

634
The Highland Council
No. 8 2019/2020

Minutes of Meeting of the Highland Council held in the Council Chamber, Council Headquarters, Glenurquhart Road, Inverness on Monday, 9 December 2019 at 10.35am.

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

Present:

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

In Attendance:

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

Mr B Lobban in the Chair

Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of Mr B Allan, Mr A Baxter, Mrs G Campbell-Sinclair, Ms K Currie, Mr J Gordon, Mr T Heggie, Mr K Rosie and Mrs C Wilson.

2. Declarations of Interest Foillseachaidhean Com-pàirt

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

- Item 8 – Mr K Gowans (Financial)
- Item 14 – Mr A Christie (Financial)
- Item 18 – Mrs I MacKenzie (Financial)
- Item 19 – Mr A Christie (Non-Financial)

3. Membership of the Council Ballrachd na Comhairle

It was **NOTED** that, following the By-Election held on 14 November 2019, Ms Emma Roddick had been elected as a Member of Ward 14 (Inverness Central).

In this regard, and in welcoming Ms Roddick as a Member of the Council, the position was **NOTED**.

4. Quality Awards Winners and the Apprenticeship Scheme Buannaichean nan Duaisean Inbhe agus an Sgeama Preantasachd

The Council **NOTED** an update on the Quality Awards Winners and the Apprenticeship Scheme which was provided at the meeting and conveyed their congratulations to all those involved.

5. Presentation - Combat Stress

A Presentation was undertaken at the meeting by Mr M Leinster, a Peer Group Support Volunteer from Combat Stress, the UK's leading Charity for Veterans' Mental Health and a unique nationwide Peer Support Service led by veterans for veterans.

In this respect, it was confirmed that the Charity had been set up in 1919 to represent veterans and specifically to provide help with issues such as post-traumatic stress disorder, anxiety and depression.

In acknowledging that it was of vital importance to represent veterans and to provide specialist treatment and support where necessary, it was highlighted that statistics for 2018 confirmed that 15,000 calls had been handled by the Combat Stress helpline and support had been provided for 3121 veterans. This was support for veterans (as opposed to serving soldiers) and it was noted that on average it took a veteran 13 years to ask for help.

For the future, it was vitally important to encourage as many veterans as possible to become involved with Combat Stress and specifically the Peer Support Group. In order to highlight the work being undertaken, the '7 Nights in 7 Cities' initiative was currently being planned for 2020 whereby a 'sleep out' was planned in Inverness, Aberdeen, Glasgow, Edinburgh, Manchester, Birmingham and London and would be undertaken in woods, mountains and hills as opposed to on the streets. Details of this event would be made public in due course and would be publicised on the

Combat Stress Website.

Decision

Having thanked Mr Leinster for the extremely moving and informative presentation, the Council **NOTED** the position on the basis that any issues/questions arising from the presentation could be raised with Mr Leinster during the lunch break.

6. Confirmation of Minutes Daingneachadh a' Gheàrr-chunntais

There had been submitted for confirmation as a correct record the Minutes of Meeting of the Council held on 31 October 2019 and the Minutes of the Special Council Meeting (Planning) held on 22 November 2019 as contained in the Volume which had been circulated separately – which were **APPROVED**.

7. Minutes of Meetings of Committees Geàrr-chunntasan Choinneamhan Chomataidhean

There had been submitted for confirmation as correct records, for information as regards delegated business and for approval as appropriate, the Minutes of Meetings of Committees contained in Volume circulated separately as undernoted which were **APPROVED** – subject to the following:-

Lochaber Area Committee, 6 November - Page 433 - Item 7 – Corran Ferry Service Update –

AGREED to remove the following bullet point from the Minutes – ‘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’.

Ross and Cromarty Committee, 6 November
Environment, Development and Infrastructure Committee, 7 November
Badenoch & Strathspey Committee, 11 November
Sutherland County Committee, 14 November
Caithness Committee, 19 November
Corporate Resources Committee, 20 November
City of Inverness Area Committee, 21 November
Nairnshire Committee, 27 November
Audit & Scrutiny Committee, 28 November

Isle of Skye and Raasay Committee, 2 December – Page 16 of the Supplementary Paper - Starred Item 8 –

AGREED the creation of a Gaelic Medium catchment area for Mount Pleasant Primary School encompassing the whole of the Thurso Associated School Group as detailed in the report.

Care, Learning and Housing Committee, 5 December

8. Town Centre Fund Working Group – Minutes of Meeting

Declaration of Interest – Mr K Gowans declared a financial interest in this item as an employee of Inverness College 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 Minutes of Meeting of the Town Centre Fund Working Group held on 28 November 2019 which were **APPROVED**.

In this regard, the Council **AGREED** as follows:-

- (i) funding for the Pavilion, Cromal Hill, Ardersier (£40k)
- (ii) funding for the Sports Pitch, Inverness College (£126k)
- (iii) funding for the Fisherman's Hut, Bought Park, Inverness (£20k)

**9. 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 12 September 2019 (which had been approved by the Board on 22 November 2019) which were **NOTED**.

**10. Climate Change Panel
Pannal Atharrachadh Gnàth-shìde**

There had been circulated Minutes of Meeting of the Climate Change Panel held on 26 November 2019 which were **APPROVED**.

11. Tourism Working Group/Committee

It was **AGREED** that the current Tourism Working Group should now become a full Committee with an extended membership based on political balance and should take responsibility for tourism and report directly to the full Council.

**12. Membership of Committees/Remuneration and Appointment of new Chairs
Ballarachd Chomataidhean, msaa/Co-dhioladh agus Cur Chathraichean Ùra an Dreuchd**

Membership of Committees

It was **NOTED** that Mr K Gowans had confirmed that he had re-joined the SNP Group and also would now replace Mrs P Munro on the Valuation Joint Board.

On that basis, and following the result of the By-Election for Ward 14 (Inverness Central), it was also **NOTED** that the political make-up of the Council was now as follows: -

Independent – 27/SNP – 21/Scottish Conservatives – 11/Liberal Democrat – 9
Labour – 3/Green Party – 1/Sutherland Independent – 1/Non-Aligned – 1

The formula in respect of the number of places on the new Strategic Committees was now 7/5/3/3.

The Council also **AGREED** the Membership Lists for the new Strategic Committees which had been tabled at the meeting.

It was further **AGREED** that Ms E Roddick should be appointed to the South Planning Applications Committee from Ward 14.

Changes to Senior Councillor Remuneration

It was confirmed at the meeting that there would now be an additional number of Chairs as the Council had agreed to move from 3 to 6 Strategic Committees and Vice Chairs would be unpaid.

The position was **NOTED**.

Appointment of new Committee Chairs

The Council **AGREED** the appointment of the following new Strategic Committee Chairs:-

Corporate Resources Committee – Mr A MacKinnon (Vice Chair – Mr M Reiss)
 Education Committee – Mr J Finlayson (Vice Chair – Mr T Heggie)
 Housing & Property Committee – Mr B Thompson (Vice Chair – Mr M Finlayson)
 Economy & Infrastructure Committee – Mrs T Robertson (Vice Chair – Mr J Gray)
 Health, Social Care & Wellbeing Committee – Ms L Munro (Vice Chair – Ms N Sinclair)
 Communities & Place Committee – Mr A Henderson (Vice Chair – Mr H Morrison)

13. Governance Review **Ath-sgrùdadh Riaghlachais**

There had been circulated Report No. HC/61/19 dated 29 November 2019 by the Chief Executive.

