmhnant Baile-Roinne Inbhir Nis

There had been circulated Report No EDI/71/19 dated 28 October 2019 by the Executive Chief Officer - Transformation and Economy.

In addition to the report, the Executive Chief Officer – Transformation and Economy, Mr Stuart MacKellar of LDN Architects, and Mr Bryan Beattie of Creative Services gave a detailed presentation on the Inverness Castle Project, now called “Spirit of the Highlands in 100 stories”.

During discussion, excitement was expressed about the Inverness Castle project which would be an asset for the city and attract both residents and tourists. In relation to the Bridge Street phase, information was sought, and provided, on the duration of existing leases. In addition, it was queried whether consideration was being given to a roof garden.

In relation to the Science Skills Academy and, in particular, the Newton Rooms, the need for robust and comprehensive monitoring of the success of the project was emphasised. If the aim was to engage young people with science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM), one issue was the uptake of STEM subjects at schools and universities. Another was the current gender imbalance in engineering, computer studies and other disciplines. It was essential to identify outcomes for pupils and be able to measure them, and Members with Newton Rooms in their areas were urged to satisfy themselves that the desired outcomes were being achieved.

The Committee otherwise **NOTED** progress with the City Region Deal during 2018/19; and the positive feedback on 18/19 annual review.

## 10. A9/A96 Inshes to Smithton Road Scheme (East Link) Sgeama A9/A96 nan Innseagan gu Baile a’ Ghobhainn (Ceangal Sear)

There had been circulated Report No EDI/72/19 dated 25 October 2019 by the Executive Chief Officer - Transformation and Economy.

The Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** progress and next steps for Transport Scotland’s East Link road scheme;
- ii. **NOTED** East Link’s proposed future maintenance arrangements, as detailed in paragraphs 6.3 and 6.4 of the report; and
- iii. **AGREED** to support the scheme as currently proposed and to raise no objection to it.

## 11. Community Asset Transfer Requests Glusad So-mhaoin Choimhearsnachd

There had been circulated Report No EDI/73/19 dated 1 October 2019 by the Acting Head of Policy.

With regard to the sale of land to Kilmallie Community Centre (KCC) Ltd the recommendation to refuse was on the basis the proposal lacked little community

benefit, would impact on current and future Council plans to develop how traffic and parking would be managed and the proposals to install facilities for paint recycling, electric vehicle charging and campervan waste disposal had not been well demonstrated. However, at present, Highland Council paid no attention to the car park which lay adjacent to the Community Centre and it was now in a substandard condition. It was not in a tourist hotspot, was used predominantly by those attending the Community Centre, and the possibility of the Council generating income from the car park at present was therefore negligible. A 254 signatory petition and letter of support had been received from the Community Council for the car park's resurfacing. Furthermore, with the increase in electric vehicles the demand for charging points would increase and the need for campervan waste disposal on this route was already an issue. Refusal was in variance with the Council's policy of localism and the Community Centre should be given an opportunity to develop this asset. Accordingly, it was proposed that determination of this application be deferred to allow officers and KCC to come forward with a better proposal.

Thereafter, the Committee **AGREED**:-

- i. the following community asset transfer requests – subject to the terms of transfers as detailed in the report;-
  - lease of land at Jubilee Park Road, Dingwall to Dingwall Men's Shed for 30 years at £300 p.a.;
  - sale of the Drumnadrochit Visitor Centre and connected toilets with rights to the 4 car parking spaces directly outside the building to Glenurquhart Rural Community Association for £85k; and
- ii. to defer the decision regarding the sale of land to Kilmallie Community Centre Ltd.

## **12. BT Payphone Consultation Co-chomhairle Fòn BT**

There had been circulated Report No EDI/74/19 dated 25 October 2019 by the Acting Head of Policy.

The Committee **AGREED** the Council's response to BT's proposed removal of public payphones as set out at appendix 1 of the report.

## **13. Annual Report under Public Bodies Climate Change Duties 2018/19 Aithisg Bhliadhnaile fo Dhleastanasan Atharrachadh Gnàth-shìde nam Buidhnean Poblach 2018/19**

There had been circulated Report No. EDI/75/19 dated 7 October 2019 by the Executive Chief Officer - Transformation and Economy.

During discussion, the following issues were raised:-

- Members welcomed the report, which was educational and informative, and commended the Climate Change Officer and his team for their efforts. It was emphasised that the Climate Change team was highly under-resourced and it was necessary, when planning the budget, to consider how that could be addressed;

- reference was made to a recent lecture by Joan MacNaughton, Chair of The Climate Group and the Advisory Board of the New Energy Coalition of Europe, who had spoken to the need to use electricity rather than oil and gas. It was commented that many houses had oil or gas heating systems, and information was sought, and provided, on whether it was possible to specify the type of heating installed in new developments. In addition, it was queried what type of heating would be installed when old heating systems in Council houses were renewed;
- in relation to Priority 3 and the need to develop a strategy and action plan focussing on how the Council could generate its own electricity, Highland had a lot of power that was going to waste as it could not be exported, and it was suggested that the possibility of using it to generate hydrogen to tackle transport issues be explored;
- many people in communities did not grasp the work local authorities were putting in to reducing their carbon footprint and the report demonstrated the positive impact of measures such as the replacement of sodium street lights with LEDs;
- it would be helpful to know more about how the Council planned to reduce its overall consumption of electricity or generate much more of its own renewable electricity, and it was queried whether there were any plans for a seminar in that regard. The Climate Change Officer confirmed that the possibility of a Seminar could be discussed with the Climate Change Panel;
- it would be helpful to know more about why non-streetlighting electricity consumption continued to rise across the organisation so that Members could understand what needed to be done to reduce it;
- the diagram on P104 of the papers needed to be updated to reflect the new Council structure;
- Members commended the success of the Grey Fleet redesign project, which demonstrated what could be achieved if other organisations followed suit; and
- Members and staff should challenge electricity usage in Council buildings in the same way that they would at home.

Thereafter, the Committee **AGREED:-**

- i. that the 2018/19 report be submitted as part of the mandatory reporting process under the Public Bodies Climate Change Duties; and
- ii. that the possibility of a Seminar on how the Council planned to reduce its overall consumption of electricity or generate much more of its own renewable electricity be explored with the Climate Change Panel.

#### **14. Strategic Housing Investment Plan Plana Tasgaidh Taigheadais Ro-innleachdail**

**Declaration of Interest: Mr R Bremner and Mr D Rixson declared non-financial interests in this item as Board Members of Albyn Housing Association and Lochaber Housing Association 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. EDI/76/19 by the Executive Chief Officer Transformation and Economy.

During discussion, Members raised the following issues:-

- given the importance of achieving as many tender approvals as possible this financial year to secure funding, renewed calls were made for the seminar agreed at the August 2019 Committee meeting where Members could meet and explore issues with representatives from the construction industry;
- confirmation was sought, and provided, that where housing revenue account (HRA) stock was identified as surplus to requirement, it returned to the HRA;
- there was an underspend of £9m on the HRA Capital Programme, the reasons for which had been detailed to Members. Nevertheless, with 8,000 people on the waiting list for a Council property, it was difficult to comprehend how this money was not being spent;
- Dingwall was the priority in Mid Ross at present but it was sometimes difficult to progress development due to the infrastructure constraints. However, 8 new homes for affordable rent had been built at Larch Bridge Way, the standard of which were praised;
- concern was expressed at housing developments which commenced but which remained unfinished, often having a negative effect on the appearance of a community, and information was sought, and provided, as to what action the Council could take to ensure these properties were completed;
- some developers who took time to complete projects were impacted by requests for contributions from the Council and it had to be born in mind that this had a detrimental impact on their profit margins;
- there might be potential for some land at the Cameron Barracks to be used for housing and this should be investigated further;
- soldiers leaving the army often had difficulty finding housing;
- concern had been expressed at the depopulation of some rural areas. The level of investment in these areas was low and it was questioned if it was possible to build council houses in these areas in advance of need. In response, it was explained that where future economic activity could be identified this could take place but it was important not to have properties lying empty;
- additional information was sought, and provided, in relation to the 4 units proposed for Dunbeath;
- Wick and Thurso had a particularly high number of voids but, having taken time to carefully assess the situation, a number of properties had been identified as surplus and were now in the process of being sold. With the decommissioning of Dounreay and the falling population there were still houses for which there was no demand and which could also be sold and the money generated being used for the regeneration of the area and investing in providing housing suitable for younger people;
- the outstanding Lochyside School redevelopment had recently been completed and the officers involved were thanked for their hard work. There was a tangible excitement locally with tenants looking forward to moving in;
- further information was sought as to the impact on climate change of developments and how this would be mitigated and offset; and

- it was essential that the Council were satisfied that, when improving the quality and condition of the housing stock, it was also able to evidence how it was reducing fuel poverty and this should be included in future Strategic Housing Investment Plans.

The Committee:-

- APPROVED** the Strategic Housing Investment Plan, as submitted to the Scottish Government in draft form, included within Appendix 1 of the report; and
- NOTED** the planned investment programme as included within Appendix 2 of the report.

## 15. Flood Scheme Updates and Future Options

### Cunntas às Ùr mu Sgeama Thuiltean agus Roghainnean san Àm ri Teachd

There had been circulated Report No EDI/77/19 dated 10 October 2019 by the Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure and Environment.

During discussion, Members raised the following issues:-

- in relation to the proposal to raise the height of the seawall at Golspie, it was suggested a holistic approach should be adopted. A more effective and economically sustainable option would be to provide a breakwater and a lagoon area within that breakwater. This had a number of benefits including an enhanced coastline, the protection of the village and the marine environment and encouraging visitors to stop and remain in Golspie, thus generating economic benefit. In response, it was confirmed that this option had been taken into account but the seawall proposal had scored higher overall. This would however not preclude the introduction of a breakwater in the future to complement defences; and
- an indication was sought, and provided, as to when the Mill Burn flood prevention measures might start.

The Committee:-

- NOTED** the progress to date on the development of Flood Protection Schemes at Smithton & Culloden, Caol and Lochyside and Drumnadrochit, and the Flood Studies which have been identified within the Local Flood Risk Management Plans; and
- APPROVED** the submission of the Preferred Options for Golspie, Thurso, Mill Burn and River Peffery Flood Protection Schemes to SEPA for national Flood Protection Scheme prioritisation.

## 16. National Transport Strategy – Consultation Response

### Ro-innleachd Còmhdhail Nàiseanta

There had been circulated Report No EDI/78/19 dated 21 October 2019 by the Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure and Environment.

During discussion, Members raised the following issues:-

- the importance of the strategy and the need for Highland Council to reinforce its commitment to active travel was emphasised. However, the Council could not support the view that no new roads should be built as improvements to the infrastructure were important to the area's economy and connectivity with the rest of Scotland;
- whilst interconnectivity and an integrated concession scheme was important so too was integrated transport;
- accessible transport should also refer to villages where there was currently no public transport provision;
- the increasing cost of diesel was making freight transport by rail more favourable and any small development around this could make a considerable difference, especially with the transport of non-perishable goods and timber;
- Friends of the Far North Line had referred to Transport Scotland announcements regarding potential investment into the infrastructure of this important route;
- clarification was also sought, and provided, if the National Transport Strategy included a strategic trunk road review;
- with bus capacity able to replace a significant amount of cars, it was hoped that further investigation could take place as to what sort of viable bus provision might work in rural areas. In this regard, Members were reminded that in March 2018 the Council had agreed to conduct feasibility work on the options for enhancing Highland bus services at the soonest opportunity by the Redesign Board once the details and outcomes of the Scottish Government's Transport Bill were known. This would include franchising and the creation of a publicly-owned bus operator, if and when such powers become available to local authorities;
- to have a better more inclusive Highland society it was important to have bus routes where communities wanted them in terms of access to employment, healthcare etc as opposed to the routes which were more commercially viable;
- Eastern Airways had reduced their timetable from Wick John O'Groats Airport over the winter and it was hoped the response could reflect the ongoing discussions that Caithness Chamber of Commerce was having with Transport Scotland and Scottish Minister about putting in place a Public Service Obligation between Wick and Edinburgh, giving reassurance to visitors and the business community of the area's commitment to air connectivity;
- Caithness was primarily served by only two main routes, the south one being particularly important as it gave access to services such as Raigmore Hospital. If the rate of depopulation was to be reduced, then it was essential to focus on what enabled people to feel they could remain where they were whilst still feeling connected;
- the considerable investment being made to the Berriedale Braes was welcomed. The north hairpin bend had been realigned but, recently, most accidents had taken place on the south hairpin bend and, referring to the response that pinch points should be taken forward through focused investment, calls for a bridge at this location were made;
- a barrier to new and improved infrastructure was the expectation to achieve full design standard and it was felt that this was not always necessary and/or appropriate in a community;
- the Government placed considerable emphasis on achieving equality but it was questioned how this would be defined;

- the calls for trunk road investment, particularly round the A82 and A830, were welcomed;
- ideally the level of the railway platform at Fearn should be raised to assist travellers with mobility issues;
- the statement that the A890 Stromeferry Bypass was a lifeline route was welcomed; and
- improving the quality and availability of information to visitors to enable better transport choices did not necessarily involve significant investment.

The Committee:-

- NOTED** the key proposals set out in the Draft National Transport Strategy 2; and
- HOMOLOGATED** the submitted response, at Appendix 1 of the report, that has been developed by a cross service group of Officials and reviewed by the Chair, Vice Chairs and political group leaders.

### **17. Community Services Revenue Budget Monitoring Report Aithisg Sgrùdaidh Buidseat Teachd-a-steach nan Seirbheisean Coimhearsnachd**

There had followed Report No EDI/79/19 dated 30 October 2019 by the Executive Chief Officer Customer and Communities. In this regard, Members were reminded that Appendix 3 had been replaced, copies of which had been emailed and tabled.

During discussion, Members raised the following issues:-

- the Chairman referred to a recent visit to the Diriebught depot and emphasised the importance of providing decent work conditions;
- it was disappointing to see the impact of budget pressures on Community Services. Despite the very limited resources, staff tried to maximise their output but the service was under-staffed and this consequently affected the ability of the service to generate income and meet demand. The continued controls on recruitment and vacancies put pressure on staff especially when they were still expected to deliver services of a high standard. Staff were to be commended for their efforts and it was disheartening the necessary resources were not provided. This all impacted on the health of staff. The under-investment in Community Services could not continue and a cross-party approach was needed;
- cross-party Area Committee workshops were suggested as every community would have different expectations and where local ideas could be put forward. Also, where decisions were made at Strategic Committee, the impact on how they could be delivered at the local level might not have been taken into account;
- the lack of maintenance and inability to meet maintenance requests at an early stage meant that repair costs escalated significantly in the longer term;
- impossible income targets had been set and, in many cases, had not then received the appropriate support. However, Councillor Louden offered to help identify areas which would help mitigate overspends;
- Grounds Maintenance and Amenities were predicting a £527k underspend. However, there were frequent complaints regarding

overgrown weeds and bushes and lack of maintenance of green areas and this had a negative impact on the wellbeing of residents. Once highlighted, staff were quick to resolve matters but a more proactive approach was called for with some remedial work taking place before the end of the current financial year. Whilst this would reduce the underspend, it was argued that there was a reputational risk to the Council if this was not done; and

- Management Rules needed to be tighter so that the public were clear about what the Council could and should do.

The Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the projected pressures and risks in the budget;
- ii. **NOTED** the mitigation proposed as set out in section 7 of the report; and
- iii. **APPROVED** the revenue budget monitoring report for 1 April 2019 to 30 September 2019.

#### **18. Community Services Performance Report - 1 April to 30 September 2019 Aithisg Coileanaidh nan Seirbheisean Coimhearsnachd – 1 Giblean gu 30 Sultain 2019**

There had been circulated Report No EDI/80/19 dated 29 October 2019 by the Executive Chief Officer Customer and Communities.

During discussion, Members raised the following issues:-

- in response to comments made in Caithness from Community Councils regarding difficulties in obtaining responses to queries, an arrangement had been set up that Local Members met with officers responsible for the delivery of the service once each month and this had greatly improved communication and reduced complaints. The officers involved were congratulated for their engagement and it was requested that Members' appreciation be recorded; and
- the number of pothole instructions continued to increase.

The Committee **NOTED** the information provided on Community Services performance from 1 April to 30 September 2019.

#### **19. Northern Roads Collaboration Joint Committee – Annual Report Co-Chomataidh Co-obrachadh nan Rathaidean a Tuath – Aithisg Bhladhnaill**

There had been circulated Report No EDI/81/19 dated 28 October 2019 by the Executive Chief Officer Customer and Communities.

During discussion, Members raised the following issues:-

- in addition to the work undertaken with other Councils, a lot of other good joint working was being undertaken with a range of bodies; and
- it had been hoped that a joint approach could have been developed to deal with nuisance vehicles, given that this was an issue not confined solely to one Council area. However, this was not something the Joint Committee was going to pursue at present but Highland Council, together

with another Council, was going to proceed to see what collaborative approach might be adopted.

The Committee **NOTED**:-

- i. the Annual report from the Northern Roads Collaboration Joint Committee as attached at Appendix 1 of the report;
- ii. the continued role of Highland Council in providing the Finance Officer for the Joint Committee; and
- iii. that it is intended that Environment Development and Infrastructure Committee will continue to receive an annual report on performance activities annual achievements of the Joint Committee.

## **20. Residual Waste Project Update Ro-innleachd Sgudail**

There had been circulated Joint Report No EDI/82/19 dated 25 October 2019 by the Executive Chief Officers Infrastructure and Environment and Customer and Communities.

During discussion, Members raised the following issues:-

- the results of the soft market research on the potential uses of the recyclates and/or the Refuse Derived Fuel (RDF) the facility might produce were requested. It was important to know if there was a market for RDF and the costs associated with producing it;
- concern was expressed at the increasing capital costs of the various schemes. The project had taken time to evolve but it was pleasing to note that it had not lost any momentum as a result of the Scottish Government's announcement to extend the landfill ban transition period to 2025;
- only a limited number of companies would be able to build these plants and, as Councils approached the deadline, demand for their services would out way supply;
- confirmation was sought, and received, that the Longman waste management facility was still projected to be completed by November 2021;
- confirmation was also sought, and received, that all viable locations for an energy from waste (EfW) plant in the inner Moray Firth area were being considered, taking into account a range of criteria;
- it was essential that any EfW plant had the ability to be connected to the National Grid;
- it was queried if biodegradable waste could be composted locally; and
- the Scottish Government were looking for Councils to work together to find solutions to this issue and the Chairman was pleased to inform Members that this was already taking place at officer and Senior Member level.

The Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** that the Scottish Government has announced a landfill ban transition period to 2025, with new requirements and incentives on compliance yet to be announced;

- ii. **NOTED** that work is underway on developing infrastructure as previously agreed at Committee and Council to ensure compliance along with operational reviews of waste management contracts;
- iii. **NOTED** that the work underway is being managed as a corporate project with Programme Management Office support and oversight from a member working group;
- iv. **NOTED** the progress being made on the earlier Committee decision to develop a facility to develop a facility at the former Longman landfill site and to assess the feasibility and viability of an energy-from-waste facility in the Inner Moray Firth; and
- v. **AGREED** that a report is presented to a future Committee on the implications for the Council of:
  - a. the Deposit and Return Scheme for Scotland Regulations 2020 (draft laid before the Scottish Parliament on 10 September 2019);
  - b. the extension of the Packaging Producer Responsibility System (consultation on specific regulatory measures anticipated during 2020 by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs);
  - c. the review of the Code of Practice on Household Recycling in Scotland; and
  - d. any operational change proposed from contract reviews that require Member governance.

## **21. Road Structures – Annual Report Structaran Rathaid – Aithisg Bhliadhnaid**

There had been circulated Report No EDI/83/19 dated 6 October 2019 by the Executive Chief Officer Customer and Communities.

Although the diagram in the report suggested that the Bridge Stock Condition was either fair or good, there did appear to be a backwards trend with 10.8% of Council owned bridges failing European standards, compared to 3.6% elsewhere in Scotland. In this regard, Councillor Rixson requested a summary of the issues affecting bridges in order to increase awareness of their strategic importance and to consider how the Council would manage these risks.

The Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the position of the Bridge Stock Condition Indicators in Highland;
- ii. **NOTED** the current position in Highland in relation to the number of structures inspections undertaken; and
- iii. **APPROVED** the use of a continuous rolling programme for an extended list of schemes for the “Bridges, Retaining Walls and Culverts” allocation of the Community Services Capital Programme.

## **22. Use of Recycled Plastic in Road Surfacing Materials Cleachdadh Plastaig Ath-chuartichte ann an Stuthan Uachdarachaidh Rathaid**

There had been circulated Report No EDI/84/19 dated 23 October 2019 by the Executive Chief Officer Customer and Communities.

Whilst it was recognised that a cautious approach was necessary, Members were eager that a trail was undertaken at an appropriate location in Highland

where local conditions on its suitability could be closely monitored. This was particularly important taking into account that the Council had recently declared a Climate Emergency.

The Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the ongoing discussions between Transport Scotland and suppliers within the industry regarding the performance of bituminous surfacing materials containing recycled plastics;
- ii. **AGREED** that bituminous surfacing materials containing recycled plastics were not to be used on the Highland Council adopted road network until approval was given by Transport Scotland, and Highland Council considered the product technically suitable for their adopted road network but with a short adopted section contributing to a National Trial at the earliest opportunity; and
- iii. **AGREED** that bituminous surfacing materials containing recycled plastics might be used on unadopted roads within the Highland Council Area subject to the planning condition as stated in item 11 of the report.

### **23. Award of Community Transport Grants Tabhartasan Còmhhdhail Coimhearsnachd**

**Declaration of Interest: Mr W Mackay declared a non-financial interest in this item as a Director of Caithness Voluntary Group but, having applied the test outlined in Paragraphs 5.2 and 5.3 of the Councillors' Code of Conduct, concluded that his interest did not preclude his involvement in the discussion.**

There had been circulated Report No EDI/85/19 dated 18 October 2019 by the Executive Chief Officer Customer and Communities.

The Committee:-

- i. **APPROVED** the grant award recommendations as set out in table 1, paragraph 5.8 of the report, with awards proposed to 26 community transport groups, including 6 as new recipients;
- ii. **APPROVED** in principle, the flexibility in funding for years two and three of the grant cycle to allow for natural fluctuations in groups' activities within the allotted budget; and
- iii. **NOTED** that:
  - a. issuance of grant payments in line with award recommendations would be dependent upon groups' submission of regular claim forms and progress reports; and
  - b. grant awards may be withdrawn, withheld or reduced in instances where claim forms and progress reports are either persistently not submitted, or where they reflect a group's activity does not match that which is outlined in their application.

### **24. Off Street Car Parking - Progress Parcadh Chàraichean Far-Sràide – Adhartas**

As agreed at the Special Environment, Development and Infrastructure Committee on 24 October 2019, an update on the implementation of the Off Street Car Parking Policy would be provided to future Committees.

Members were informed that the project team had been developing the project plan which included identification of resources required to support implementation; arrangements for site assessments to be undertaken; and collation of site-specific data including local circumstances, current usage of sites and key stakeholders within each location. It was the intention for this plan to be completed by early December. In addition, recognising the importance of communities clearly understanding the process, how it would operate and how their views could be incorporated, a communications plan was being developed which would include a web-based presence containing key information and, eventually, site-specific information. It was recognised, however, that the next meeting of the Committee was not until 30 January 2020 and, as preparation work continued, Members would be provided with a further update in the interim.

The Committee **NOTED** progress and that a written briefing would be provided to Members with a further update before the Christmas break.

## **25. Air Quality and National Clean Air Day 2020** **Càileachd Èadhair agus Latha Nàiseanta an Èadhair Ghlain 2020**

There is circulated Report No EDI/86/19 dated 18 October 2019 by the Executive Chief Officer Customer and Communities.

During discussion, Members raised the following issues:-

- the good work taking place with the Care and Learning Service regarding improving air quality around schools should be highlighted. In this regard, reference was made to a proposed pilot project where traffic around a school would be limited with a view to mitigating pollutants; and
- with the increased number of cruise ships using Highland ports, confirmation was sought, and provided, that emissions were within current limits but the situation would continue to be monitored.

The Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the summary of the 2019 Air Quality Annual Progress Report for the Highland Council;
- ii. **AGREED** for Environmental Health to assist and monitor the Council's support for National Clean Air Day 2020.

## **26. Scottish Government Consultation on the Control of Dogs (Scotland) Act 2010** **Co-chomhairle Riaghaltas na h-Alba mu Achd Smachd air Coin (Alba) 2010**

There had been circulated Report No EDI/87/19 dated 15 October 2019 by the Executive Chief Officer Customer and Communities.

The Committee **APPROVED** the proposed response to the consultation.

**27. Appointments to Sub-Committees etc**  
**Cur an Dreuchd gu Fo-Chomataidhean is eile**

The Committee **AGREED** that Mr D Louden replace Ms K Currie on the Harbours Management Board.

**28. Minutes**  
**Geàrr-chunntas**

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

- i. North PAC – 31 July 2019;
- ii. South PAC – 7 August 2019;
- iii. North PAC – 10 September 2019;
- iv. South PAC – 17 September 2019: and

and, **APPROVED**:-

- v. Tourism Working Group – 6 June 2019;
- vi. Harbours Management Board Minutes – 20 August 2019
- vii. Education Transport Review Sub Committee – 12 September
- viii. Tourism Working Group – 26 September 2019;

and, subject to the decision taken at Item 8,

- ix. Town Centre Fund Working Group of 30 October 2019; and
- x. Town Centre Fund Working Group of 3 October 2019.

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

The Committee **APPROVED** 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 involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Part 1 of Schedule 7A of the Act, the relevant paragraphs being shown.

**30. Land and Property**  
**Fearann agus Cuid-seilbhe**

**Paragraphs 6 and 9**

There had been circulated to Members only Report No. EDI/88/19 dated 17 October 2019 by the Executive Chief Officer Transformation and Economy.

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

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

**Paragraphs 6 and 9**

There had been circulated to Members only Report No. EDI/89/19 dated 18 October 2019 by the Executive Chief Officer Transformation and Economy.

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

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

**Paragraphs 6 and 9**

There had been circulated to Members only Report No. EDI/90/19 dated 29 October 2019 by the Executive Chief Officer Transformation and Economy.

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

The meeting ended at 4.55 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 November 2019 at 10.30 am.

### Present:

Mr J Bruce  
Mrs M Cockburn

Ms P Hadley  
Mr B Lobban

### In attendance:

Mrs K Lackie, Executive Chief Officer – Performance and Governance, Chief Executive's Office  
Ms L Cowie, Ward Manager (Nairn, Badenoch and Strathspey), Chief Executive's Office  
Mr R Chapman, Station Manager, Scottish Fire & Rescue Service  
Mrs S McKandie, Benefits and Welfare Manager, Corporate Resources Service  
Mr G Munro, Policy & Assurance Officer, Corporate Resources Service  
Mr R MacLeod, Principal Housing Officer, Community Services  
Mrs L Dunn, Principal Administrator, Chief Executive's Office

### Also in attendance:

Ms C Graham, Local Delivery Relationship Lead, Social Security Scotland (Item 3)

**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

#### Preliminaries

Prior to commencing the meeting, the Chair welcomed Mrs K Lackie, Executive Chief Officer – Performance and Governance to the meeting and advised that she had been assigned responsibility for the geographical area of Badenoch and Strathspey in accordance with the new senior management structure.

Continuing, the Chair expressed disappointment at the brevity of the agenda despite the diligent efforts of the Ward Manager and praised the Housing Service and external partners for their continued support. He indicated that with the exception of Housing, there was a lack of commitment from all other Council departments to the localism agenda. He therefore proposed that there should be a complete programme of reports from all Council departments for the next year of Area Committee meetings and that this should be in place by the second week in January 2020 at the latest for approval. This programme would then be supplemented with ad-hoc Council reports as well as the valued contributions from external partners.

This proposal was fully endorsed by the Committee and it was further requested that there be a report from NHS Highland with regard to the new hospital that was being built in Aviemore. Concern was also expressed that Members were not updated in a timely manner on the changes that were taking place in early years learning.

Thereafter, the Committee **AGREED** that:-

- i. a programme of reports from all Council departments for the next year (2020) of Area Committee meetings, to be supplemented with ad-hoc Council reports and contributions from external partners, be prepared for approval by the second week in January 2020; and
- ii. a report be submitted to a future meeting from NHS Highland on the new hospital that was being built in Aviemore.

### **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 5 – Ms P Hadley (financial)

#### **3. Presentation: Social Security Scotland Taisbeanadh: Tèarainteachd Shòisealta Alba**

There was a detailed presentation by Ms Catherine Graham, the Local Delivery Relationship Lead for Social Security Scotland, on the rollout of Social Security provision in Highland and how it would roll out in the Badenoch and Strathspey area. The presentation included an overview of the agency structure, the legislative duties, and outlined the different types of benefits currently available as well as the various methods of application. In addition, further information was provided on the need for localism, particularly given the unique geography of the Highlands, and collaborative working with local stakeholders to achieve improved access and maximise benefit take-up.

During discussion, the following main points were raised:-

- Further information was sought and provided on how Social Security Scotland was monitored and scrutinised;
- With regard to the Best Start Foods benefit, further assurance was provided that this initiative had been extended to include a wider range of foods;
- It was highlighted that the Highland Council and NHS Highland operated an integrated service using the lead agency model and it was queried whether there had been any link in with this partnership;
- It was suggested that consideration should be given to using Educational Wellbeing and Counselling Services as a means of signposting individuals to services and also utilising Ambassador packs to cascade information to local networks; and
- It was queried how many drop-in facilities were likely to be located across the Highlands.

The Committee **NOTED** the presentation and **AGREED** that a copy of the presentation and Factsheets be circulated.

**4. Scottish Fire and Rescue Area Committee Performance Report  
Aithisg Coileanaidh Comataidh Sgìreil Smàlaidh agus Teasairginn na h-Alba airson**

There had been circulated Report No BSAC/**16**/19 dated 17 October 2019 by the Group Commander.

During discussion, the following main points were raised:-

- Further information was sought and provided in regard to the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service working collaboratively with health care teams to provide additional support and an indication was sought as to when this service, Safe and Well Visits, would come to fruition;
- Last year had been a difficult year in regard to wildfires and it was queried whether any educational programmes would be undertaken in regard to this;
- Assurance was provided that Rapid Response Units had been rolled out across 14 areas within the Highlands and confirmation was also provided that Community Response Units were located at Carrbridge; and
- It was queried whether there were any plans to increase the availability of staffing within Aviemore, which was the most populated area, and whether the Community Response Unit staffing levels would be reinstated in Nethybridge.