During discussion, it was suggested that, in addition to the recommendation for a separate Committee for Ward 5, and in order to ensure that localism had the confidence of both Members and local communities, there should also be separate Committees for Wards 8&9 and Wards 6&7.

It was also highlighted that there was concern at the cost of these new proposals (which were effectively doubling the number of Strategic Committees and creating additional Local Committees) as it was not considered that the public would think that this was the best use of finances within the Council.

Thereafter, Mr G Adam, seconded by Mrs A MacLean, **MOVED** the creation of additional Local Committees for Ward 5, Wards 6&7 and Wards 8&9.

As an **AMENDMENT**, Mr M Finlayson, seconded by Mrs F Robertson, moved the recommendations as detailed within the report which included one additional Local Committee for Ward 5.

On a vote being taken, the **MOTION** received 35 votes and the **AMENDMENT** received 14 votes, with 13 abstentions, and the **MOTION** was therefore **CARRIED**, the votes having been cast as follows:-

For the Motion:

Mr C MacLeod, Ms P Hadley, Ms L Munro, Mrs D MacKay, Mrs I MacKenzie, Mr G Cruickshank; Mr C Smith, Mr I Brown, Ms E Roddick, Ms E Knox, Mrs M Cockburn, Mr A Jarvie, Mr J Bruce, Mr P Saggars, Mr B Lobban, Ms M Smith, Dr I Cockburn, Mr A MacInnes, Mr C Fraser, Mrs L MacDonald, Mr R Gale, Mr I Ramon, Mr D

MacKay, Mr K Gowans, Mr G MacKenzie, Mr D Louden, Mrs J Barclay, Mr D Rixson, Ms A MacLean, Mr A Graham, Mr A MacKinnon, Mr A Henderson, Mr A Christie, Mr J Gray and Mr R Bremner.

For the Amendment:

Mr R MacWilliam, Ms P Munro, Mr D Macpherson, Mr R Balfour, Mr A Rhind, Mrs T Robertson, Mr D MacLeod, Mr M Finlayson, Mrs F Robertson, Mrs I Campbell, Mrs H Carmichael, Mr R MacDonald, Mr W MacKay and Mr M Reiss.

Abstentions:

Mr N McLean, Mr J McGillivray, Mr S Mackie, Mr A Sinclair, Miss J Campbell, Mr G Ross, Mr L Fraser, Ms N Sinclair, Mr J Finlayson, Mr B Thompson, Mr B Boyd, Mr H Morrison and Mrs M Davidson.

Decision

The Council **AGREED**: -

- (i) the operational arrangements for Sub-Committees, Boards and Working Groups as set out in Appendix 1 to the report and the introduction of annual reporting to the Council as set out in Paragraph 5.2;
- (ii) additional functions and responsibilities for Area Committees as set out in Paragraph 6.3;
- (iii) the resources set out in Paragraph 3.1;
- (iv) the establishment of 3 new Area Committees for Ross & Cromarty – Ward 5, Wards 6&7 and Wards 8&9; and
- (v) the review arrangements as set out in Section 7 of the report.

**14. Director of Public Health (Annual Report)
Stiùiriche Slàinte Phoblach (Aithisg Bhliadhnail)**

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

It was **NOTED** that Dr C Stark and Ms C Steer were in attendance at the meeting to highlight issues contained within the Annual Report from the Director of Public Health.

In this regard, an electronic link to the Annual Report had also been circulated as follows:-

<https://www.nhshighland.scot.nhs.uk/Publications/Documents/DPH-Annual-Report-2019-and-appendices.pdf>

Following presentation of the issues within the report, and during discussion, Members raised the following issues: -

- this was the final report from Dr Hugo Van Woerden and as such there was a need to convey the thanks of the Council to him, not least in regard to his commitment to public health in the Highlands;

- it had to be acknowledged that poor mental and physical health was rooted in poverty and it was therefore imperative that all agencies worked together within communities to identify solutions as and when required;
- the Council's localism agenda could be key in future prevention and it would be helpful if this could be discussed as much as possible through the Community Planning Partnership;
- priority had to be given to issues in relation to rural isolation and deprivation in particular, perhaps through a focused joint strategy from the Council and NHS Highland;
- it would be important for a Seminar to be arranged in order to consider in more detail the issues which were contained within the Annual Report and that feedback was provided thereafter to a Strategic Committee and/or the full Council;
- there was a need for Community Partnerships to be better resourced in future and this should be taken forward as a recommendation in any forthcoming discussions;
- access to vital services and transport in rural areas was often very poor and this, together with fuel poverty, presented particular issues across the Highland area;
- a focus on help for young carers and also on preventing issues arising from isolation experienced by children in the Highlands had to be a priority in terms of future proposals;
- it had already been evidenced that early intervention was key in terms of improving wellbeing and issues surrounding mental health;
- focusing on recruitment challenges in the Highlands was also imperative, particularly in relation to the care sector; and
- many people across the Highlands often had to travel very long distances for medical treatment and all public sector agencies had to work together to find solutions to alleviate this in future at the same time as addressing the other issues which had been raised at the meeting.

Decision

The Council, having thanked Dr Stark and Ms Steer for their attendance, otherwise **NOTED** the terms of the Annual Report and the presentation at the meeting.

15. Question Time Am Ceiste

The following Questions had been received by the Head of Corporate Governance –

(i) Mr A Jarvie

To the Chair of the Corporate Resources Committee

“Please can you provide the VRMs, make, model, most recent odometer readings, purchase and registration dates of all electric cars owned by Highland Council”.

The response had been circulated.

In terms of a supplementary question, it was queried as to what could be done to incentivise greater usage of the Council's electric cars and, if not, could the vehicles not being used be returned to save lease costs.

In response, it was confirmed that usage of these vehicles would be investigated and

the outcome of this would be reported to Members.

(ii) Mr B Thompson

To the Chair of the Corporate Resources Committee

“What reassurance can the Council provide that it is applying discretion where appropriate to the imposition of the 200% Council Tax rate applicable to empty homes? i.e. what proportion of empty homes in Highland currently benefit from a discretionary reduction in the 200% rate and for what reasons has discretion generally been applied?”

The response had been circulated.

In terms of a supplementary question, it was queried whether Council Officers were inspecting properties, including those in the most remote and rural areas of the Highlands, for which a discretionary reduction was being sought.

In response, it was confirmed that Officers inspected properties throughout the whole of the Council area.

(iii) Mrs M Cockburn

To the Leader of the Council

“What measures can be put in place to ensure that any guidance provided by COSLA on matters such as social care delivery are disseminated across all Council Members?”

The response had been circulated.

There was no supplementary question but Mrs Cockburn indicated her willingness to work with the Leader on this issue.

(iv) Mrs M Cockburn

To the Leader of the Council

“Will Highland Council open up a school to give homeless or disadvantaged people a hot meal on New Years’ day?”

The response had been circulated.

There was no supplementary question but Mrs Cockburn indicated her willingness to work with the Leader on this issue.

(v) Mr C Fraser

To the Chair of the Care, Learning & Housing Committee

“Please provide the actual school capacity and actual current school roll for all Highland primary schools as this was omitted from recent Committee reports?”

The response had been circulated.

In terms of a supplementary question, and on the basis that following significant refurbishment Cromarty Primary School currently had two empty classrooms, it was queried why the school was not being used to its full potential.

In response, it was confirmed that this was most likely due to demand within the catchment area and assurance was provided that the space would be utilised if required. Also, any suggestions in regard to improving usage would be welcomed.