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

**5. Housing Performance Report – 1 April 2019 to 30 September 2019  
Aithisg Coileanaidh Taigheadais – 1 An Giblean gu 30 An t-Sultainn 2019**

**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/**17**/19 dated 28 October 2019 by the Executive Chief Officer – Customer and Communities.

During discussion, the following main points were raised:-

- Praise was expressed in regard to the Tenant Participation walk arounds that had been held and any follow up reporting on this would be welcome;
- Further information was sought and provided in regard to current ‘pinch points’ across the area. In addition, it was further emphasised that there was a need to be supportive of adapted properties, which created flexibility to meet changing client needs and also long-term cost savings; and
- Overall the performance results were good and this was welcomed but the need to keep on top of rent arrears was emphasised.

The Committee **NOTED** the information provided on housing performance for the period 1 April 2019 to 30 September 2019.

**6. Minutes**  
**Geàrr-chunntas**

There was circulated and **NOTED** Minutes of Meeting of the Badenoch and Strathspey Area Committee held on 19 August 2019 which were approved by the Council on 5 September 2019.

The meeting was closed at 11.41am.

**The Highland Council  
Sutherland County Committee**

Minutes of Meeting of the Sutherland County Committee held in the Chamber, Council Offices, Drummie on Thursday, 14 November 2019 at 10.30am.

**Present:**

Ms K Currie  
Mr R Gale

Mrs D Mackay  
Mr J McGillivray

**Officials in attendance:**

Mr P Tomalin, Ward Manager, Chief Executive's Office  
Ms A Donald, Education Quality Improvement Manager, Care and Learning Service  
Mr B Couston, Acting Education Quality Improvement Manager, Care and Learning Service  
Mr G Smart, Head Teacher, North West Sutherland Schools, Care and Learning Service  
Ms A Bain, ELC Commissioner North, Care and Learning Service  
Mr J Gunn, Technician, Community Services  
Ms S Murdoch, Common Good Fund Officer, Corporate Resources Service  
Ms A Macrae, Committee Administrator, Chief Executive's Office

**Also in Attendance:**

Station Manager J Gardiner, Scottish Fire and Rescue Service

**Mr R Gale in the Chair**

**1. Apologies for Absence  
Leisgeulan**

Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of Mrs L Munro and Mr H Morrison.

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

There were no declarations of interest.

**3. Scottish Fire and Rescue Local Performance Report  
Aithisg Dèanadais Ionadail Seirbheis Smàlaidh is Teasairginn na h-Alba**

There had been circulated Report No SCC/17/19 dated 30 October 2019 by the Local Senior Officer for Highland.

In discussion, Members raised the following main points:-

- the Service be commended on the number of home fire assessments carried out in the area and the fact there had been no fire related fatalities over the period;

- the Service be commended on its proactive approach to recruitment in the area, while acknowledging there continued to be challenges in some areas;
- an explanation was sought and provided on how the Service shared information from home fire assessments on vulnerable people in communities with other partners and agencies;
- clarification was sought and provided on the process for recruiting young people to the Fire Skills scheme and the potential to extend the scheme into Ward 1: North, West and Central Sutherland;
- confirmation was sought and provided that virtual headset technology was being used in the Driving Ambitions scheme;
- an assurance was sought and provided that appropriate counselling was available to firefighters attending road traffic collisions;
- the work to support the Scottish Ambulance Service in regard to uninjured falls. It was confirmed the pilot scheme in Caithness and Sutherland continued to be active and monitored.

The Committee following scrutiny, **NOTED** the attached Area Performance Report.

#### **4. Kinlochbervie Associated School Group Overview Sealladh Coitcheann air Buidheann Sgoiltean Co-cheangailte Cheann Loch Biorbhaidh**

There had been circulated Report No SCC/18/19 dated 1 November 2019 by the Interim Head of Education.

Mr G Smart, Head Teacher, North West Sutherland Schools provided an update in relation to the successful transition which had taken place to the new 3 to 18 campus which had been well supported by parents and the wider community. He provided further information on HMIE inspections, ASN provision, funding, buildings, exclusions and the school roll projections. In terms of staffing the current roll-based model did not allow him to cover the curriculum he would wish to cover. He was proud of the 100% positive destinations of pupils which reflected the hard work undertaken within the campus, including the work undertaken with local employers to find apprenticeships and employment.

In discussion, Members raised the following main points:-

- an update was sought on the position with Kinlochbervie Childcare Centre, in response to which it was confirmed this setting would be bought under the Council's control from January 2020;
- an assurance was sought and provided that probationers were accessing their training and professional development and there were no barriers in terms of travel and IT support;
- the training of active schools coordinators in mental health support for children and young people was welcomed and an assurance provided there would be no issues with access to the relevant training;

- concern the issues around teacher contracts continued to be a challenge going forward;
- the importance of maintaining good communications in respect of school closures due to winter road conditions;
- confirmation was sought and provided that all the probationers which had been engaged this year had expressed a wish to work in the Highlands;
- it was disappointing that HMIE had not accepted the reality of the new North West Sutherland Schools structure and other 3 to 18 campuses in Sutherland and the potential to raise this at a national level;
- the opportunity to follow up on the Head Teacher's request for a single budget with the Executive Chief Officer – Education, once in post;
- the potential for staff within the North West Sutherland Schools campus to consider dual registration given the flexibility this provided and the need for the Council to support any such requests;
- concern at the school roll numbers for some of the schools within the campus and the need for the issues of depopulation and economic development in the area to be addressed as a priority;
- the need to consider how to support the delivery of modern languages to pupils within schools; and
- further information was sought and provided around the provision of maths and physics within the campus.

Thereafter, Ms A Bain, ELC Commissioner North, provided an update on the implementation of the Scottish Government's commitment to deliver 1140 hours of free early learning and childcare provision from August 2020. She outlined the challenges in delivering the extended hours by the due date in terms of ensuring the workforce was in place and around capital investment so that settings had the capacity to accommodate the extended hours. The Scottish Government had provided clear criteria in relation to the national standard all settings were required to meet. It was disappointing that a situation had arisen in Brora in relation to the proposal that Sutherland Stepping Stones be the provider and the fact there had not been prior discussions with parents in a more planned and informed way. Information sharing sessions had been scheduled for Thursday 21 November 2019.

In discussion, concern was expressed that parents had learned that a review had taken place and the decision taken to close the nursery in Brora and provision transferred to Sutherland Stepping Stones in advance of any consultation or dialogue taking place with parents. Furthermore, Members had not been informed of the proposed change or the opportunity through the normal consultation processes to consider the proposals. A meeting had been held the previous evening at which parents had detailed their questions and concerns. The newly appointed Interim Head of Education had attended the meeting and a further meeting and site visits would be held the following week. It had been requested the process be halted until parents had been provided with the relevant information and had the opportunity to consider the proposal.

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

**5. Education Scotland Activity in Edderton Primary School  
Obair Foghlam Alba ann am Bun-Sgoil Eadardain**

There had been circulated Report No SCC/19/19 dated 6 November 2019 by the Interim Head of Education.

In discussion, Members raised the following main points:-

- this was a positive report and the fact there would be no further HMle visits to the School in relation to the inspection was welcomed;
- in terms of concerns at population numbers in the area and projected school roll numbers every effort should be made to ensure the School was not subsumed into the Tain 3 to 18 campus given its importance to the local community and vice versa;
- the more 1140 child care that could be delivered in smaller schools such as Edderton Primary School, the better the future was for their schools rolls and staffing numbers; and
- the importance of addressing the challenges identified in the HMle report, particularly around assessments, and of driving forward positive change and improvements in teaching and learning at the School going forward and to maximise the potential of pupils.

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

**6. Winter Maintenance Plan 2019/20  
Plana Obair-gleidhidh Geamhraidh 2019/20**

There had been circulated Report No SCC/20/19 dated 22 October 2019 by the Executive Chief Officer Customer and Communities.

In discussion, Members raised the following main points:-

- confirmation was sought and provided that the recruitment process for two operative vacancies had commenced with a view to the posts being filled by the end of the year;
- the importance of good communication on winter road conditions being maintained between Ullapool High School and the gritter drivers serving the area from Assynt southwards;
- concern that the Edderton/Struie road be given more priority on the basis this route was busier than might be expected;
- confirmation was sought and provided that arrangements had been put in place with the relevant bus operator to ensure the gritter was deployed in front of the school bus serving Rogart Primary School; and
- an assurance was sought and provided that measures had been put in place to ensure the even spread and use of better quality of salt, reference being made to issues which had been experienced in the Rogart area

during the previous winter. This included the use of fresh salt which would also be covered.

The Committee **APPROVED** the Winter Maintenance Plan for the Sutherland Area, which includes the priority road lists and maps presented in Appendices B & C.

**7. Street Naming – Dornoch  
Ainmeachadh Sràide**

There had been circulated Report No SCC/21/19 dated 31 October 2019 by the Acting Head of Policy.

Arising from this item, it was suggested that consideration be given to how the Council could feed new street names into mapping services such as Google maps.

The Committee **APPROVED** the naming of a flatted development in Dornoch as Old Stable Yard, St. Gilbert St.

**8. Dornoch Common Good  
Math Coitcheann Dhòrnaich**

**(a) Annual Report 2018/19, Proposed Budget 2020/21 and Quarter 2  
Monitoring Statement 2019/20  
Aithisg Bhliadhnail Math Coitcheann Dhòrnaich 2018/19, Buidseat ga  
Mholadh airson 2019/20 agus Aithris Sgrùdaidh Cairteil 2 2019/20**

There had been circulated Report No SCC/22/19 dated 28 October 2019 by the Executive Chief Officer Resources and Acting Head of Policy.

The Committee:-

- i. **APPROVED** the Dornoch Common Good Fund Annual Report and Accounts for 2018/19;
- ii. **AGREED** the Dornoch Common Good Fund Annual Budget for 2020/21; and
- iii. **NOTED** the position of the Dornoch Common Good Fund, as shown in the Q2 monitoring statement against budget.

**(b) Lease of Ground to East Sutherland Rescue Association  
Aonta Fearainn do Chomann Teasairginn Chataibh an Ear**

There had been circulated Report No SCC/23/19 dated 31 October 2019 by the Acting Head of Policy.

In discussion, it was confirmed the lease related to the disposal of land only and the erection of any buildings on the site would be subject to a separate planning process. The public would have the opportunity to comment on any proposed development as part of that process.

The Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the outcome of the consultation process undertaken; and
- ii. **AGREED** the proposal to dispose of an increased area of Common Good to the East Sutherland Rescue Association subject to the consent of the Sheriff Court being obtained.

## 9. Minutes Geàrr-chunntas

There were circulated and **NOTED** Minutes of the Sutherland County Committee held on 22 August 2019, which were approved by the Council on 5 September 2019.

## ADDITIONAL ITEM

The Committee **AGREED** that the following item be considered as an additional item to allow Members to consider a request in relation to the Golspie Flood Protection Scheme.

## 10. Golspie Flood Protection Scheme

The Chair reported that the Environment, Development and Infrastructure Committee had agreed at its meeting on 7 November 2019 that the Golspie Flood Protection Scheme be submitted to SEPA. He expressed concern that there had been no consultation with the Sutherland Members on the Scheme to go forward, and suggested the proposed scheme was limited in its effect and there was a need for a more holistic approach for Golspie and the coastal area. He therefore requested that the relevant officers consult with Members on the scheme and provide an explanation of the rationale for the proposal.

The Committee **AGREED** to request that Sutherland Members be consulted on the proposal for the Golspie Flood Protection scheme which the Environment, Development and Infrastructure Committee had agreed be submitted to SEPA.

The meeting closed at 12.15pm.

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**The Highland Council  
Caithness Committee**

Minutes of Meeting of the Caithness Committee held in Thurso Library, Davidson's Lane, Thurso on Tuesday, 19 November 2019 at 10.00am.

**Present:**

Mr R Bremner  
Mr W Mackay  
Mr D Mackay

Mr S Mackie  
Mr A Sinclair  
Ms N Sinclair

**Officials in attendance:**

Mr A Macmanus, Ward Manager, Chief Executive's Office  
Ms A Donald, Education Quality Improvement Manager, Care and Learning Service  
Mrs H Flavell, Head Teacher, Thurso High School, Care and Learning Service  
Ms L MacKellaich, Road Safety Officer, Community Services (by TC)  
Mr J Gunn, Technician, Community Services  
Mr J Holden, Housing Manager (North), Community Services  
Ms A Macrae, Committee Administrator, Chief Executive's Office

**Also in Attendance:**

Station Commander J Donaldson, Scottish Fire and Rescue Service  
Watch Commander D MacFadden. Scottish Fire and Rescue Service

**Appointment of Chair of Meeting**

The Ward Manager reported that Mr M Reiss had intimated his apologies and therefore Members were required to appoint a Chair for the meeting.

Mr D Mackay seconded by Mr W Mackay moved that Mr S Mackie be appointed as Chair.

On there being no further nominations, Mr S Mackie was appointed as Chair for the meeting.

**1. Apologies for Absence  
Liesgeulan**

Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of Mr M Reiss and Mr K Rosie.

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

There were no declarations of interest.

**3. Minutes  
Geàrr-chunntas**

There were circulated and **NOTED** Minutes of the Caithness Committee held on 27 August 2019, which were approved by the Council on 5 September 2019.

#### 4. Matters Arising from the Minutes

The Ward Manager provided Members with an update on the status of the individual actions set out in the Committee's action tracker.

In discussion, it was suggested the Council facilitate a meeting of all community groups involved in Christmas lights and decorations in Caithness to resolve any issues and identify good practice well in advance of next year's festive season. The Ward Manager advised that as a starting point he would seek to refresh the report on this issue which had been submitted to the Committee in May 2019.

The Chair advised that at the last meeting of the Environment, Development and Infrastructure Committee it had been confirmed work was ongoing around a feasibility study in relation to the housing stock in Caithness and therefore this action was in progress. In addition, the Head of Housing would be invited to attend the next meeting.

Thereafter, it was suggested that discussion take place at a Ward Business Meeting on the information Members wished to be included in future ASG reports to the Committee.

The Committee:-

- i. **AGREED** the updates to the action tracker from the minutes of previous meetings;
- ii. **AGREED** that the report on Christmas lighting and decorations submitted to the Committee in May 2019 be refreshed as a starting point in identifying good practice and resolving any issues; and
- iii. **AGREED** to discuss the information that Members wished to be included in future ASG reports at a ward business meeting.

#### 5. Scottish Fire and Rescue Local Performance Report Aithisg Dèanadais Sgìreil na Seirbheis Smàlaidh is Teasairginn

There had been circulated Report No CC/18/19 dated 6 November 2019 by the Local Senior Officer for Highland.

In discussion, Members raised the following main points:-

- the Service be commended on its work in the area to keep people safe;
- an explanation was sought and provided on the Fire Skills initiative which involved pupils from Thurso High School;
- the introduction of the national Youth Volunteer Scheme in six areas in 2020, one of which was Wick, was welcomed;
- an update was sought and provided on the preventative work being undertaken by the Service with older people in rural areas particularly over the winter months;
- the opportunities to update the Driving Ambitions initiative to make it more relevant for young people and the support Members could provide in this regard;
- an update was sought and provided on progress with the potential co-location of the fire stations with NHS Highland/Scottish Ambulance Service in Wick and Thurso. The Station Manager undertook to keep local Members informed of progress going forward; and

- the Service's plans to address issues of inequalities and improve community resilience in Caithness as the lead of the local community planning partnership.

The Committee **NOTED** following scrutiny, the Area Performance Report.

## **6. Thurso Associated School Group Overview Sealladh Coitcheann air Buidheann Sgoiltean Co-cheangailte**

There had been circulated Report No CC/19/19 dated 1 November 2019 by the Head of Education.

Mrs H Flavell, Head Teacher, Thurso High School, reported on the range of work and initiatives being undertaken in relation to the four main aims of the School which were that all pupils feel included, supported and valued; to set high expectations for attainment, behaviour, attendance and punctuality; to provide quality learning and teaching experiences to all; and to provide an engaging and challenging curriculum for all learners including preparing pupils for life after school. She advised the figure for positive destinations at Thurso High School was 97.5%, and it was anticipated this figure would increase in 2018/19. She explained the carry forward shown on the budget had been due to staffing issues. In relation to buildings, she advised of the need to improve disabled access at Thurso High School with the provision of stairlifts being considered. There were also challenges with developing a lock down policy for the School given there was no automatic door locking systems or perimeter fence.

The Education Quality Improvement Manager advised that the data provided in ASG reports on exclusions had been incorrect, specific reference being made to Newton Park Primary School. The Business Intelligence Officer had provided an assurance that the data would be accurate going forward.

Thereafter, Members congratulated the School on an excellent report and on the positive destinations achieved and on the low number of pupils going on to be unemployed. The fact that both Thurso High School and Wick High School were performing above the Highland and Scotland average on positive destinations was a good news story and the Head Teachers and staff be commended on this achievement. The focus on the individual wellbeing of the child through Thurso High School's programmes and initiatives was also welcomed.

During further discussion, Members raised the following main points:-

- the need for flexibility in future reporting to recognise that some pupils from Bower Primary School which was included within the Wick ASG, went on to attend Thurso High School;
- the potential to increase the level of professional mental health support for pupils;
- an explanation was sought and provided on the Care Inspectorate's and HMle's inspection regime for nurseries and a request that future reports include commentary on the Council's RAG status for early years settings;
- concern at the impact of any further reduction of PSA support for teachers who were already under significant pressure;

- the need to identify any gaps in supporting teachers to deal with the social and emotional disruptive behaviours of pupils in the classroom which may not be assessed to be ASN need particularly in smaller schools;
- there was a difference in how the Council understood ASN provision as opposed to the expectation of parents and the need for this to be highlighted in the ASN review;
- the Service's plans for the transition of Gaelic medium primary pupils in Thurso to high school education at the end of the school year be welcomed;
- information be included in future reports on the number of Gaelic medium pupils at Mount Pleasant Primary School;
- the potential challenges around recruiting a secondary Gaelic teacher to work across both Thurso and Farr High Schools; and
- a request that the information on Caithness Educational Trusts be re-circulated.

The Committee

- NOTED** following scrutiny, the content of the report; and
- AGREED** that future reports include commentary on the Council's RAG status for early years settings and information on the number of Gaelic medium pupils at Mount Pleasant Primary School.

#### 7. **Safer Routes to School - Pennyland Primary School Slighean nas Sàbhailte dhan Sgoil – Bun-Sgoil Pennyland**

There had been circulated Report No CC/20/19 dated 1 November 2019 by the Executive Chief Officer - Customer and Communities.

In discussion, Members welcomed the proposal and raised the following main points:-

- details of the hotel development at Ormilie Brae, Thurso be passed to the Roads Safety Officer to allow her to consider the implications for safer routes to schools; and
- confirmation was sought and provided that the next stage of the safer routes to school work in respect of Pennyland Primary School would focus on the route from Burnside through the Pennyland Estate.

The Committee **APPROVED** the:-

- raised table traffic calming feature proposed for Trostan Road, Thurso; and
- raised table traffic calming feature proposed for Castlegreen Road, Thurso.

#### 8. **Winter Maintenance Plan 2019/20 Plana Obair-gleidhidh Geamhraidh 2019/20**

There had been circulated Report No CC/21/19 dated 28 October 2019 by the Executive Chief Officer Customer and Communities.

In discussion, Members raised the following main points:-

- the potential to raise public awareness through community councils on the routes BEAR Scotland and the Council were responsibility for treating;
- an explanation was sought and provided on the timescales involved in completing the gritting cycle on priority one routes in the morning. The Technician confirmed these routes were normally treated by 0700hrs;
- clarification was sought and provided on the period salt remained effective on routes depending on the temperature and road conditions and how this was monitored;
- there was a separate priority list for the gritting of footpaths a copy of which could be made available for Members, and that in general schools treated their own campus;
- clarification was sought and provided on the arrangements for filling salt bins including requests from communities in this regard;
- the staff be thanked for their hard work in providing this essential winter maintenance service and on dealing with the recent exceptional conditions experienced;
- a briefing paper be prepared and circulated to community councils on the winter resilience scheme, and the uptake by communities to date was welcomed;
- the potential for a press release to be issued on the winter maintenance plan for the area including details of the parameters the Service had to operate within to manage community expectations; and
- progress with a number of ongoing traffic orders in Caithness be discussed at a ward business meeting.

Thereafter, concern was expressed that the commencement of operations at 0600hrs was on some routes not early enough for the morning traffic on these roads and the potential for there to be flexibility within the policy to commence operations earlier than 0600hours. The Technician confirmed there was flexibility in this regard, and that this had been exercised once over the past two years as a result gritter breakdowns. He explained that an earlier start may also have implications for staff later in the day in relation to the requirements for a period of continued rest.

Following a short adjournment, it was proposed that the Winter Maintenance Plan be approved on the basis that at the discretion of the duty officer operations on selected routes could commence at 0500hrs. The routes covered on a weekend may also be extended during snow conditions.

The Committee **APPROVED** the Winter Maintenance Plan for the Caithness Area, which included the priority road lists and maps presented in Appendices B & C, on the basis operations begin at 0600hrs and can continue to 2100hrs. At the discretion of the duty officer operations on selected routes can commence at 0500hrs. The routes covered on a weekend may be extended during snow conditions.

## **9. Housing Performance Report - 1 April 2019 to 30 September 2019 Aithisg Dèanadais a thaobh Taigheadais - 1 Giblean 2019 to 30 An t-Sultainn 2019**

There had been circulated Report No CC/22/19 dated 7 November 2019 by the Executive Chief Officer Customer and Communities.

In discussion, Members queried progress with developing a localised policy to address the unique housing issues in Caithness. It was suggested there was a need for a joined-up approach with partners including those involved in economic development to consider all the options and to ensure the best decisions were made to meet housing needs in future. The Council should therefore take the lead in arranging a meeting involving Highlands and Islands Enterprise, Caithness and North Sutherland Regeneration Partnership, and the social housing providers in Caithness. Items for discussion should include potential regeneration opportunities, forecast housing demand, the use of technology to enable people to remain in their houses for longer, and the funding opportunities in this regard. To add weight to this request, it would be helpful if this initial summit was endorsed by the Chief Executive.

Further points raised by Members included:-

- concerns raised by a tenant that his current heating system was to be replaced by electric heating rather than being repaired The Housing Manager confirmed he would investigate this specific case;
- within the Council's obligations to reduce carbon and improve energy efficiency, it was important tenants were offered proper choices in relation to affordable heating systems that were sustainable and proven to work;
- the need to continue to push for pilot schemes in Caithness in relation to new innovative heating systems; and
- an explanation was sought and provided on the potential to improve sheltered housing provision in the area and the increased focus on delivering more personal solutions to enable tenants to remain in their own homes.

The Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** following scrutiny, the information provided on housing performance in the period 1 April 2019 to 30 September 2019; and
- ii. **AGREED** to seek a joint meeting with Highlands and Islands Enterprise, Caithness and North Sutherland Regeneration Partnership, and the social housing providers in Caithness to discuss housing issues in Caithness.

The meeting ended at 1.00pm.

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**The Highland Council  
Corporate Resources Committee**

Minutes of Meeting of the Corporate Resources Committee held in the Council Chamber, Council Headquarters, Glenurquhart Road, Inverness on Wednesday 20 November 2019 at 10.30 am.

**Present:**

Mr G Adam	Mr D Louden
Mr R Bremner	Mr A MacInnes
Mr J Bruce	Mrs D Mackay (VC)
Mrs C Caddick	Mr A Mackinnon
Mrs M Davidson	Mr D Macpherson (substitute)
Mr L Fraser	Mrs M Paterson
Mr R Gale	Mr M Reiss
Mr A Jarvie	Mr P Saggars
Mr B Lobban	Mr B Thompson

**Non Members also Present:**

Mrs J Barclay	Mr J McGillivray (VC)
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**Officials in attendance:**

Mrs D Manson, Chief Executive  
 Ms L Denovan, Executive Chief Officer –Resources & Finance  
 Mrs K Lackie, Executive Chief Officer – Performance and Governance  
 Mr E Foster, Head of Corporate Finance and Commercialism, Corporate Resources Service  
 Mrs S McKandie, Benefits and Welfare Manager, Corporate Resources Service  
 Mr J Shepherd, ICT Operations Manager, Corporate Resources Service  
 Mr D Mackenzie, Trading Standards Manager, Development & Infrastructure Service  
 Mrs L Dunn, Principal Administrator, Chief Executive’s Office  
 Ms A Macrae, Committee Administrator, Chief Executive’s Office

**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 Mackinnon in the Chair**

**Business**

**1. Apologies for Absence  
Leisgeulan**

Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of Mrs G Campbell-Sinclair, Mrs H Carmichael, Dr I Cockburn, Mr R MacDonald, Mr G MacKenzie, Mr S Mackie, Mr D Rixson.

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

Item 5: Mr R Bremner (non-financial)

### 3. **Good News** **Naidheachdan Matha**

- The Highland Council Modern Apprenticeship Programme had recently received a Good assessment from Skills Development Scotland quality audit. There were currently 20 Early Years Practitioners on the Programme and it was on track to reach 191 starts by the end of the current financial year;
- John Greig joined the Highland Council as a Youth Trainee in October 2018 and completed an SVQ in IT and Telecommunications. In addition, Mr Greig was also awarded the Trainee of the Year award at The Highland Council Awards ceremony and he had secured a full-time role as a Digital Service Officer; and
- Lily Scrimgeour completed her apprenticeship and Scottish Vocational Qualification in Business Administration and had secured a position as a Revenues Assistant in Corporate Resources.

The Committee **NOTED** the update.

### 4. **Appointments to Sub-Committees, Working Groups, etc** **Cur an Dreuchd gu Fo-Chomataidhean, Buidhnean-obrach is eile**

The Committee **APPROVED** the appointments to the following Sub-Committees, Working Groups etc:-

- Central Safety Committee – Mr Alex MacInnes
- Employment Release Sub-Committee – Mr Graham Mackenzie

### **CARE AND LEARNING SERVICE** **SEIRBHEIS A' CHÙRAIM AGUS AN IONNSACHAIDH**

### 5. **Gaelic** **Maoin**

**Declaration of Interest – Mr R Bremner declared a non-financial interest in this item as the Chair of the local organising Committee for the Royal National Mòd in Caithness, Caithness branch of An Comunn Gàidhealach, and the Caithness and Sutherland Local Mòd 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.**

Prior to consideration of the reports, the Chair read out the following statement:-

There had been correspondence with Arthur Cormack regarding funding for Blas and Feisean nan Gaidheal, and useful recent meetings between him and the Chief Executive during her visit to Skye. There has been confusion over previous meetings and internal enquiries have established that the quality of correspondence has not been what it should have been and this has not been helped by the turnover of key staff. As a result, an apology has been made to Mr Cormack for these misunderstandings and a commitment has been given that

moving forward, the Council will be clearer in communications with the Blas and Feisean and notification of funding will be as early as possible.

**(a) Gaelic and Culture Update**  
**Aithisg Ùrachaidh Gàidhlig agus Cultair**

There had been circulated Report No RES/35/19 by the Chief Executive.

During discussion, the following main points were raised:-

- the report highlighted the crucial contribution of the Council to the National Gaelic Plan 2018-20 and the Scottish Government's targets for growth especially in education provision;
- the importance of good relationships being maintained with all the Gaelic organisations which the Council funded;
- future reports be more streamlined to comprise the salient points and the work being undertaken be related to each of the key Gaelic Language Plan Themes;
- clarification be provided on the engagement around the Community Partnership Development Plans;
- information be provided on the increase in the actual number of Gaelic speakers and positive trends in Highland;
- more work was required on the commitment to identify and provide opportunities for Members and staff to learn Gaelic;
- there was also a need to focus on developing strategies for both the Gaelic jobs markets and Gaelic related jobs;
- Education work be presented in graph form particularly in regard to the delivery and resourcing of Gaelic L2 and L3;
- the need to separate out in the report the information relating to support for early years;
- the Council be praised for its significant support to the Scottish Government targets as demonstrated at section 8 of the report and thanks be conveyed to the Gaelic Team on the figures achieved;
- further information be provided on the breakdown of spend according to projects and the resulting outcomes and benefits being achieved;
- the strategic priority and accountability for Gaelic within the Council in terms of education and economic development be welcomed; and
- the need to build on the significant contribution of the Gaelic language and activities and events to the Highland economy and the important role of the new Gaelic Committee in this regard.

The Committee **APPROVED** the contents of the report and **AGREED** that future reports be more streamlined to comprise the salient points and:-

- a. The work being undertaken be related to each of the key Gaelic Language Plan Themes;
- b. Education work be presented in graph form particularly in regard to the delivery and resourcing of Gaelic L2 and L3; and
- c. Further information on the breakdown of spend according to projects and the resulting outcomes and benefits being achieved.

**(b) Support to Royal National Mòd  
Taic dhan Mhòd Nàiseanta Rìoghail**

There had been circulated Report No RES/36/19 dated 12 November 2019 by the Chief Executive.

During discussion, the following main points were raised:-

- the recommended funding support to be awarded annually over four years to An Comunn Gaidhealach to host the Royal National Mòd represented a small reduction in funding from the Council;
- the major contribution the Royal National Mòd made to the economy and communities in Highland including in the lead up, its legacy thereafter, and in supporting the Gaelic Language Plan;
- the need to improve the reporting on the outcome and benefits of other successful Gaelic events and festivals which the Council funded;
- the Council's contribution to each Royal National Mòd represented an overall increase over four years, compared to the previous award over a period of three years;
- An Comunn Gaidhealach should therefore reduce the significant level of funding local organising committees were required to raise for the event. The Chair confirmed this issue would be raised in discussions with the organisation;
- the potential for the Royal National Mòd to be held in other areas of Highland and the ability of the Council to influence this decision;
- the financial benefits to the Council of hosting the Mòd in Lochaber in 2017 where a Council owned building was used as a main venue; and
- the official launch date of the Royal National Mòd Inverness 2020 be confirmed to Members.

The Chief Executive advised that a rapid review of events and festivals was being carried out and due to be completed in December 2019 and the findings would be reported back to Members. There was a focus initially on next year's Mòd and on the importance of fringe events to bring the best benefits, experience, legacy and income generation for the Council and wider groups.

Thereafter, the Committee:-

- i. **AGREED** that the Royal National Mòd (RNM) was hosted in the Highland Council area in 2024, 2028 and 2032;
- ii. **APPROVED** that as part of the Highland Council's revised governance and renewed SDC that support of £37.5k was awarded annually over 4 years to ACG to host the RNM in the Highlands. This would be a 6.25% reduction in funding from the Highland Council as it replaced the £40k which was awarded annually; and
- iii. **AGREED** the official launch date of the Royal National Mòd Inverness 2020 be confirmed to Members.