(vi) Ms E Roddick

To the Leader of the Council

“Following the motion agreed unanimously by the Council on mental health crisis services at the meeting on 7th September 2017, what plans does the Council have to continue work with NHS Highland to improve services for those who require emergency help with mental health?”

The response had been circulated.

In terms of a supplementary question, it was queried whether the Leader would work with Ms Roddick in addressing crisis services.

In response, the Leader confirmed that she would work with Councillor Roddick to address crisis services, expressed her concern regarding the discharge protocols at New Craigs Hospital and advised that she intended to bring back a stream of work which would be action focused.

(vii) Mr B Boyd

To the Chair of the Care, Learning & Housing Committee

“What steps are being taken to ensure that appropriate and sustainable psychological support is available for our young people who require additional help in schools?”

The response had been circulated.

In terms of a supplementary question, it was queried as to whether there were plans to increase capacity to ensure that early intervention and named psychologist support was available in schools when it was needed.

In response, it was confirmed that the Service would continue to put in as much resource as possible.

(viii) Mr D Loudon

To the Leader of the Council

“Homes with a prepayment electricity meter do not have their prices capped. They pay much more than those paying by direct debit or on invoice despite being the least able to afford it. This difference in price is growing. Will the Highland Council write to the UK Energy Secretary asking in the strongest terms that OFGEM extends the price cap to these customers to tackle fuel poverty?”

The response had been circulated.

(There was no supplementary question).

(ix) Mr R MacWilliam

To the Leader of the Council

“What funding has Highland Council requested from Central Government in respect of Brexit mitigation?”

The response had been circulated.

In terms of a supplementary question, it was queried whether, in 2020, there would be a report setting out the Brexit mitigation measures that the Council would put in place to address the shortfall in funding.

In response, it was confirmed that, in the event that the Council did not receive the grant which was being sought, more information would be provided.

(x) Mr K Gowans

To the Chair of the Environment, Development & Infrastructure Committee

“Does the Administration intend to write Highland Town Centre Plans so that future windfall funding from the Scottish Government’s Town Centre fund or similar schemes can be applied without controversy?”

The response had been circulated.

In terms of a supplementary question, it was queried as to what reassurance could be provided to the people of Inverness that similar windfall funding from the Scottish Government was adequately managed in future.

In response, it was confirmed that, whilst looking forward to future windfall money, there would be no prescriptive changes made to current arrangements.

(xi) Ms M Smith

To the Leader of the Council

“How many biomass plants do we currently operate in our own property stock in the Council and Highlife Highland?”

The response had been circulated.

In terms of a supplementary question, it was queried if a report on the cost benefit analysis and the carbon capture of each scheme could be submitted to the relevant Committee.

In response, it was confirmed that more information would be provided in this regard.

(xii) Dr I Cockburn

To the Leader of the Council

“When will the Members see the report that the Council promised over a year ago to bring to Committee on the modular ideas and designs for our Highland schools?”

The response had been circulated.

In terms of a supplementary question, it was queried whether the Seminar for all the major players in the construction industry in the Highlands was still to go ahead as had been agreed at a previous Environment, Development & Infrastructure Committee meeting.

In response, it was confirmed that the Seminar was to go ahead.

(xiii) Ms P Hadley

To the Leader of the Council

“How is the Council going to sufficiently resource the ambition to realise a carbon neutral Highlands by 2025?”

The response had been circulated.

In terms of a supplementary question, it was queried whether the Leader could bring forward a framework as to how the Council would work collegiately with other Councils, National Parks and NGOs to maximise the effectiveness and value of efforts with regard to combating climate change.

In response, it was confirmed that this was an issue for everyone and involved numerous organisations and as such this request would be passed to the Chair of the Climate Change Panel in the first instance to progress as part of work going forward.

(xiv) Mr S Mackie

To the Leader of the Council

“The landward village of Bower has historically provided students to both Thurso High School as well as Wick.

The Council’s decision to withdraw funding for students wishing to attend Thurso High School in 2018 was met with opposition from the local community and representations from the Bower Community Council as this reversed long standing commitments.

It has been repeatedly cited by families that the decision was made contrary to Scottish Government guidance that states that “someone affected by the decision can have a legitimate expectation that because the policy or procedure has been operated in such a way in the past, that this will continue in the future”.

Given the Highland Council and its immediate and past predecessors, extending over the last half-century, have maintained a policy of local choice for children to attend Thurso High School, it is understandable that there is substantive and legitimate expectation from the local community.

Promises made to the Community Council that fees for school transport would be withdrawn at public meetings have failed to materialise. Instead, the Council has moved from a position of flexibility and openness to find a solution to an enforcement body, with parents threatened with court or debt collection for failure to pay the c.£410 per pupil cost.

Given that the Council must provide transport, if only to facilitate the transport of one pupil, and that Thurso, unlike Wick High School, currently experiences capacity number issues, will you agree to reviewing the decision currently enforced by the Council and make a commitment that the principles of localism will apply to the students and parents of Bower and the surrounding parish as it has done for the previous 50 years?"

The response had been circulated.

In terms of a supplementary question, it was queried whether the Leader could compel the relevant Officer(s) to engage constructively with Bower Community Council in the first instance in order to avoid this issue being escalated to the relevant Committee unnecessarily.

In response, it was confirmed that if this was a change of policy, then the issue would require to follow current procedures, including submission to a Service Committee if necessary. However, if a briefing could be provided, discussion could be undertaken with the Officers concerned and the Chair of the Education Committee.

16. Notices of Motion Brathan Gluasaid

The following Notices of Motion had been received by the Head of Corporate Governance –

(i) Highland Council welcomes the pavement and double parking ban in the forthcoming Transport (Scotland) Act, the Bill for which has now passed Stage 3. Pavement parking can be a severe impediment to wheelchairs, pushchairs and those with limited mobility. In some circumstances dangerous parking can put lives at risk. Those impacted by pavement obstruction rightly expect an immediate, effective response from enforcement agencies – under the current system that has too often not been the case. The approved Bill has the potential to make enforcement much speedier and more effective.

The Council recognises the financial support made available by the Scottish Govt. to enable Councils to prepare for the ban. However enforcement must be cost-effective for local authorities. The geography of the Highlands will likely limit cost-effective implementation of the ban in remote or rural areas. For that reason, the Council will write to Scottish Ministers, calling on them, when making regulations for the implementation of the Bill, to allow the public to submit evidence of parking violations. This could be, for example, by an approved phone app. The intention being to allow local authority parking officers to issue penalty charge or warning notices without the requirement to attend the scene of the contravention. For the avoidance of doubt, parking officers would keep full discretion on whether to issue a PCN, a warning or neither.

Signed: Mr B Thompson Mr A Henderson Mrs M Davidson

In line with Standing Order 12 – no financial cost had been identified by the Executive Chief Officer (Resources & Finance) in relation to the above Notice of Motion.