**FINANCIAL MONITORING  
SGRÙDADH IONMHASAIL**

**6. Corporate Revenue Monitoring Report to 30 September 2019  
Aithisg Sgrùdaidh Teachd-a-steach Corporra gu 30 Sultain 2019**

There had been circulated Report No RES/37/19 dated 1 November 2019 by the Executive Chief Officer - Finance and Resources.

The Chair welcomed the significant improvement in the forecast year end position compared to the previous quarter. He advised this demonstrated that the governance, monitoring and tracking of budgets which had been put in place was working. It should be recognised there continued to be challenges going forward such as the potential impact on the budget in the event of a severe winter. However, by working with Members on a cross party basis and with staff there was confidence a balanced budget and potentially an underspend could be delivered at the end of the current financial year.

During discussion, Members welcomed the improved financial position as outlined in the report and raised the following main points:-

- clarification was sought and provided in relation to the impact on reserves depending on the year end position;
- clarification was sought on the level and impact of the additional ASN funding awarded by the Scottish Government. The Head of Corporate Finance and Commercialism reported that the Council had not yet been advised of the level of award or whether this would apply to the current or next financial year;
- a balanced budget was being achieved through the variance in staff costs and therefore the hard work and efforts of staff should be recognised;
- concern that the reliance on managing staff costs was not sustainable and the need to introduce new ways of working in those areas with the highest levels of vacancy management;
- the Council was in the process of considering more efficient ways of working and transformation of services and therefore the holding of posts was necessary and staff be commended for embracing change at a challenging time;
- assurance was provided that the welfare of staff was of the utmost importance and that a governance board met weekly to consider the business cases for filling vacancies;
- an explanation was sought and provided in relation to the figures shown and work ongoing in relation to the unallocated corporate savings shown in the report and the areas where there were challenges in delivering these savings;
- the need to consider the opportunities in respect of those areas where savings had yet to be made;
- the Corporate Finance Team and budget holders and managers across the Council be commended on delivering a significantly improved financial position;
- the improved financial governance and control of the budget which had been put in place had resulted in the Council being in a better place financially at this stage of the year than for a number of years; and

- the relevant staff be commended on the outstanding success of the Placement Services Change Programme which had received a Quality Award.

Thereafter, the Committee **NOTED**:-

- ii. the financial position of the General Fund and HRA revenue budgets as at 30 September 2019 and note the estimated year end forecast;
- iii. the status of budgeted savings in the year; and
- iv. the action in progress intended to deliver a balanced budget by year end.

## 7. **Corporate Capital Monitoring Report to 30 September 2019** **Aithisg Sgrùdaidh Calpa Corporra gu 30 Sultain 2019**

There had been circulated Report No RES/38/19 dated 1 November 2019 by the Executive Chief Officer - Finance and Resources.

In discussion the proposal for the Storr Car Park was welcomed and it was suggested that an assessment be carried out on the potential to develop other similar income generating initiatives in areas where there was clear evidence of demand. The proposed scale of the charging was queried in terms of whether these had been set at an appropriate level and had been based on good practice elsewhere. The Chair confirmed that further information would be provided to Members on the rationale for the proposed charging regime for Storr Car Park.

During further discussion, the following main points were raised:-

- an explanation was sought and provided on the adjustment to the flooding grant referred to in Appendix 3 to the report;
- an explanation was sought and provided on the underspend shown on the General Fund net capital budget in terms of the early years spend;
- there was a need for further discussions involving Members on the reasons for the underspend shown on the Housing Revenue Account and to consider how this could be resolved given the level of housing need in the Highlands; and
- concern at the potential long-term implications of the remodelling of the debt as set out in section 3.1 of the report and the need to ensure this did not create a burden for the Council in future.

The Leader confirmed she would discuss with the Chair of the Environment, Development and Infrastructure Committee, the opportunity to hold a briefing session for Members in relation to the spend on the Housing Revenue Account.

Thereafter, the Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the financial position of the General Fund and HRA Capital Programmes as at 30 September 2019;
- ii. **APPROVED** £0.420m of capital expenditure on Storr Car Park Phase 2 with the associated loans charges and running costs to be fully funded by income generated by car parking charges from the whole Storr site;
- iii. **AGREED** that further information be provided on the rationale for the proposed charging regime for Storr Car Park; and

- iv. **NOTED** that the Leader would discuss with the Chair of the Environment, Development and Infrastructure Committee, the opportunity to hold a briefing session for Members in relation to the spend on the Housing Revenue Account.

**8. Corporate Resources Service and Welfare Budget Revenue Monitoring to 30 September 2019**

**Sgrùdadh Teachd-a-steach Seirbheis nan Goireasan Corporra agus Buidseat nan Sochairean gu 30 Sultain 2019**

There had been circulated Report No RES/39/19 dated 21 October 2019 by the Executive Chief Officer - Finance and Resources.

During discussion, confirmation was provided that the savings in regard to the Welfare Budget 2018/19 had not been to the detriment of low-income families.

Thereafter, the Committee **AGREED** the financial position of the Corporate Resources Service and Welfare budget as at 30 September 2019.

**9. Corporate Resources Service Capital Monitoring Report to 30 September 2019**

**Aithisg Sgrùdaidh Calpa Seirbheis nan Goireasan Corporra gu 30 Sultain 2019**

There had been circulated Report No RES/40/19 dated 21 October 2019 by the Executive Chief Officer - Finance and Resources.

The Committee **AGREED** the financial position of the Corporate Resources Service capital budget as at 30 September 2019.

**10. Chief Executive's Office and Members' Revenue Monitoring Report to 30 September 2019**

**Aithisg Sgrùdaidh Teachd-a-steach Oifis an Àrd-Oifigeir agus nam Ball gu 30 Sultain 2019**

There had been circulated Report No RES/41/19 dated 12 November 2019 by the Chief Executive.

The Committee **AGREED** the financial position of the Chief Executive's Office and Members' budget as at 30 September 2019.

**CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S OFFICE  
OIFIS AN ÀRD-OIFIGEIR**

**11. Change Fund Bid: Approved Trader Scheme**

There had been circulated Report No RES/42/19 dated 12 November 2019 by the Executive Chief Officer – Performance and Governance.

During discussion, the following main points were raised:-

- The scheme was welcomed but a request was made for monitoring and reporting arrangements to be implemented with a view to the scheme being revised if necessary. The Chair provided assurance that a report would be brought back to a future meeting of the Committee as part of the overall governance arrangements;
- Mixed views were expressed in regard to the fee structure with some support being indicated for the fee scaling system (Option 3). However, in contrast it was felt that the level of business sign-up would be critical and, on this basis, it was therefore felt that a flat rate fee (as per Option 1 or 2) would be the best route to ensuring a high volume of take up; and
- It was highlighted that many businesses were already members of their own professional/industry accreditation scheme and were therefore unlikely to pay for the same service twice.

Thereafter, the Committee:-

- NOTED** Business Case;
- APPROVED** the development of an Approved Trader Scheme for the Highland area; and
- AGREED** that arrangements be put in place at the earliest opportunity for regular monitoring reports on the scheme to be submitted to Members.

### **CORPORATE RESOURCES SERVICE SEIRBHEIS NAN GOIREASAN CORPORA**

## **12. Treasury Management Rianachd Ionmhais**

### **(a) Mid-Year Treasury Management Report 2019/20 Aithisg Stiùiridh Meadhan-Bliadhna an Ionmhais 2019/20**

There had been circulated Report No RES/43/19 dated 7 November 2019 by the Executive Chief Officer - Finance and Resources.

During discussion, the following main points were raised:-

- Members commended the work of the Treasury Team for the borrowing activities that had been undertaken and timing of these;
- The movement in interest rates and the UK Government decision, with no warning, to increase the Public Works Loan Board (PWLB) rate by 1% on new borrowing was unfortunate; and
- Further information was sought and provided on the likelihood of the PWLB rate being further increased and the potential impact of this on the Council's Capital Programme.

Thereafter, the Committee **NOTED** the Treasury Management Mid-Year Review 2019/20.

**(b) Treasury Management – Summary of Transactions  
Rianachd Ionmhais – Geàrr-chunntas Ghnothaichean**

There had been circulated Report No RES/44/19 dated 29 October 2019 by the Executive Chief Officer - Finance and Resources.

The Committee **NOTED** the Treasury Management Summary of Transactions as circulated.

**13. Corporate Resources Service Quarterly Performance Report  
Aithisg Choileanaidh Ràitheil Seirbheis nan Goireasan Corporra**

There had been circulated Report No RES/45/19 dated 31 October 2019 by the Executive Chief Officer - Finance and Resources.

During discussion, staff were congratulated for the considerable financial gains that had been made in regard to Welfare Support and it was requested that future reports should include enhanced information on the financial benefit to customers from the Citizens Advice Bureau (CABx) to ascertain the overall position. In addition, it was also highlighted that this was the second year of operation of the Nairn Business Improvement District - Nairn Connects and therefore further information was also requested on the level of collection rates that had been achieved for the first year.

Thereafter, the Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the statutory and key performance indicators as outlined in the report;
- ii. **AGREED** that future reports include information on the financial benefit to customers from advice given by CABx in Highland; and
- iii. **AGREED** that information be provided on the collection rates for the first year of Nairn Connects.

**14. ICT Transformation and Network Refresh  
Cruth-atharrachadh ICT agus Ùrachadh Lionraidh**

There had been circulated Report No RES/46/19 dated 29 October 2019 by the Executive Chief Officer – Resources and Finance.

During discussion, appreciation was expressed to staff for the improving relations with Wipro and the efforts being made to overcome the continuing challenges. In addition, the application of financial penalties for failure of delivery of agreed contractual milestones was welcome and it was hoped that this approach would be continued and applied to any further slippages in performance.

Thereafter, the Committee **NOTED** the update on the ICT Transformation and Network Programmes.

**MINUTES OF MEETINGS  
GEÀRR-CHUNNTAS CHOINNEAMHAN**

**15. Commercial Board: Minutes of Meetings  
Bòrd Malairteach: Geàrr-chunntasan Choinneamhan**

There had been circulated Minutes of Meetings of the Commercial Board held on 16 October 2019 and 13 November 2019 – the terms of which were **APPROVED**.

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

The Committee:-

- i. **APPROVED** the Minutes of the Staff Partnership Forum held on 1 November 2019;
- ii. **APPROVED** the Minutes of the Central Safety Committee held on 1 November 2019; and
- iii. **NOTED** the Minutes of the Non-Domestic Rates Appeals Committee held on 7/8 October 2019.

The meeting ended at 12.26pm.

## The Highland Council

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

### Present:

Mr B Boyd	Mr A Jarvie
Mr I Brown	Ms E Knox
Mrs C Caddick	Mrs I MacKenzie
Miss J Campbell	Mr D Macpherson
Mrs G Campbell-Sinclair	Mr R MacWilliam
Mr A Christie	Mrs E McAllister
Mr G Cruickshank	Mrs T Robertson
Mrs M Davidson	Ms E Roddick
Mr K Gowans	Mr G Ross
Mr A Graham	Mr C Smith
Mr J Gray	

### Non-Members also present:

Mr A Henderson

### Officials in Attendance:

Mr S Black, Executive Chief Officer Transformation and Economy  
 Mr M MacLeod, Executive Chief Officer Environment and Infrastructure  
 Mr A McCann, Economy and Regeneration Manager, Development and Infrastructure Service  
 Mr J Kelman, Principal Project Manager, Development and Infrastructure Service  
 Ms J Vivers, Principal Housing Officer, Community Services  
 Mr E Foster, Head of Corporate Finance and Commercialism, Corporate Resources Service  
 Ms A Clark, Acting Head of Policy, Chief Executive's Office  
 Mr D Haas, Inverness City Area Manager, Chief Executive's Office  
 Ms F MacBain, Committee Administrator, Chief Executive's Office  
 Miss M Murray, Committee Administrator, Chief Executive's Office

### Also in attendance:

Mr M Kelly, Highlands & Islands Enterprise (HIE)  
 Mr A McEwan, City Fibre  
 Mr D Wilson, Area Group Commander, Scottish Fire and Rescue Service

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

### Mr G Ross in the Chair

### Preliminaries

Prior to the commencement of the formal business, the Depute Provost made the following announcements:

- The Provost, Mrs Helen Carmichael, had been taken ill and was wished a quick recovery on behalf of the Committee;
- Ms E Roddick was congratulated on her recent election to Central Ward;
- Mr Ron Archer, Housing Manager, was congratulated on his recent award of Highland Council Employee of the Year;
- Ms Krista Munro was congratulated her award of Primary Teacher of the Year at the recent Highland Heroes event;
- Agreement was sought and provided to amend the running order of the agenda and consider Item 8 immediately after Item 5;
- Attention was drawn to late papers and updates that had been circulated.

The Committee **NOTED** the preliminaries.

**1. Apologies for Absence  
Leisgeulan**

Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of Mr R Balfour and Mrs H Carmichael.

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

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

Item 5 – Mr A Christie (non-financial)  
 Items 6 and 7 – Mr K Gowans (non-financial)  
 Item 8 – Miss J Campbell (non-financial)  
 Item 9c – Mr A Graham (non-financial)

The Inverness City Area Manager sought and received confirmation that all Members who had declared an interest intended to stay in the Chamber during debate of the relevant items, for the reasons provided and detailed under the item headings.

**3. Presentation – Making Inverness One of the UK’s First Gigabit Cities  
Taisbeanadh – A’ toirt Inbhir Nis an lùib ciad bhailtean gigabit na RA**

Arising from the Inverness City Region Deal, five public sector organisations had come together with the objective of improving the digital connectivity of the Highlands. A presentation was undertaken by City Fibre on their plans to make Inverness one of the UK’s first gigabit cities, with their initial project being to extend the footprint of full fibre, gigabit capable internet connections in Inverness. Other issues covered included a project overview, trends in internet usage and the need for improved infrastructure, the benefits to all sectors, the timescales for the project (due to be ready for use in 2021) and the construction process.

During discussion, the following issues were considered:

- the project was welcomed and the benefits to a wide variety of sectors were summarised, including education (such as the use of chrome books by pupils at home and in school) and health (such as home-based eHealth technology). Synergy between public sector initiatives and this project was urged and

- would be discussed with HIE, noting that many of the earmarked sites were primary and secondary schools;
- with reference to people living in remote and rural areas with poor internet connections, it was hoped this infrastructure would eventually be rolled out beyond cities. It was confirmed that HIE was working with the Scottish Government to improve rural broadband;
  - as door to door communication was not the preferred method for some communities, other means of communication such as mail campaigns and drop in centres were suggested, as was attendance at community councils and residents' association meetings. An Inverness-based marketing manager would take much of this forward;
  - it was reported that in some areas work had started with local residents and Members being adequately informed;
  - assurance was sought and provided that there would be no connection fee to residents;
  - equipment should be put beneath grass verges wherever possible and it was vital that all pavements were reinstated to an acceptable standard. Details on measures in place to ensure this was done, including post-work inspections, were provided;
  - ongoing updates on the rollout of the project should be provided to local Members via Ward Business Meetings;
  - Members welcomed the initiative which would be of significant benefit to Inverness; and
  - in response to a query about City Fibre's relationship to BT Openreach, it was explained they were competitors in the field of building and maintaining internet infrastructure. Cityfibre, as a younger organisation, did not have a pre-existing network of infrastructure to maintain. Information on their use of contractors was provided.

The Committee **NOTED** the presentation and **AGREED** the rollout of the project be regularly communicated to local Members through Ward Business Meetings.