During discussion, Members raised the following issues: -

- the intention of this Motion was not to commit the Council to any particular course of action but to provide options on the basis that the pavement parking ban would become effective in 2021 and by that time there would have to be a system in place to deal with every complaint in relation to parking;
- the Scottish Government was currently establishing regulations in this regard and it would be essential that the Council was involved in influencing those regulations wherever possible from a Highland perspective;
- it was being assumed that there could be two main options, namely the introduction of CCTV cameras or the requirement for a Council Officer to be in attendance at every traffic violation, and neither option would be satisfactory in the Highlands;
- the general public deserved a quick and efficient response in the future and the intention of the Motion was therefore to ensure that the imminent parking ban was as practical as possible for the Council by suggesting/providing additional options in terms of enforcement;
- it would be imperative to ensure that the needs of disabled persons were taken into account in any future proposals;
- alternatively, it was suggested that there were concerns around the possible restriction of civil liberties in any future proposals and that it should be highlighted that there were already measures in place to deal with dangerous parking;
- it would perhaps be preferable to defer any further consideration to allow discussion at Local Committees in the first instance followed by discussion/debate at Strategic Committee level and thereafter submission of a response to the Scottish Government;
- any future proposals should take account of how the complaints/appeals process would be dealt with in future;
- it was regrettable that Police Scotland had withdrawn Traffic Wardens as that arrangement had worked well in the past and as such it was suggested that Police Scotland should be asked for their views on this matter; and
- consideration should be given as to whether this Motion should be withdrawn meantime to allow more detail to be provided in view of the issues which had been raised at the meeting.

Thereafter, Mr B Thompson, seconded by Mr A Henderson, **MOVED** the terms of the Notice of Motion as detailed – subject to the deletion of the final three sentences.

As an **AMENDMENT**, Mr A Christie, seconded by Miss J Campbell, moved that this issue should be deferred to allow discussion/debate at Local Committees in the first instance.

On a vote being taken, the **MOTION** received 41 votes and the **AMENDMENT** received 15 votes, with 5 abstentions, and the **MOTION** was therefore **CARRIED**, the votes having been cast as follows:-

For the Motion:

Mr R Balfour, Mr B Boyd, Mr R Bremner, Mr I Brown, Mr J Bruce, Mrs C Caddick, Mrs H Carmichael, Dr I Cockburn, Mrs M Cockburn, Mrs M Davidson, Mr J Finlayson, Mr M Finlayson, Mr C Fraser, Mr K Gowans, Mr J Gray, Ms P Hadley, Mr A Henderson, Mr D Loudon, Mrs L MacDonald, Mr A MacInnes, Mrs D MacKay, Mr G MacKenzie, Mr S Mackie, Mr A MacKinnon, Ms A MacLean, Mr C MacLeod, Mr D MacLeod, Mr D Macpherson, Mrs B McAllister, Mr N McLean, Mr H Morrison, Ms L

Munro, Mr M Reiss, Mr D Rixson, Mrs F Robertson, Mrs T Robertson, Mr P Saggars, Mr A Sinclair, Ms N Sinclair, Ms M Smith and Mr B Thompson.

For the Amendment:

Mrs J Barclay, Mrs I Campbell, Miss J Campbell, Mr A Christie, Mr G Cruickshank, Mr R Gale, Mr A Graham, Mr A Jarvie, Mr B Lobban, Mr D MacKay, Mrs I MacKenzie, Mr R MacWilliam, Mr I Ramon, Ms E Roddick and Mr G Ross.

Abstentions:

Ms E Knox, Mr R MacDonald, Mr W MacKay, Mrs P Munro and Mr C Smith.

Decision

Members **AGREED** the following amended Motion:-

Highland Council welcomes the pavement and double parking ban in the forthcoming Transport (Scotland) Act, the Bill for which has now passed Stage 3. Pavement parking can be a severe impediment to wheelchairs, pushchairs and those with limited mobility. In some circumstances, dangerous parking can put lives at risk. Those impacted by pavement obstruction rightly expect an immediate, effective response from enforcement agencies – under the current system that has too often not been the case. The approved Bill has the potential to make enforcement much speedier and more effective.

The Council recognises the financial support made available by the Scottish Government to enable Councils to prepare for the ban. However, enforcement must be cost effective for Local Authorities. The geography of the Highlands will likely limit cost effective implementation of the ban in remote or rural areas. For that reason, the Council will write to Scottish Ministers calling on them, when making regulations for the implementation of the Bill, to allow the public to submit evidence of parking violations.

(ii) That Highland Council agrees to contract the services of an external provider for the purposes of employee whistle-blowing.

Signed: Mr R MacWilliam Ms K Currie

In line with Standing Order 12 – the following financial impact had been identified by the Executive Chief Officer (Resources & Finance) in relation to the above Notice of Motion:-

‘There would be additional costs associated with contracting an external provider. It is not possible to determine the actual costs of this service without a tender exercise and the overall cost would also be dependent upon the number of whistle blowing instances and so on this occasion a competent financial assessment can’t be made within the timescale.

Outsourcing is not necessary nor a cost-effective way to deal with whistle blowing issues.

Work is being undertaken to transfer the management of the Whistle Blowing Policy to Internal Audit and will operate with a confidential email and telephone number for reporting’.

Decision

The Council **NOTED** that the above Notice of Motion had now been **WITHDRAWN**.

(iii) Since HC cut the playpark budget 2 years ago our play areas have been decimated. The equipment has failed and not been replaced meaning that housing estates are crying out for outdoor play for their children. The Administration said at the time that community groups could seek funding from other bodies. In practice this hasn't happened as the public expect the local authority to provide them.

Often outdoor play equipment has a little more risk than indoor toys. Whether it is encouraging children to use slides they might be a little afraid to go down, or to try challenging play trails; outdoor play equipment can help children to learn to push their boundaries and become good at risk assessment. It also teaches them to explore new games and become confident in learning to try new things without being guided by adults.

Being outside means that children naturally get Vitamin D which is proven to help improve moods and create a positive mental attitude. The freedom outdoor play also encourages children to get rid of built up energy, particularly if they tend to be fidgety when sitting for long periods of time, this leads to them becoming calmer and ultimately helps them to be more focused when in the classroom.

It encourages them to use their imagination when learning, they develop better social skills and tap into their creative side.

Council agrees to identify a ring-fenced budget of £10,000 per ward per annum from next financial year to allow our playparks to be restocked and maintained over a 5 year period.

Signed: Ms M Smith Mr D Louden

In line with Standing Order 12 – the following financial impact had been identified by the Executive Chief Officer (Resources & Finance) in relation to the above Notice of Motion:-

'Budget provision of £210K per annum (over £1M across the five years) would be required if this motion is agreed.

The Council currently maintains 435 play areas. Independent inspections on the condition of our play areas was carried out in 2017. Obsolete equipment has been removed and a new repair and maintenance programme has been developed and implemented based on the findings of these inspections. Following decision by council the budget for maintaining these assets was reduced by £212k in 2018/19 (more than half of the budget at £401,814 in 2017/18). It is now £189,212 in 2019/20.

At Council in October it was said the amenities review would include play areas and that it can identify options for making the service more sustainable. This could include rationalising provision, supporting community asset transfers, prioritising repairs further and reviewing workforce arrangements. By agreeing to the motion this would reinstate the saving (£210k per annum) agreed in 2018/19 However Communities Services is currently projecting an over spend projected of £1.1m this year.

Reserves are at an all-time low and below levels recommended by external audit with a challenging financial outlook forecast by the Fraser Allander Institute. Additional savings to off-set this budget request must therefore be agreed'.

During discussion, Members raised the following issues: -

- it had to be highlighted that since the playpark budget had been cut, play areas had been decimated and this had led to a situation whereby new housing estates currently enjoyed new play areas but older estates often now had no provision. As such, this situation now needed to be addressed, not least in terms of equality across the Highland area;
- it was not planned (at this meeting) to identify alternative savings from other areas which could be used to equate to the required expenditure as detailed in the Motion but the SNP Group had already undertaken this exercise and could make details available if necessary;
- whilst agreeing with the sentiment of the Motion, it was considered that the correct time to consider this proposal would be during discussion of the overall Council budget in February/March;
- it was acknowledged that the current system in place was failing and there was concern for individual areas/communities who were dealing with ongoing issues, such as making large payments to external companies for the purchase and installation of play park equipment. As such, it was suggested that there should be a moratorium on any further handing over of play parks to communities until this situation had been resolved;
- it also had to be recognised that often 'natural' play areas (away from established play parks) were often most used;
- there were many deprived areas across the Highlands where there was no play park provision at all and this was likely to have consequences in terms of any future attainment gap;
- consideration should be given as to whether it would be best for this issue to be considered by Local Committees in the first instance;
- the Council had a responsibility to all Wards and communities across the area and there was therefore a need for more detail on this issue before a decision was taken;
- issues of capacity would also have to be taken into account before putting any new policy in place so this would have to be considered as part of the future budget setting process;
- the provision of play areas was increasingly become a 'postcode lottery' and the full budgetary implications of any new proposal would have to be known before taking any further decision on this matter;
- issues of maintenance of existing play areas and the provision of new areas were associated with a sense of civic pride and this was an important factor for any future discussions;
- both the revenue and capital costs of any new arrangement had to be considered as part of the budget process;
- consideration should be given as to whether sponsorship could be pursued in relation to this issue in future; and
- issues such as health, wellbeing and deprivation had to be central to any future policy discussions on this matter.

Decision

The Council **AGREED** the terms of an amended Notice of Motion whereby the final paragraph (of the Motion) was removed and replaced with the following – work should be undertaken by a Sub Committee on this issue with a view to bringing back a playpark budget as part of future budget discussions.

17. Resourcing the Climate & Ecological Emergency

There had been circulated Report No. HC/62/19 dated 3 December 2019 by the Executive Chief Officer, Infrastructure & Environment.

In this regard, the report set out the anticipated resource requirements to meet the increased aspirations of the Council following the declaration of a Climate and Ecological Emergency which included:-

- a short piece of work through external assistance in pulling together the various strands of work underway and matching those against the Scottish Government Programme;
- the appointment of a Climate Change Manager who would be supported by a minimum of 2 Officers;
- completion of carbon baseline work for the region;
- a contribution of £15k for each of the next 3 years to support the employment of a Project Manager to oversee the Highland Adapts initiative; and
- a contribution of £10k to organise and facilitate a Climate Change Seminar in Spring 2020.

Decision

The Council **AGREED** the resource requirements detailed within the report in the total sum of £145k which would be committed from the Council's Change Fund.

It was also **AGREED** that, following contact from Wick High School pupils in particular, cardboard and recycling facilities should be provided within all Schools across the Highland area.

18. Transient Visitor Levy

Declaration of Interest - Mrs I MacKenzie declared a financial interest in this item on the basis of connections with a family business and, having applied the test outlined in Paragraphs 5.2 and 5.3 of the Councillors' Code of Conduct, confirmed that she would leave the Chamber during the discussion.

There had been circulated Report No. HC/63/19 dated 27 November 2019 by the Executive Chief Officer (Transformation & Economy).

During discussion, Members raised the following issues: -

- thanks should be conveyed to the Officers concerned for the work undertaken and the extremely comprehensive report which included a significant level of research on this issue;
- there were many Members in the Chamber who fully supported a 'tourist tax' and were firmly of the view that it would not deter visitors from coming to the area;
- it had to be acknowledged that at present the Council was meeting all costs in relation to issues such as road repairs, car parks, littering offences, etc and whilst tourists brought significant revenue to the Highlands, this did not come directly to the Council;
- it was in fact considered that a transient visitor levy could provide the necessary finance in future to enhance the 'visitor experience' in the Highlands;
- whilst being supportive of the transient visitor levy, it would however be essential that the position was reviewed on an annual basis with a report on whether there was an adverse effect on tourism – if it was the case that there was an issue with

a decrease in future visitor numbers as a direct result of any transient visitor levy, then the position would need to be reconsidered at that time;

- it would be preferable to argue in any future discussions that a transient visitor levy should be set by the Local Authority and not the Scottish Government;
- this research had been undertaken on a much wider basis than previous external surveys and the additional level of detail was welcomed;
- tourism affected everyone in the Highlands in different ways and it was felt that the additional revenue from a transient visitor levy could provide the money required to bring some Highland roads up to an adopted standard in future;
- this had often been referred to as a 'bedroom tax' but this failed to encompass other issues such as the damage to roads and parking areas e.g. in Skye, consideration was currently being given to car parking charges at iconic sites in future;
- there was a need to have some scepticism in relation to survey results as it had been proved in the past that whilst respondents would offer their support for future charges for certain services in a survey, it could often be very different when they were subsequently asked to pay for those services;
- there was also a need for caution when making comparisons with other countries in this regard as the tax situation in those countries was often very different;
- it did appear from the research results that many local businesses were in fact in favour of a transient visitor levy;
- it would be advantageous for all issues in relation to the introduction of a transient visitor levy to be fully considered in the first instance by the Tourism Committee in order to provide a 'Highland perspective' on this issue – this could be followed by a report (with conclusions) being presented to a Strategic Committee or full Council encompassing recommendations on the level of revenue and how it should be distributed;
- any consideration of how this could work was at a very early stage but it was known that the expectation in local communities was that any money raised would be reinvested locally in order to meet infrastructure costs, etc. A clear focus on both consultation and the future criteria to be used in terms of distribution was therefore vital from the outset;
- the data and research which had been provided was very valuable and informative but it also had to be recognised that tourists would often pass through many areas of the Highlands during their stay and this would have to be kept in mind during discussion on future distribution levels;
- the advice from Scottish Government was pertinent regarding overnight stays and it would perhaps be appropriate to start with a modest levy and review the position on an annual basis;
- it was important to note that issues had been raised by the Federation of Small Businesses and the Chamber of Commerce in opposition to the introduction of a transient visitor levy on the basis that, when this was combined with VAT levels, it made the Highlands an expensive destination for tourists;
- it would be possible for a transient visitor levy to be implemented in a variety of ways and this was especially relevant to the Highlands;
- care would need to be taken in the introduction of a levy to ensure that there was no detrimental effect on smaller areas across the Highlands;
- there was concern that the introduction of such a levy would mean that tourist number would decrease in future as this had been the case in some other countries where a levy had been introduced;
- only Edinburgh and the Highlands were considering the introduction of a transient visitor levy at present and it was felt that as an alternative there should instead be a focus on the introduction of parking charges across the Highland area;
- it was imperative that the views of businesses were fully taken into account during future discussions on this issue;

- the Highland Council was currently meeting all costs in relation to the upkeep of the area across a range of services but this could not be sustained indefinitely and the introduction of a levy would produce much needed funds for the tourist experience in future; and
- finding a model which suited the Highlands was paramount and this could only be achieved through partnership working with the Scottish Government, businesses and local communities.

Thereafter, the Convener, seconded by Ms M Smith, **MOVED** the recommendations as listed in the report.

As an **AMENDMENT**, Mr A Jarvie, seconded by Mr P Saggars, moved that the Council should acknowledge the opportunity from the Scottish Government to legislate for a tourist tax but, given the negative impact on such a vital sector, respond to the Scottish Government that it is was opposed to the principle of a tourist tax.