#### **4. Scottish Fire and Rescue – Area Performance Report Smàladh is Teasairginn na h-Alba – Aithisg Coileanaidh Sgìreil**

There had been circulated Report No. CIA/51/19 dated 26 October 2019 by the Local Senior Officer for Highland.

During discussion, the following issues were considered:

- clarification was provided that there had not been hydrant pressure issues at a recent incident in Ardersier and that it was standard practice to set up hoses from nearby open water sources, such as the sea, as a potential back up;
- Members commended the preventative measures and awareness raising initiatives that were being undertaken;
- concern was expressed in relation to properties which had a high turnaround of tenants and might require more regular fire safety inspections;
- information was sought and provided on recruitment efforts, with particular need for additional fire officers in rural areas. Reference was made to the importance of encouraging more females into the service, and efforts to address this were outlined; and
- assurance was provided on the programme for school visits and that they included both male and female officers.

The Committee **NOTED** the Area Performance Report.

**5. Housing Performance Report – 1 April 2019 to 30 September 2019  
Aithisg Coileanaidh Taigheadais – 1 Giblean 2019 gu 30 Sultain 2019**

**Declaration of Interest – Mr A Christie declared a non-financial interest in this item as the 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/52/19 dated 6 November 2019 by the Executive Chief Officer Customer and Communities.

The Principal Housing Officer drew attention to Section 7 of the report, Rent Arrears, and explained that anomalies in the reported figures were partly due to timing issues, with Universal Credit being paid on a 4-weekly rather than a calendar month basis. These would be smoothed out at the end of the financial year. It was likely Universal Credit might move to daily payments which would be helpful.

During discussion, the following issues were raised:

- in relation to efforts to seek compensation from the UK Government for hardship suffered as a result of Highland being a pilot area for Universal Credit, a case had been made but progress had stalled due to the forthcoming general election on 12 December 2019. This would be followed up in due course;
- the possible move to daily Universal Credit payments was welcomed and would ease hardship for many, especially at the start of the process;
- in relation to Council house refusals, the current policy allowed two refusals within 12 months, after which the applicant was suspended from the waiting list for six months before becoming eligible again;
- it would be helpful to have more information on the reasons behind rent arrears, refusals and homelessness to facilitate more appropriate support being provided, and a more detailed report was requested in future, to understand, in particular, causes of debt and to understand how mental health and wellbeing could be supported. This would be investigated, noting that not all required information was recorded; and
- a new way of considering voids might also be helpful, for example, considering them by location and a brief summary was provided of improvement measures in this area that had already been undertaken.

The Committee **NOTED** information provided on housing performance in the period 1 April 2019 to 30 September 2019 and **AGREED** the Principal Housing Officer investigate the possibility of providing a more detailed report in future, noting the need to understand causes of debt and to understand how to improve mental health and wellbeing.

**8. Victorian Market, Inverness – Business Plan – Market Hall/Fish Hall Transformation - Inverness Common Good Fund  
Margadh Bhictòrianach, Inbhir Nis – Plana Gnothachais – Cruth**

## **atharrachadh Talla na Margaidh/Talla an Èisg – Maoin Math Coitcheann Inbhir Nis**

**Declaration of Interest – Miss J Campbell declared a non-financial interest in this item as a Member of the Victorian Market Stakeholder Group 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.**

There had been circulated Joint Report No. CIA/55/19 dated 13 November 2019 by the Executive Chief Officer Transformation and Economy and the Inverness City Area Manager.

The Depute Provost introduced the Business Case, which had been requested by the Committee on 29 August 2019, and prepared by Graham and Sibbald, who had extensive knowledge of the local property market and how it was influenced by national and local trends. The Victorian Market was a principal asset of the Inverness Common Good Fund and Inverness Members, as custodians of the fund, had a duty to ensure the right decisions were taken to achieve best value, not only for financial reasons, but to ensure the market remained an asset to the city and a destination in its own right. The report represented a culmination of work that had started in summer 2016 with a series of workshops which had led to the creation of the Victorian Market action plan, agreed by the committee in June 2017, and which included the refurbishment of the market hall. All engagement undertaken, including with the Victorian Market Stakeholder Group, and the support proposed for current tenants, were detailed in the report. Support for the proposals had been indicated by the Federation of Small Businesses, the Inverness Chamber of Commerce, Inverness BID, and the Stakeholder Group, who were thanked for their contributions.

Attention was drawn to recommendation four of the report, which sought agreement on the compensation awarded to tenants. With this in mind and noting that aspects of the proposal could directly affect the financial interest of the tenants, it might be necessary, under Section 50A(4) of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973, to exclude the public for any discussion of individual tenants.

The Executive Chief Officer Transformation and Economy gave a presentation that included detail on the Business Case, the vision and aims of the project, the finances of the project, the proposed layout, rental returns, footfall and customer experience. The presentation also covered transformational change and the wider benefits to the city centre, risks, communication issues and next steps.

In summary, the market was a key asset of the Inverness Common Good Fund and was not currently performing as it should. The proposed project would have wider benefits for the area.

During discussion, Members made the following comments:

- the Business Case was welcomed and the need for change was emphasised. The market was currently a liability and required renovation to ensure it remained structurally sound. Reference was made to the concerns of the current traders but a managed transition was preferable to the prospect of an

abrupt closure if the building became structurally unsafe. In addition to bringing the building back up to an acceptable standard, it was suggested that it might thereafter be sold to the private sector for future management, given the length of time (14-25 years) to recoup the cost of refurbishment;

- in response to the suggestion about the market being sold to the private sector, it was pointed out that this would most likely increase the rent levels. The importance of the building and its role in attracting people into the city centre meant that even if it was run at a slight deficit, it should remain a valuable asset of the Common Good Fund
- it was suggested that the market was losing money due to high management costs and that the vision for the market's future was too similar to the Eastgate Centre;
- clarification was sought and provided that the Committee had the necessary authority to approve the £1.5m expenditure from the Common Good Fund;
- with reference to the role of the Inverness and Area Members as trustees of the Common Good Fund, the importance of ensuring the Market remained a valuable asset was emphasised, not only for the current tenants of the market, but for the many other businesses in the city centre and for the wider benefit of the people of Inverness;
- concern was expressed about the plight of the current tenants of the market and several Members voiced suggestions on differing levels of compensation and support that should be offered to them, including the provision of one to one business advice and assistance sourcing alternative facilities for the duration of any refurbishment works;
- in response to a suggestion that insufficient market research had been undertaken and that the Business Case lacked the necessary retail knowledge, reference was made to the details in the report on the research that had been undertaken and the credentials of the experts involved in preparing the Business Case;
- concern was expressed at the management of the market to date which had led to it being run at a loss and it was suggested there had been insufficient attention paid to feedback from current tenants who were not being treated with adequate care. Additional support and help to find them alternative premises were urged;
- clarity was sought and provided that it was usual for the total project budget, in this case £1.5m, to be publicly available and this did not influence the tendering process for individual aspect of the project, for example construction works;
- assurance was sought and received that the sections of the market which were in various private ownership would not be affected by the refurbishment;
- some Members suggested deferring approval of the Business Case pending more information on levels of support and compensation that could be provided to current tenants, while others felt it important the matter be determined without further delay;
- information was sought on plans to increase the use of the market by young people;
- the previous tenancy framework and details on what had been changed were sought by Ms E Roddick;
- an explanation was sought and provided on why the selection process for new tenants aimed to avoid taking in a new tenant that would be in direct competition to an existing tenant;

- in response to suggestion the market could be transformed into a 'mini Eastgate centre', it was explained that while the Eastgate centre mainly hosted large national retailers, the market would remain for independent local retailers;
- the usefulness of the market as a wet weather visitor attraction was highlighted and it was hoped that a closer tour bus drop-off point could be arranged;
- it was vital the Council did all it could to support the current tenants to continue trading during the refurbishment; and
- reference was made to the Council's obligation to the hundreds of businesses in the vicinity of the market, not only the 14 tenants of the market, and it was important a decision was made without further delay.

In response to Members' comments, the experience and knowledge of the consultants used to prepare the Business Case was emphasised, as was the market research undertaken. There was a strong case on environmental reasons alone to refurbish the market to increase the value of the asset and provide a destination for locals and tourists in the city centre, as well as the other 800-1000 local businesses that formed part of Inverness BID, who were supportive of the proposals. The role of the Council's business gateway service in assisting current tenants was outlined, with the possibility of entering into immediate discussions with tenants as soon as the business Case had been approved. In relation to management of the market, reference was made to the retained high occupancy rates throughout the recession. There were current empty units in the market in preparation for the refurbishment. As soon as the business case was approved, current tenants would be invited to bid for a unit.

At this point in the meeting, Members indicated a desire to discuss the detail of compensation to be offered to current tenants and the Committee **RESOLVED** that, under Section 50A(4) of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973, the public be excluded from this part of the meeting on the grounds that it might involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Part 1 of Schedule 7A of the Act.

While in private session, Members discussed various proposals for levels of compensation. There following a ten minute adjournment to facilitate the drafting of amendments to the recommendations in the report. Following the adjournment, the Committee **AGREED** it was no longer necessary to exclude the public and they were invited to return to the meeting.

Mr G Ross, seconded by Mr J Gray, **moved** the recommendations as detailed in the report. Mr A Christie, seconded by Mrs C Caddick, moved as an **amendment**, that the following three bullet points be added to the recommendations in the report:

- that subject to recommendation 4, those traders not returning will be entitled to compensation of 9 months and those returning will be entitled to 6 months as detailed in the report plus an additional 6 months rent free;
- that the common good fund arrange one to one consultations with the tenants of the Victorian Market impacted by the proposals to try and agree where feasible individual tailored solutions for progressing in co-production with all concerned

- that decanted traders meeting the new criteria be invited to apply for a new tenancy and be given the first option right to said tenancy.

Mr R MacWilliam, seconded by Mrs G Campbell-Sinclair, moved as a **second amendment** to reject the recommendations in the report and refer the Business Case back to a City of Inverness Area Committee special meeting in December 2019.

Mrs G Campbell-Sinclair, seconded by Mr K Gowans, moved as a **third amendment** to award 12 months rent compensation for leaving current tenants and 6 months rent compensation plus 9 months free rent for returning current tenants.

On a vote being taken between the **third (Campbell-Sinclair) and second (MacWilliam) amendments**, the result was as follows:

- For Mrs Campbell-Sinclair's amendment: Boyd; Brown; Campbell-Sinclair (3)
- For Mr MacWilliam's amendment: Gowans; Graham; Knox; MacWilliam; Roddick (5)
- Abstentions: Caddick; Campbell; Christie; Cruickshank; Davidson; Gray; Jarvie; MacKenzie; MacPherson; McAllister; Robertson; Ross; Smith (13)

Mr MacWilliam's amendment was carried and on a vote being taken between **the second (MacWilliam) and first (Christie) amendments**, as detailed above, the result was follows:

- For Mr MacWilliam's amendment: Boyd; Gowans; Graham; Knox; MacWilliam; Roddick (6)
- For Mr Christie's amendment: Brown; Caddick; Campbell; Campbell-Sinclair; Christie; Cruickshank; Davidson; Gray; Jarvie; MacKenzie; MacPherson; McAllister; Robertson; Ross; Smith (15)
- Abstentions: None

Mr Christie's amendment was **carried** and Mr Ross withdrew his motion in favour of Mr Christie's amendment, which became the **decision** of the meeting, as follows:

- i. **NOTED** the further work undertaken since the report presented to Committee on 29 August 2019;
- ii. **AGREED** the Business Plan attached, relating to the letting of a Tender for the transformation of the Market Hall and Fish Hall of the Victorian Market (Appendix 1);
- iii. **AGREED** to allocate £1.5m from the Inverness Common Good Fund and instruct officers to draft and publish an Invitation to Tender for the Transformation of the Market Hall and Fish Hall of the Victorian Market described within this report and the Business Plan;
- iv. **AGREED** that compensation was awarded to the tenants currently in the Market Hall and Fish Hall to help with the necessary relocation, with all tenants in the two Halls being offered the final 6 months of their rent as compensation (either to remain in situ rent free or as a final payment). Noting that this would amount to a compensation settlement of £55,772, with formal

- Notices to Quit likely to be served on Tenants in early 2020 to allow for the Project to commence in Spring 2020;
- v. **NOTED** that the rental income would be significantly reduced during the compensation (6 months), refurbishment (10 months) and letting periods (6 months). In total this was likely to be in region of 22 months and the equivalent loss of rental of £204,497. It was hoped some of this would be absorbed in the cost the £1.5m allocation;
  - vi. **NOTED** that further reports would be made to the City of Inverness Area Committee on progress, with a Tender Report being prepared and presented to the City of Inverness Area Committee for approval if required by Financial Regulations and Contract Standing Orders as soon as practicable in 2020;
  - vii. **NOTED** that all practicable steps were being taken to maximise third party funding opportunities, including an application to the Town Centre Fund, which had a deadline of committed funds 31st March 2020;
  - viii. **AGREED** that subject to recommendation 4, those traders not returning would be entitled to compensation of 9 months and those returning would be entitled to 6 months as detailed in the report plus an additional 6 months rent free;
  - ix. **AGREED** that the common good fund arrange one to one consultations with the tenants of the Victorian Market impacted by the proposals to try and agree where feasible individual tailored solutions for progressing in co-production with all concerned; and
  - x. **AGREED** that decanted traders meeting the new criteria be invited to apply for a new tenancy and be given the first option right to said tenancy.

**6. Torvean and Inverness Campus Sports Provision – Developer Contributions**  
**Solar Spòrs Campas Thòrr Bheathain agus Inbhir Nis – Tabhartasan Luchd-leasachaidh**

**Declaration of Interest – Mr K Gowans declared a non-financial interest in this item as an employee of UHI 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/53/19 dated 8 November 2019 by the Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure and Environment.

The Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure and Environment gave a presentation in amplification of the report.

During discussion, Members raised the following issues in relation to the proposed Inverness Campus sports facilities:-

- there was a desperate need for sports facilities in the east of Inverness and the proposals were welcomed;
- whilst recognising the need to accommodate Craig Dunain Rugby Club, there would be a significant call on the facilities by students and residents, and the need for maximum flexibility, and not to favour one group over another, was emphasised;
- information was sought, and provided, on when more detailed designs would be available, and it was suggested that further information on the design proposals be provided by way of a Members’ Briefing;

- Members were keen to see the project move forward sooner rather than later, and information was sought, and provided, on how it was intended to fill the funding gap;
- the facilities would allow Inverness College and UHI to develop courses that were not currently available, putting them on a more level playing field with other colleges and universities;
- the facilities would be attractive not only to the public but to professional athletes. It was understood that Caledonian Thistle Football Club had expressed interest as they did not currently have an all-weather pitch to train on, and helping them to achieve their potential would be something to celebrate;
- the strategic location of the campus was important in terms of its connectivity with the A96, the A9 and the West Link road, as well as its proximity to the airport and Inverness Station;
- some of the most affluent and some of the poorest areas in Inverness were located nearby and the facilities would provide sport for all;
- information was sought, and provided, on what consideration had been given to taking developer contributions from one area of Inverness and allocating them to another area;
- the benefits of the proposed facilities were immeasurable in terms of health, wellbeing and activity; and
- Culloden to the Inverness Sports Centre was approximately a 20-mile round trip so the new facilities would be a boon for the surrounding areas.