On a vote being taken, the **MOTION** received 44 votes and the **AMENDMENT** received 8 votes, with 3 abstentions, and the **MOTION** was therefore **CARRIED**, the votes having been cast as follows:-

For the Motion:

Mr R MacWilliam, Mrs P Munro, Mr C MacLeod, Ms P Hadley, Mr D Macpherson, Miss J Campbell, Mr G Ross, Ms L Munro, Mrs B McAllister, Mr I Brown, Ms E Roddick, Ms E Knox, Mrs M Cockburn, Mr A MacInnes, Mr C Fraser, Mrs L MacDonald, Ms N Sinclair, Mr J Finlayson, Mr B Thompson, Mrs T Robertson, Mrs C Caddick, Mr R Gale, Mr K Gowans, Mr B Boyd, Mr G MacKenzie, Mr D Louden, Mr H Morrison, Mrs F Robertson, Mrs J Barclay, Mr D Rixson, Mrs A MacLean, Mr A Graham, Mr B Lobban, Ms M Smith, Dr I Cockburn, Mrs H Carmichael, Mrs M Davidson, Mr A MacKinnon, Mr A Henderson, Mr A Christie, Mr J Gray, Mr R Bremner, Mr R MacDonald and Mr N McLean.

For the Amendment:

Mr R Balfour, Mr D MacLeod, Mr I Ramon, Mr D MacKay, Mr A Jarvie, Mr J Bruce, Mr P Saggars and Mr A Sinclair.

Abstentions:

Mrs I MacKenzie, Mr G Cruickshank and Mr C Smith.

Decision

Members **AGREED**: -

- i. the written response to the Scottish Government consultation as set out in Appendix 4;
- ii. the support for a Transient Visitor Levy in Highland evidenced in the online and face-to-face surveys but also the observations on impact and design made across the consultation;
- iii. that this evidence constituted a mandate to introduce a Highland TVL and committed to further consideration of how such a scheme might be designed and implemented in order to reflect the views given in the consultation and to mitigate any potential negative impacts;
- iv. to incorporate the views from the Highland consultation in a series of design principles which would be used in the Council response to, and subsequent engagement with, the Scottish Government;

- v. that a Highland TVL should be able to be applied in ways other than just a 'bed tax' on those staying in paid overnight accommodation.
- vi. that Highland residents but not residents from other parts of Scotland should be exempted from paying a Highland TVL;
- vii. to continue to work with the Scottish Government wherever possible to help shape other elements of the national approach to reflect the region's needs and the results of the Highland consultation;
- viii. to commit to the following principles in relation to the investment of revenue from a Highland TVL scheme, if implemented:
 - ring-fencing revenue to 'tourism uses' as sought in all elements of the Consultation and outlined in the Scottish Government National Consultation;
 - acknowledging the Consultation results in relation to investing TVL revenue and use these, along with working with Scottish Government and local partners, to help determine what constitutes 'tourism uses' and how these are defined for Highland;
 - exploring how some TVL revenue might be ring-fenced for use in the area of Highland in which it is raised, including representing the need for this to Scottish Government so that legislation allows this, and investigating logistical and financial implications of different models; and
- ix. that Officers work with the Council's Tourism Committee on the detail of a scheme with a view to producing a series of recommendations on the design of a scheme that would be brought back to a future meeting of the Council for approval.

19. Highland Armed Forces Community Covenant Update Aithisg Bhliadhnaidh Cùmhnant nam Feachdan Armaichte

There had been circulated Report No. HC/64/19 dated 25 November 2019 by the Acting Head of Policy.

Declaration of Interest – Mr A Christie declared a non-financial interest in this item as General Manager of Inverness, Nairn, Badenoch & Strathspey Citizens Advice Bureaux 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.

During discussion, Members raised the following issues:-

- there had been a number of positive achievements over the past year in a number of areas, including education and health, and this was welcomed;
- thanks should be conveyed to the staff involved in this work and particularly Dot Ferguson, Lou Kinnear and Jo Lenihan;
- specifically, the work undertaken through the Military Liaison Group was regarded as an example of 'best practice';
- every Combat Unit now had a firm base which was a very positive development, not least for family stability and uptake of employment opportunities, although lack of availability of suitable housing stock continued to be a problem;
- there was a need to highlight the excellent work being undertaken through the Action Plan in terms of delivering on the agreed outcomes surrounding the economy, children and young people, caring communities, housing and empowering communities;

- NHS Highland had received a second Libor Grant of £1.02m to provide continued support for veterans and this was warmly welcomed;
- In thanking those involved for the excellent work in the promotion of positive outcomes, there was a need for liaison with other Service Charities in order to identify potential future opportunities;
- thanks should also be conveyed to Cadets and Adult Volunteers for the invaluable work which they continued to undertake; and
- there was a need for more tailored local training to be put in place and the potential for a Creative Forces Day to be held in the Highlands in future would be a very positive step in this respect.

Decision

Members **NOTED**: -

- (i) the considerable progress made with partners over the past 14 months across a range of activities which supported the Armed Forces Community Covenant;
- (ii) the creation of a specific Reserves Special Leave Scheme which would be reported to a future Corporate Resources Committee; and
- (iii) that the Council was working towards a submission for the Defence Employer Recognition Scheme Gold Award.

20. Fostering and Adoption: Foster Carer Fees Review and Proposal Altramadh agus Uchd-mhacachd

There had been circulated Report No. HC/65/19 dated 29 November 2019 by the Executive Chief Officer (Health and Social Care).

During discussion, Members raised the following issues:-

- there was a need to welcome progress on this issue but it was hoped that there could be an increase in the number of foster carers in the near future as only 15 out of the 18 foster carers who had left had been replaced to date;
- the proposal in the report should be viewed as a 'spend to save' measure as Highland Council was still in the lowest cluster of Local Authorities in this regard;
- on the basis that there was clear evidence that the life outcomes of a child who remained close to home improved radically, the proposal for a 'fee per child' was warmly welcomed although there was still a need for an increase in the 'allowance' element;
- it was hoped that more people across the Highlands could be encouraged to become involved in foster caring in future;
- it was clearly beneficial for siblings to remain together wherever possible and it was felt that the proposals within the report could enable this to a much greater degree in future;
- congratulations should be extended to Councillor A Jarvie for the considerable level of work which he had undertaken in relation to this issue over recent months;
- it was important that the thanks of the Council were conveyed to current foster carers and that they were made aware of how much they were valued;
- the work of previous and current Officers across the Council was highlighted and it was stressed that 'universal services' would be needed in future whilst working within local communities across the Highlands to meet the increasing demand in this regard;

- prevention and early intervention were key in terms of keeping families together and as such vital links with Community Planning Partners were essential;
- it was suggested that the most important sentence within the report was as follows – ‘Foster Carers are critical to the successful care of looked after children and there is evidence that supports the view that children in foster care achieve better outcomes’;
- it would be helpful if an early report could be submitted to a Strategic Committee on ‘best practice’ which included current and previous work undertaken across the Council in relation to this issue; and
- further information was needed on the potential to increase work placements for teenagers and also on any future proposals around fees for kinship carers.

Decision

The Council **AGREED**:-

- (i) to change Foster Carer fee payments from a fee per household to a fee per child; and
- (ii) to increase Foster Carer fee payments by 20%.

21. Equally Safe at Work Co-ionannachd Sàbhailteachd aig an Obair

There had been circulated Report No. HC/66/19 dated 27 November 2019 by the Executive Chief Officer (Health & Social Care).

During discussion, Members raised the following issues: -

- the positive action which had been detailed in the report was welcomed in relation to promotion of a zero tolerance culture towards gender based violence and in this respect personal examples of such violence were provided at the meeting;
- whilst acknowledging the positive steps being taken, it had to be acknowledged that there was always more that could be done and in this regard further information was needed on what a zero tolerance culture would mean for the range of issues which had been detailed in the Action Plan and specifically those which had not yet been completed;
- it was of particular importance that women were encouraged to stand for elected office and that mentoring schemes were put in place to allow this to be highlighted and progressed;
- in particular, the proposals within the Action Plan to run recruitment campaigns to encourage apprentices into non-traditional gender roles and create shadowing schemes for women in non-traditional gender and also leadership roles;
- there was a need for further information on opportunities for part-time working and job sharing arrangements at Senior Council Officer and Teaching level;
- consideration should also be given to offering specific training on awareness of gender based violence and domestic abuse to Members of the Highland Licensing Board and Highland Licensing Committee;
- the proposal to seek invitations from Elected Members to champion the work of Officers to progress gender equality at Highland Council was welcomed; and
- it would be beneficial to also include male mentors in this work in future.

Decision

The Council:-

- (a) **AGREED** that invitations should be sought from Members to champion the work of Officers to progress gender equality at Highland Council;
- (b) **AGREED** that Annual Reports should be taken to the Corporate Resources Committee to allow Members to scrutinise and celebrate progress towards accreditation;
- (c) **AGREED** that training and information material should be made available to Members through induction and the Member Development Programme; and
- (d) **NOTED** the progress made to date by the Joint Officer and Trade Union Working Group.

22. Organisational Transformation and Transition Eadar-ghluasadán agus Cruth-atharrachadh

There had been circulated Report No. HC/67/19 dated 3 December 2019 by the Chief Executive.

During discussion, Members raised the following issues:-

- thanks should be conveyed to Officers for the considerable level of work which had been undertaken in relation to the issues within the report which it was expected would produce very positive outcomes for the Council;
- it was important that Highland continued to be a 'listening Council' with continuous improvement over time and that a recognition was given to the fact that the Gaelic language had links with many areas of work;
- it would be essential that any transformation measures did not impact ongoing service delivery in any way, particularly in relation to roads and winter maintenance which were two areas which needed to be strengthened and empowered in future;
- it was highlighted that Fleet had been contained with 'Communities and Place' but also had very strong and obvious links to 'Roads' which had been listed under 'Environment and Infrastructure';
- listing 'Housing & Property' under one heading was welcomed as it was felt that this could deliver improvements in future;
- there was a need to acknowledge the hard work of all staff across the Council and to thank them for their co-operation with these new proposals;
- there should be a strong focus on future proposals for Roads (Strategic and Operational) in order to ensure improvements across areas where there had been difficulties in the past;
- further information on the timeline for and reporting of the review of the Named Person Scheme was required; and
- in regard to Education Transformation, it would be essential to ensure continuous dialogue with staff in order to achieve the aspirations which had been listed in the report.

Decision

The Council: -

- (i) **NOTED** the progress being made with the Organisational Transformation and Transition Programme;

- (ii) **NOTED** the emerging themes and principles for the transformation of Education, Care and Learning arising from engagement with staff, Members and wider stakeholders;
- (iii) **NOTED** the intention to bring detailed structure proposals to Strategic Committees and the Council in the early part of 2020; and
- (iv) **NOTED** the development of the Council's Place-Based strategy and **AGREED** to hold a Members' Seminar early in 2020 to explore the approach in greater depth.

23. Review of the Scheme of Delegation Ath-sgrùdadh dhen Sgeama Riochdachaidh

There had been circulated Report No. HC/68/19 dated 3 December 2019 by the Executive Chief Officer (Performance & Governance).

In this regard, the proposed new Scheme of Delegation had been circulated separately.

Decision

The Council **AGREED**: -

- (i) the revised Scheme of Delegation as circulated;
- (ii) the Climate Change Panel to be re-named the 'Climate Change Working Group' and to report to the Council;
- (iii) the 'Tourism Working Group/Sub Committee' to be re-named the 'Tourism Committee' and report to the Council;
- (iv) the Gaelic Implementation and Strategy Group to be re-named the 'Gaelic Committee' and report to the Council; and
- (v) a Joint Wellbeing Sub-Committee comprising Members of the following Committees – Education, Health, Social Care & Wellbeing, Housing and Communities & Place - to be formally established in March 2020 once the new Committees had met for the first time to discuss and agree membership, a remit and terms of reference.

24. 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 31 October 2019 was available in the Members' Library and on the Council's Website.

The meeting ended at 5.20pm.

659
The Highland Council
No. 9 2019/2020

Minutes of Special Meeting of the Highland Council held in the Council Chamber, Council Headquarters, Glenurquhart Road, Inverness on Thursday, 13 February 2020 at 10.30am.

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

Present:

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

In Attendance:

Chief Executive	Executive Chief Officer, Infrastructure & Environment
Executive Chief Officer, Communities & Place	Executive Chief Officer, Performance & Governance
Executive Chief Officer, Education & Learning	Executive Chief Officer, Property & Housing
Executive Chief Officer, Health & Social Care	Executive Chief Officer, Resources & Finance

Mr B Lobban in the Chair

Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of Mr B Allan, Mr B Boyd, Mr C Fraser, Mr J Gordon, Ms P Hadley, Mrs L MacDonald, Mr C MacLeod, Mrs F Robertson, Mr C Smith and Mrs C Wilson.

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

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

Item 3 – Mr D Rixson (Non-Financial)

Item 7 – Mr A Christie and Mr I Brown (Financial) and Mrs D MacKay (Non-Financial)

URGENT ITEM OF BUSINESS - Prior to the commencement of the formal business, the Convener advised Members that an urgent and confidential item of business would be discussed following the agenda items which had been listed.

3. **Housing Revenue Account – Revenue Estimates 2020/21** **Tuairmsean Teachd-a-steach HRA 2020/21**

Declaration of Interest – Mr D Rixson declared a non-financial interest in this item as the Council nominee on 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 him from taking part in the discussion.

At its meeting on 29 January 2020, the Housing & Property Committee had agreed to make recommendations to the Council in relation to the Housing Revenue Account – Revenue Estimates 2020/21.

In this connection, there had been circulated Extract from the Minutes of the Housing & Property Committee meeting and re-circulated Report No HP/2/20 dated 16 January 2020 by the Executive Chief Officer – Customer and Communities.

At this point, the new Executive Chief Officer for Housing & Property, Mr Mark Rodgers, was also welcomed to his new role within the Council.

Decision

The Council:-

- i. **AGREED** the draft HRA Revenue Budget for 2020/21;
- ii. **AGREED** a 3% increase for council house rents for 2020/21;
- iii. **AGREED** that this percentage increase (3%) be applied to all residential HRA rents and service charges and to Gypsy/Traveller site pitches;
- iv. **AGREED** that non-HRA rents for leased property should be increased as stipulated in existing contracts; and
- v. **NOTED** that a report on the HRA Capital Plan (2022/2027) would be presented to the Housing & Property Committee in April 2020.

4. **Membership of Committees, etc** **Ballrachd na Comhairle**

It was **NOTED** that Mr Ronald MacDonald had tendered his resignation as a Member of the Council with effect from 19 December 2019 and that a By-Election for Ward 10 Eilean a' Cheò would be held on 12 March 2020. In this regard, the thanks of the

Council were conveyed to Mr MacDonald for what had been achieved during his time as a Member and the many attributes which he had brought to the role.

Mr Stuart Black – at this point in the meeting, it was also highlighted that Mr Stuart Black had now left the Council to take up a new position with Highlands & Islands Enterprise. In this respect, the thanks of the Council were conveyed to Mr Black for the extensive work which he had undertaken in his role as Director of Development & Infrastructure and latterly as Executive Chief Officer for Transformation and Economy.