In relation to Torvean Park, the report stated that an element of the funding would be used for maintenance of the park and other green spaces, and it was hoped that the area would be better maintained than the pathway between Whin Park and the rugby pitches, which was overgrown and unsightly. In response, the Depute Provost confirmed that the issue of grounds maintenance at Whin Park had been taken up at ward level and the Head of Environmental and Amenity Services and the Amenities Manager (South) would be in attendance at the Ward Business Meeting on Monday 25 November.

Thereafter, the Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the intended purpose of these strategic sports facilities in supporting future growth in the City and the steps towards delivery;
- ii. **AGREED** the funding of £25,000 from developer contributions towards the delivery of the Torvean Park project as detailed in paragraph 5.4 of the report;
- iii. **AGREED** in principle to the funding of £250,000 of developer contributions towards the delivery of the Inverness Campus Sports Pitch as detailed in paragraph 6.3 of the report, and subject to confirmation from partners on the arrangements for community use and compatibility with the aspirations of Craig Dunain Rugby Club; and
- iv. **AGREED** that more detailed information on the proposed design of the strategic sports facilities be provided by way of a Members' Briefing.

## 7. Town Centre Fund Maoin Meadhan a' Bhaile

**Declaration of Interest – Mr K Gowans declared a non-financial interest in this item as an employee of UHI 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/54/19 dated 12 November 2019 by the Chief Executive Officer Transformation and Economy.

The Depute Provost explained that, at its meeting on 7 November 2019, the Environment, Development and Infrastructure (EDI) Committee had agreed to defer any approval of funding to Inverness projects, and that the Inverness projects proposed to receive support from the Town Centre Fund be brought to the City of Inverness Area Committee for ranking. The agreed governance for decisions on the projects sat with the Town Centre Working Group and the EDI Committee.

He was aware there was a wish to consider the full range of projects within the paper and, should the Committee decide to rank any projects that were considered ineligible, he had been advised that these would need to be agreed by the EDI Committee. Given that there were no meetings of the EDI Committee or its successor until the beginning of February 2020, any such recommendation would go to Council as a starred item.

He emphasised that the Committee was not here to discuss the process, and that the focus must be on how to move forward. It was a fantastic opportunity to support a range of projects in the city and area, and it was necessary to concentrate on the projects and make recommendations as time was pressing.

During discussion, Members raised the following issues:-

- the deferral of the Inverness projects to allow consideration by the City of Inverness Area Committee was welcomed;
- concern was expressed that the eligibility criteria had not been applied consistently;
- it was necessary to take a wider view of what constituted a town centre and not look purely at Inverness town centre;
- the need for any projects submitted to have all funding in place was emphasised;
- there were lessons to be learned from the process and, if Town Centre Funding became available in the future, it was suggested that more innovative projects could be found that would help people who were vulnerable, lonely, isolated or housebound; and
- if any of the projects submitted were not accepted the funding should be reallocated to one of the approved Inverness projects.

Thereafter, having debated the merits or otherwise of individual projects, the Committee **AGREED** that the following projects be submitted for consideration for Town Centre Funding with the proviso that if any of the projects were not accepted the funding be reallocated to one of the approved Inverness projects:-

Midmills Phase 2 (WASPS) - £160,000  
 The Victorian Market - £250,000  
 The Pavilion, Cromal Hill, Ardersier - £40,000  
 Fisherman's Hut, Bught Park - £20,000  
 Inverness Campus Sports Pitch – £126,901

Following the conclusion of the item, Members commented that it was necessary to ensure such a situation did not happen again. There appeared to be confusion regarding what constituted a town centre within the City of Inverness Area and, the need for a proper definition having been emphasised, it was suggested that officers should liaise with their counterparts in the Scottish Government to ensure that there was no confusion in the future. It was further suggested that the Committee agree to ensure that town centre plans existed that reflected investment priorities for the City of Inverness Area in future. Support was expressed in that regard, and it was confirmed that the request would be noted in the Minutes.

## **9. Inverness Common Good Fund Maoin Math Coitcheann Inbhir Nis**

### **(a) Financial Monitoring and Capital Projects Sgrùdadh Ionmhasail agus Pròiseactan Calpa**

There had been circulated Report No. CIA/56/19 dated 7 November 2019 by the Inverness City Area Manager.

The Inverness City Area Manager drew attention to the revised Appendix 2 that had been circulated, which showed an estimated variance of £40k in respect of the Victorian Market Academy Street entrance. In that regard, it was explained that the £30k grant from the Townscape Heritage Fund had yet to be claimed. That was in process and thereafter the estimated variance was likely to be in the region of £7.5k.

During discussion, Members commented that it was useful to have the information provided in the monitoring statement. However, some of the budgets were quite large and, whilst it was appreciated that further information on some aspects, such as Events and Festivals and Common Good Grants, was reported to the relevant Working Group/Sub-Committee, it was suggested that it would be helpful, in future reports, to provide a more detailed breakdown of expenditure. The Inverness City Area Manager confirmed that he would explore the possibility with finance officers.

Thereafter, the Committee

- i. **NOTED** the financial monitoring report to 31 October 2019 and that overall expenditure was within agreed budgets;
- ii. **NOTED** the current status of capital projects; and
- iii. **AGREED** that the possibility of providing a more detailed breakdown of expenditure in future reports be explored with finance officers.

### **(b) Inverness Common Good Fund – Annual Report 2018/19 Fo-Chomataidh Maoin Math Coitcheann Inbhir Nis – Aithisg Bhliadhnail 2018/19**

There had been circulated Joint Report No. CIA/57/19 dated 5 November 2019 by the Executive Chief Officer Resources and Finance and the Inverness City Area Manager.

The Committee **NOTED** the final monitoring report and balance sheet for the Inverness Common Good Fund as at 31 March 2019.

**(c) Grants Applications over £10,000**  
**Iarrtasan Tabhartais thar £10,000**

**Declaration of Interest – Mr A Graham declared a non-financial interest in the application by Blysthwood Care as a family member was a volunteer for Blysthwood 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/58/19 dated 5 November 2019 by the Inverness City Area Manager. A copy of supporting documentation had been circulated as Booklet A.

The Committee:-

i. **APPROVED** the following applications for funding:-

Inverness Men’s Shed - £27,554  
 Blythswood Care - £20,000; and

ii. **NOTED** that the Grants Budget for 2019/20 had been fully allocated and no new applications would be accepted for grants until the 2020/21 budget was approved by the Committee in early 2020.

**(d) Inverness City Arts - Annual Report**  
**Ath-sgrùdadh Bliadhnail/Plana-gnìomh Ealain Baile Inbhir Nis**

There had been circulated Report No. CIA/59/19 dated 11 November 2019 by the Acting Head of Policy.

The Depute Provost explained that the report provided a general update on the Inverness River Art Project Programme but specifically updated Members on the actions following the Special Meeting of the City of Inverness Area Committee in August 2019.

The decisions taken that day included officers exploring how to increase access to the My Ness art piece. Work had been ongoing with the contractors and the Principal Project Manager would provide a short presentation on that work, including the costings. He would also provide an update on the proposals to re-site the Rest Spaces piece.

The Principal Project Manager then provided a presentation as described, following which the Depute Provost reminded Members that they were being asked to note the updates provided to deliver on the recommendations from the City of Inverness Area Committee in August. This included that work was ongoing to address the additional funding required.

During discussion, Members raised the following issues:-

- in relation to the Gathering Place/My Ness, an assurance had been given that the final design would be fully accessible but it appeared that execution had

fallen short of ambition. The report stated that the design had been revised to allow a turning circle of 1500mm. However, the Department of Transport's access guidelines stated that for a 180 degree turn the minimum space should be 1600mm by 2000mm, and that users of electric scooters and large electric wheelchairs may require more space. The Countryside for All Good Practice Guide suggested 2000mm by 2000mm, increasing to 2100mm for mobility scooters. It therefore appeared that the improvements would still leave the artwork inaccessible to people who used wheelchairs and other mobility aids. It had been explained that the path started at 900mm, widening to 1500mm. Even if it was considered that 1500mm provided a turning circle there was no room to pass. Moray Council's Inclusive Design Handbook suggested passing places should be at least 1800mm by 1800mm at reasonable intervals to allow wheelchairs to pass. Concern was expressed regarding people in wheelchairs being made to feel like they were holding everyone up while they enjoyed the artwork, and it was suggested that those faced with that possibility would not bother visiting. It was also questioned whether a 900mm path was wide enough for a visually impaired person guided by a sighted person. Furthermore, concern was expressed regarding the sloping parts of the path and it was queried whether they were all below the 1:12 incline recommended in the guidelines. If an Equality Impact Assessment involving equality groups and people with lived experience had been carried out at the start of process the design would have been compliant and there would be no requirement for additional funding for accessibility improvements. Only now that a considerable amount of funding had been spent had there been what was described in the report as "informal consultation" with the disbanded Inverness Access Panel and, had the Access Panel been operational and the full range of disability representatives present, it was questioned whether it would have agreed that the structure was accessible. The Council had a legal duty to ensure that the artwork was fully accessible, and it was suggested that it was not only about compliance but about making everyone feel genuinely included. The Chief Executive had spoken about the reputational damage to the Council of calling a halt to the project but it was contended that the Council failing to meet its equality duty would also cause reputational damage;

- information was sought, and provided, on whether the possibility of leaving the turning circle as it was and putting a turning "bulb" at the end had been explored, and the length of the cantilever. The most cost-effective design was a gradual increase in the cantilever section;
- in relation to the proposed bench on the opposite side of the river from the Fisherman's Hut, concern was expressed that the 45 degree bank was unsafe for young children. It was confirmed that a health and safety assessment had been carried out and the structure would not be on a 45 degree angle;
- public art was designed to fit into the area it was going to be displayed in, and relocating the Rest Space structure from its original intended site to the proposed old golf course site would render it nothing more than an ornamental piece. It was confirmed that the proposed location had been agreed with the artist;
- concern was expressed that, had it not been agreed that The Trail and the Children's Water Feature could no longer proceed, the project deficit would be closer to £92k, and information was sought, and provided, on how the budget had come to be in such a position;

- there was considerable disquiet amongst the local community about the effects of the project, particularly the environmental impact, and the incremental changes that were being introduced were adding to the disquiet;
- given that work had not yet started, it was questionable whether the project would be completed within the 12 to 18 month period previously agreed by the Committee;
- concern having been expressed that costs were not being contained as agreed by the Committee on 20 August 2019, the Depute Provost emphasised that no further expenditure had been committed;
- it was queried whether it was still the position of the Council that cancelling the project would cost an additional £190k;
- given the issues raised in terms of accessibility, confirmation was sought that the My Ness design was compliant with equalities legislation;
- thanks were expressed to officers and the Inverness City Arts Working Group for their continued work in what had been an extremely difficult time;
- many of the points raised had been discussed at the briefing session that had taken place, and Members were reminded that any Member could attend the Inverness City Arts Working Group or approach the Chair and/or officers to seek further information;
- continuing to the change the parameters would lead to further expenditure being incurred;
- officers had done what was requested of them at the Special Meeting of the Committee in August, and it was necessary to note the Annual Report, move forward, finish the project in what was now a challenging timescale, and learn from the process;
- it was questioned whether Members were the right people to take forward any future public art projects, and it was suggested that there might be merit in a joint group comprising some Councillors, members of the public, local businesses etc;
- it was necessary to make the artwork as inclusive as possible without committing any additional funding; and
- in the event that external funding could not be obtained, it was queried whether it would be within legislation to revert back to the original design.

In responding to the points regarding accessibility, the Principal Project Manager confirmed that both the original and revised My Ness designs complied with equalities legislation as it applied to public art. The proposed 1500mm turning circle was the industry standard, and the sloping sections of the path were all below the maximum 1:12 incline recommended. The requirement to provide passing places only applied to footpaths greater than 50 metres in length. In relation to whether the path was wide enough for a visually impaired person to be guided, written confirmation had been received from members of the disbanded Inverness Access Panel that they were comfortable with the proposals. It was also confirmed that the original proposals had been considered by the Inverness Access Panel.

Following discussion, Ms E Knox, seconded by Mrs G Campbell-Sinclair, **MOVED** to defer signing off on the final design until the accessibility issues now raised were addressed to ensure maximum accessibility, namely, to ensure a turning circle of 2000mm by 2000mm and regular passing places of 1800mm by 1800mm.

As an **AMENDMENT**, Mr J Gray, seconded by Mrs C Caddick, moved that the Committee note the report as recommended.

On a vote being taken, the **MOTION** received 6 votes and the **AMENDMENT** received 13 votes, with 2 abstentions. The **AMENDMENT** was therefore **CARRIED**, the votes having been cast as follows:-

**For the Motion:**

Mr B Boyd, Mrs G Campbell-Sinclair, Mr K Gowans, Ms E Knox, Mr R MacWilliam and Ms E Roddick.

**For the Amendment:**

Mr I Brown, Mrs C Caddick, Mr A Christie, Mr G Cruickshank, Mrs M Davidson, Mr A Graham, Mr J Gray, Mrs I MacKenzie, Mr D Macpherson, Mrs E McAllister, Mrs T Robertson, Mr G Ross and Mr C Smith.

**Abstentions:**

Miss J Campbell and Mr A Jarvie.

**Decision**

The Committee **NOTED**: -

- i. the report;
- ii. the adjustments required for the Inverness River Art Project Programme to meet the recommendations agreed at the Special Committee in August 2019;
- iii. that officers would explore further options with partners to fund the required changes to the programme; and
- iv. thanked Creative Scotland and other partners for their continuing support for the Project Programme.

**10. Street Naming Report  
Aithisg Ainmeachadh Sràide**

There had been circulated Report No. CIA/60/19 dated 4 November 2019 by the Inverness City Area Manager.

The Committee **AGREED**:-

- i. to homologate one new street name for housing development in Drummond as Drummond Hill;
- ii. to homologate one new street name for housing development in Slackbuie as Rothes Place;
- iii. one new street name for housing development in Culloden West as Urchal Park; and
- iv. three new names for distributor roads: Milton of Leys Road, MacAskill Drive and Slackbuie Brae.

**11. Minutes  
Geàrr-chunntas**

There had been circulated Minutes of Meetings as follows: -

- i. Victorian Market Stakeholder Management Group held on 13 August 2019 and 10 September 2019 – **NOTED**;
- ii. City of Inverness Area Committee held on 20 August 2019 and 29 August 2019 for noting – **NOTED**;
- iii. Inverness City Arts Working Group held on 27 August 2019, 17 September 2019 and 6 November 2019 for approval – **NOTED**; and
- iv. Inverness Common Good Fund Grants Sub-Committee held on 4 November 2019 for approval – **APPROVED**.

It was further **NOTED**, in relation to the Declaration of Interest at item 11 a) of the Minutes of the City of Inverness Area Committee on 29 August 2019, that Mrs T Robertson was not the Chair of the Special Needs Action Project but rather it was a family member.

The meeting ended at 4.00 pm.

## The Highland Council

Minutes of Meeting of the **Nairnshire Committee** held in the Chamber, The Courthouse, High Street, Nairn, on Wednesday 27 November 2019 at 10.30 am.

### Present:

Mr L Fraser  
Mr T Heggie

Mrs L MacDonald  
Mr P Saggars

### In attendance:

Mrs A Clark, Acting Head of Policy, Chief Executive's Office  
Mr W Munro, Interim Ward Manager, Chief Executive's Office  
Mr R MacLeod, Principal Housing Officer, Community Services  
Mrs L Dunn, Principal Administrator, Chief Executive's Office

### Also in attendance:

Mr D Wilson, Scottish Fire & Rescue Service (Item 3)

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

### Mr T Heggie in the Chair

#### Preliminaries

Prior to the commencement of the formal business, the Chair advised that the press would be allowed to record the meeting since it was a committee meeting held in public and was not webcast. The Chair also welcomed the Interim Ward Manager, Mr Munro to his first meeting of the Committee.

#### Business

##### 1. Apologies for Absence

There were no apologies for absence.

##### 2. Declarations of Interest

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

Item 5 – Mr L Fraser (non-financial)

##### 3. Scottish Fire and Rescue Service – Local Committee Performance Report for 2019-20 Seirbheis Smàlaidh agus Teasairginn na h-Alba – Aithisg Coileanaidh na Comataidh Ionadail airson 2019-20

There had been circulated Report No N/**19**/19 dated 26 October 2019 by the Local Senior Officer for Highland (Scottish Fire and Rescue Service).

During discussion, the following main points were raised:

- A request was made for the number of deliberate fires that had taken place during October 2019;
- Overall the performance results were excellent and demonstrated the positive impact being achieved as a result of the targeted engagement work and collaborative working with key partners such as Police Scotland and Community Wardens;
- Further information was sought and provided in relation to equipment upgrades and vehicle replacements; and
- It was requested that the Committee's appreciation be conveyed to the local fire fighters for their diligent work and their commitment to the safety of the community.

Thereafter, the Committee **NOTED** the Area Performance Report and **AGREED** to report back to the Committee on the number of deliberate fires during October 2019.

#### 4. Nairn Common Good Fund

##### a. Audited Accounts, Annual Report 2018/19 and Quarter 2 Monitoring 2019/20 Report

##### Maoin Math Coitcheann Inbhir Narann – Cunntasan Sgrùdaichte, Aithisg Bhliadhnaile 2018/19 agus Aithisg Sgrùdaidh Cairteil 2 2018/19

There had been circulated Joint Report No N/20/19 dated 15 November 2019 by the Executive Chief Officer Resources and Finance and Acting Head of Policy.

During discussion, the following key points were raised:

- The Committee was informed that the resurfacing works at the Riverside car park were not yet fully complete and it was anticipated that these would be concluded in the coming weeks. It was further highlighted that although this was an experimental surface that had been used, it was felt that this would be a more permanent solution thus provide wider community benefit, reduce maintenance costs, and could potentially be used in other areas across the Highlands;
- Further information was requested on when the Asset Register would be published; and
- It was reported that an investment fund (currently valued at £532,000) had been established and it was intended to continue to build on this until it could provide a meaningful annual income which could then be dispersed to support local projects.

The Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the Nairn Common Good Fund Annual Report for 2018/19;
- ii. **NOTED** the position of the Nairn Common Good Fund and outturn as shown in the 2019/20 Quarter 2 monitoring statement against budget;
- iii. **AGREED** to homologate the decision taken to accept the offer from Springfield Properties to resurface the Riverside car park; and
- iv. **NOTED** that the Asset Register publication date would be circulated to the Committee.

**b. Nairn Links Development Plan – Phase 1 Splash Pad Update  
Plana Leasachaidh Fighdeach Inbhir Narann – Fios às Ùr mu Cheum 1  
‘Splash Pad’**

There had been circulated Joint Report No N/21/19 by the Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure and Environment and Acting Head of Policy.

During discussion, the Committee raised the following main points:-

- The Council had been very proactive in taking this project forward and appreciation was expressed for their support and also their support towards the internal project management costs of £25,000;
- In addition to being responsible for the ongoing maintenance, the Nairn Common Good Fund should also make long term provision for future replacement of the equipment at the conclusion of its lifespan of 25 years. This would affect the ability of the Common Good Fund to support other projects therefore alternative methods of income generation must be considered and it was anticipated that proposals in this regard would be presented to a future meeting;
- Concern was expressed that the lifespan of the project was too short in comparison the current paddling pool which had been in existence for the past 75 years; and
- It was queried whether the Splash Pad came with an Insurance Backed Guarantee.

Thereafter, the Committee:

- i. **NOTED** the update on the Splash Pad development, including the business plan;
- ii. **AGREED** that £100,000 be committed from the Nairn Common Good Fund towards phase 1 of the Nairn Links Development Plan;
- iii. **AGREED** that the ongoing maintenance for the Splash Pad be met from the Common Good Fund; and
- iv. **NOTED** that confirmation would be provided on whether the Splash Pad came with an Insurance Backed Guarantee.

**5. Housing Performance Report – 1 April 2019 to 30 September 2019  
Aithisg Coileanaidh Taigheadais – 1 Giblean 2019 gu 30 Sultain 2019**

**Declaration of Interest: Mr L Fraser declared a non-financial interest in this item as a Sub-Contractor for the Housing Service in Nairn but, having applied the test outlined in Paragraphs 5.2 and 5.3 of the Councillors’ Code of Conduct, concluded that his interest did not preclude his involvement in the discussion.**

There had been circulated Report No N/22/19 dated 6 November 2019 by the Executive Chief Officer Customer and Communities.

During discussion, the following main points were raised:

- It was queried how many people/families had to move out of the local area to access temporary emergency accommodation;

- It was highlighted that the time for repairs had been consistently good and it was queried whether the model being used in Nairn could be replicated across the Highlands;
- The work of local Tenant Participation Officer was commended;
- The need for more affordable housing in Nairn had been emphasised at a recent community council meeting and Members indicated their desire to work collaboratively to achieve this for the development of the community; and
- Assurance was provided that early intervention/escalation measures were implemented in regard to Rent Arrears and appreciation was expressed for the work undertaken by staff to support tenants in this regard.

The Committee **NOTED** the information provided on housing performance for the period 1 April to 30 September 2019.

#### **6. Minutes of Previous Meeting Geàrr-chunntas na Coinneimh Roimhe**

There had been circulated and **NOTED** the Minutes of Meeting of the Nairnshire Committee held on 11 September 2019, which were approved by the Council on 31 October 2019.

The meeting concluded at 11.25am.

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**The Highland Council**

Minutes of Meeting of the **Audit and Scrutiny Committee** held in the Council Chamber, Council Headquarters, Glenurquhart Road, Inverness on Thursday, 28 November 2019 at 10.30am.

**Present:**

Mr G Mackenzie	Mrs A MacLean
Mr G Adam	Mr D Macpherson
Mrs J Barclay	Mrs M Paterson
Mr B Boyd	Mr P Siggers
Mr R Bremner (v/c)	Mr B Thompson (v/c)
Mrs M Davidson	

**Non-Members also present:**

Mr K Gowans

**Officials in Attendance:**

Ms C McDiarmid, Executive Chief Officer – Communities and People  
Ms K Lackie, Executive Chief Officer – Performance and Governance  
Ms L Denovan, Executive Chief Officer – Resources and Finance  
Mr S Fraser, Head of Corporate Governance  
Miss D Sutherland, Corporate Audit Manager  
Ms E Johnston, Corporate Audit & Performance Manager  
Mr J Campbell, Senior Auditor  
Ms S McKandie, Benefits and Welfare Manager  
Mr A Gunn, Head of Revenues and Customer Services  
Ms N Grant, Interim Head of Education  
Ms F Cameron, Programme Manager (LEADER Programme)  
Ms W Anderson, Highland LEADER Programme Administrator  
Ms C Campbell, Head of Performance and Resources  
Ms E Barrie, HR Manager  
Mr D Goldie, Head of Housing and Building Maintenance  
Mr M Mitchell, Finance Manager (Community Services/Development and Infrastructure)  
Mr C Mackenzie, Insurance Officer  
Mr Paul Hankinson, Senior Auditor  
Miss J MacLennan, Democratic Services Manager  
Ms M Zavarella, Administrative Assistant

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

**Mr G MacKenzie in the Chair**

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

Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of Mr R Balfour, Mr D Louden and Mr S Mackie.

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

Item 4 – Mrs M Davidson (Non-Financial)

## **3. Internal Audit Reviews and Progress Report – 01/06/19 – 06/09/19 Ath-bhreithneachaidhean In-sgrùdaidh agus Aithisg Adhartais**

There had been circulated Report No. AS/18/19 dated 18 November 2019 by the Corporate Audit Manager which summarised the final reports issued since the date of the last meeting, together with details of work in progress and other information relevant to the operation of the Internal Audit Section as follows:-

### **Care and Learning – Provision of Early Learning and Childcare Services (Reasonable Assurance)**

During discussion, information was sought and received by Members in relation to the following issues:-

- the recording of childcare usage and collection of income;
- the information being provided for parents/carers at the point where care began;
- the process to identify pupils due to transition and methods of communication to be used to ensure that any issues were identified prior to transition; and
- the lack of systems within the Council to prevent overpayments being made by parents which was an issue which had been outstanding for some time.

### **Care and Learning – Pupil Equity Fund (Substantial Assurance)**

(No issues raised at the meeting)

### **Development & Infrastructure – LEADER Programme 2018-19 (Substantial Assurance)**

During discussion, Members noted that LEADER funding was now fully committed and this was welcomed.

It was also highlighted that this Programme would be a great loss to communities, and especially young people, across the Highlands and thanks were conveyed to the Officers concerned for the excellent work which had been undertaken in previous years.

### **Corporate Resources – Review of Insurance Arrangements (Reasonable Assurance)**

During discussion, information was sought and received by Members in relation to the following issues:-

- the previous lack of assurance that all vehicles hired by the Council had been recorded on the MID database and so had been properly insured although it was noted that this issue was now being addressed;

- the need for checks to be undertaken on drivers of Council vehicles in relation to such issues as health, previous driving offences, etc;
- the value of the Council's Insurance Fund, including claims pad and reimbursements received;
- the current arrangements in place in respect of commercial tenants;
- the Council's Duty of Care in regard to employees and specifically drivers of vehicles hired by the Council; and
- the need for further information on the Management Briefings arranged by the Council in this regard.

### **Corporate Resources – Review of Absence Management Arrangements (Limited Assurance)**

During discussion, information was sought and received by Members in relation to the following issues:-

- the need for further information in relation to how/where/when Return to Work Interviews were undertaken and whether there were any specific geographical or Service issues in this respect;
- whether there was any connection between the location of absences and the level of spend on recruitment in such locations;
- the need for a further formal follow-up review on this issue at an early date;
- discussion to be undertaken by the Leader of the Council with the Chief Executive and Executive Chief Officers as a matter of priority;
- the need for a clear understanding and related reporting arrangements in connection with current levels of absence across the Council;
- the importance of Return to Work Interviews being supportive and not challenging for employees;
- the disappointing comparison between Highland Council and other Local Authorities in Scotland on this issue;
- the reasons being put forward by employees, including teachers, for illness, semi-retirement and full retirement;
- the limited implementation of recommendations which had been presented following a scrutiny review on this issue in 2017 and the role for Executive Chief Officers in recognising and identifying future trends in this regard;
- the concern about the workload for teachers which would now be overseen by Executive Chief Officers in future;
- the regulations around employees who were absent from Council work but employed elsewhere in terms of a 'second job'; and
- the need for a strong recognition that the most important people in the Council were the frontline staff and the duty of care which was required in this regard.

### **Community Services – Investigation into Missing Housing Income (System Weaknesses) (Limited Assurance)**

(No issues raised at the meeting).

### **Update from the Vice Chair - City Region Deal**

A verbal summary was provided by the Vice Chair of the Committee in relation to recent progress on the City Region Deal during which it was confirmed that two meetings of the City Region Deal Monitoring Group had now been held in August

and November and good progress had been made across a range of issues, including Scottish Government update reports and the RAG system for individual projects.

As such, future meetings would be timetabled and held quarterly in 2020.

The position was **NOTED**.

Thereafter, the Committee also **NOTED** the Final Reports referred to in Section 4.1 of the report, the current work of the Internal Audit Section as outlined at Section 5 of the report and details of progress against the plan at Appendix 1.

It was also **AGREED** that - in relation to Corporate Resources – Review of Absence Management Arrangements (Limited Assurance) – there should be a further formal follow-up review on this issue at an early date.

#### **4. Action Tracking Report**

**Declaration of Interest- Mrs M Davidson declared a non-financial interest in this item on the basis that a family member was a Council employee 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.**

There had been circulated Report No. AS/19/19 dated 18 November 2019 by the Corporate Audit Manager.

In this regard, a correction to the report was highlighted at Section 5 (Paragraph 5.1) whereby it was confirmed that the number of actions which had been satisfactorily implemented was 50 (and not 51 as had been stated) and the number of actions not yet implemented and for which revised target dates had been agreed was 20 (and not 19 as stated).

During discussion, and with specific reference to the Review of Burials and Cremations (Policy, Legislation and Processes), it was noted that there had now been a number of delays in addressing this issue. As such, and in expressing disappointment that Members had not had any involvement to date, it was suggested that this whole issue should now be referred to the Redesign Board for detailed consideration.

Thereafter, the Committee **NOTED** the action tracking information which had been provided, including the revised target dates for the completion of outstanding actions.

It was also **AGREED** that all issues pertaining to the review of Burials and Cremations should now be submitted to the Redesign Board for detailed consideration which would also allow input from Members.

#### **5. Corporate Complaints Performance Monitoring**

There had been circulated Report No. AS/20/19 dated 19 November 2019 by the Executive Chief Officer Resources and Finance.

The Committee **NOTED**:-

- i. the Council's 6-monthly performance for Frontline (5 days) and Investigation (10 days) complaints;
- ii. the continued improvement in performance at Frontline and the sustained performance for Investigation against a backdrop of a 17.34% increase in the volume of complaints received; and
- iii. the number of complaints continued to be a low volume (<1%) within the context of the scale of the Council's customer base and the scope of services provided.

## **6. Annual Report of Scottish Public Service Ombudsman Cases determined in 2018/19**

There had been circulated Report No. AS/21/19 dated 18 November 2019 by the Executive Chief Officer Performance and Governance.

The Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the outcomes of the SPSO cases; and
- ii. **NOTED** that actions had been taken in response to the Ombudsman recommendations.

## **7. Members Survey on the Effectiveness of Audit and Scrutiny Committee**

There had been circulated Report No. AS/22/19 dated 18 November 2019 by the Corporate Audit and Performance Manager.

During discussion, it was confirmed that a record was kept of the training which had been completed by individual Members of the Committee and that this would be used in terms of assessing what had been completed and what still needed to be addressed in future.

Thereafter, the Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the key findings of the survey;
- ii. **AGREED** that the survey should continue to be conducted annually;
- iii. **NOTED** that training was under development with modules on internal audit, risk and performance management completed for online learning; and
- iv. **NOTED** that the overall requirements for training would be finalised through the Council's internal Governance Review.

## **8. Regulation of Investigatory Powers (Scotland) Act 2000 (RIPSA)**

It was noted that the Council had made 14 applications for authorisation in terms of the Regulation of Investigatory Powers (Scotland) Act 2000 in the current calendar year.

These applications involved 13 for directed surveillance and 1 for a covert human intelligence source (CHIS).

The Committee **NOTED**:-

- i. the number of applications and that the Council continued to be a modest user of the powers; and
- ii. that a further report would be forthcoming to the March 2020 meeting.

**9. Accounts Commission, How Councils work, Safeguarding public money: are you getting it right?**

There had been circulated Report No. AS/23/19 dated 19 November 2019 by the Corporate Audit and Performance Manager.

The Committee **NOTED**:-

- i. the key messages of the report; and
- ii. the helpful Councillor check-lists throughout the publication which supported Members' scrutiny role.

The meeting ended at 12.46pm.