The Council **AGREED** the following - South Planning Applications Committee – Mr J Bruce to replace Ms P Hadley as a Substantive Member (as agreed by Ward 20 Members).

It was also **NOTED** that details of membership for the new Tourism and Gaelic Committees would follow in due course.

5. **Timetable of Meetings** **Clàr-ama Choinneamhan airson**

The Council **AGREED** the following changes to the Timetable of Meetings on the basis that meetings would now be held on the following revised dates –

North Planning Applications Committee – a Special Meeting of the North Planning Applications Committee to be held on Tuesday, 26 May 2020 at 3pm if required.

South Planning Applications Committee – the scheduled meeting on Tuesday, 11 August 2020 to now be moved to Tuesday, 18 August 2020.

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

The Council **AGREED** under Section 50A(4) of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973, that the public should be excluded from the meeting for the following item on the grounds that it involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraphs 6 & 9 of Part 1 of Schedule 7A of the Act.

7. **URGENT ITEM - Confidential Update – NHS Highland**

Declarations of Interest – Mr A Christie and Mr I Brown declared financial interests in this item as a Non-Executive Director and an employee of NHS Highland respectively and left the Chamber prior to discussion.

Mrs D MacKay declared a non-financial interest as a Board Member of NHS Highland and left the Chamber prior to discussion.

Following a confidential update, the Council **AGREED** action to be taken – on the basis that further updates would be provided in due course.

The meeting ended at 12.10pm.

The Highland Council

Minutes of Meeting of the **Housing and Property Committee** held in the Council Chamber, Council Headquarters, Glenurquhart Road, Inverness on Thursday, 29 January 2020 at 10.30am.

Present:

Miss J Barclay	Mr A Jarvie
Miss J Campbell	Mr D Mackay
Mrs G Campbell-Sinclair	Mrs A MacLean
Mr A Christie (substitute)	Mrs F Robertson
Mr B Lobban (substitute)	Ms E Roddick
Mr C Fraser	Mr P Saggars
Mr L Fraser	Mr B Thompson

Non-Members also present:

Mr R Bremner (VC)
 Ms B Campbell
 Mr A Henderson
 Mr D Louden
 Mr D Macpherson
 Mr J McGillivray (VC)

Officials in Attendance:

Mrs C McDiarmid, Executive Chief Officer – Communities and Place
 Mrs K Lackie, Executive Chief Officer – Governance and Performance
 Mr D Goldie, Head of Housing and Building Maintenance, Community Services
 Mr F MacDonald, Head of Property Services, Development & Infrastructure Service
 Mr B Cameron, Housing Policy & Investment Manager, Community Services
 Mr M Mitchell, Finance Manager, Corporate Resources Service

Also in attendance:

Mrs Margaret MacKay, Tenant Participation Representative

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

Ben Thompson in the Chair

1. Apologies for Absence Leisgeulan

Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of Mr M Finlayson, Mr A Graham, Mrs B McAllister, Mrs L MacDonald, Mrs L Munro and Ms M Smith.

2. Declarations of Interest Foillseachaidhean Com-pàirt

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

Items 4, 5 and 6 – Mr A Christie, Non-financial

3. **Housing and Property Committee: Role and Remit** **Comataidh an Taigheadais agus an t-Seilbh: Dreuchd agus Raon-ùghdarrais**

There had been circulated Report No HP/01/20 dated 16 January 2020 by the Executive Chief Officer – Performance and Governance.

During discussion, Members raised the following issues:-

- Members welcomed the establishment of the new Housing and Property Committee and emphasised their desire to increase housing supply and improve standards of the existing housing stock;
- In view of the significant shortage of Council and high demand for affordable housing, disappointment was expressed that no reference had been made to the Council's building programme and this should have been a prime feature of the remit. In addition, any future policies should set out the target outcomes and these should be monitored and measured to ensure they were being achieved;
- Further information was sought on devolving budgets to areas and a request was made for a report on all functions to be devolved to Area Committees and that this should be submitted to each Area Committee. It was further highlighted that the demands of the Highlands were diverse, and each area required a tailored housing strategy that met their individual local needs;
- The Council's limited resources needed to be utilised as effectively and efficiently as possible and a request was made for a future report on how the Council could refinance the HRA budget to increase house building without impacting on the revenue budget;
- There were many barriers to housing and there was a need to establish a sub-committee to examine and overcome each of these issues to ensure the delivery of additional new housing across the Highlands;
- Concern was expressed that local contractors did not receive housing repairs and maintenance works and the importance of retaining this work locally was emphasised; and
- Assurance was sought and provided that infrastructure was at the forefront when determining the Local Housing Strategy.

Following discussion, the Committee **NOTED** the report.

4. **Housing Revenue Account Revenue Estimates 2020/21** **Tuairmsean Teachd-a-steach HRA 2020/21**

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

There had been circulated Report No HP/02/20 dated 16 January 2020 by the Executive Chief Officer – Customer and Communities.

In discussion, Members highlighted there was no planned use of HRA balances in 2020/21 and that loan charges were higher than the Scotland average. It was clear from the consultation exercise that tenants were expecting the Council to reinvest the income generated by the proposed rent increase on planned maintenance and repairs and other estate improvements as a priority. There was a need therefore for a general review to ensure the most efficient use of resources including the potential use of HRA balances and review of loan charges.

It was confirmed that officers would be working in this calendar year to develop the HRA Capital Plan (2022/2027) and this would include the resourcing of the plan. As part of this consultation would be undertaken with Members to inform the Plan for future years. A report on the HRA Capital Plan would be presented to the Committee in April 2020. It was also reported that the draft budget proposed an increase in repairs and maintenance expenditure.

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

- confirmation was provided that provision had been made for impact on rent arrears arising from Universal Credit and the Committee would receive regular performance reports on rent arrears;
- the consultation exercise undertaken with tenants had been excellent and the and the Housing team be commended in this regard;
- the opportunities to drive efficiencies to improve the turnaround time for void properties to reduce the level of void rent loss;
- further information be provided on a pilot project in Hilton, Inverness which was understood to be having a positive impact on voids;
- consideration be given to an early intervention inspection regime of properties and their surrounds as spend to save measure, as had been piloted in the Ross and Cromarty area. This would also help identify vulnerable tenants and other issues. In this regard, it highlighted that local Members had the opportunity to prioritise their HRA supervision and management budget to address the different issues in areas;
- the role of the Tenant Participation Officers was key to ensuring good relationships and communication between tenants and the Council;
- the potential for timescales for repair works and administration to be presented separately in the future reporting of void figures;
- the Council's loan charges were relatively low compared to the private sector and in turn generated increased revenue for the Council;
- Members be circulated with details of expenditure on the relevant budget headings along with comparators for the past 4/5 years to allow trends to be considered;
- the potential for a time limit to be placed on the proposed use of HRA properties for temporary accommodation. The Head of Housing and Building Maintenance advised he would discuss this matter directly with Mr L Fraser;
- the potential for tenants in temporary Council accommodation to be offered a secure tenancy in appropriate cases;
- the potential for Council house rents to better reflect the range of market rates in areas across Highland;
- the need to build more Council houses, particularly in the Inner Moray Firth area where private sector rents were significantly higher than council rents;

- concern that in Ward: Culloden and Ardersier some properties did not meet the Scottish Quality Housing Standard. The Head of Housing and Building Maintenance confirmed he would investigate the specific cases involved;
- confirmation was sought and provided that officers would review the potential to bring more former janitor's houses back into general housing use to help reduce waiting lists and generate revenue;
- the importance of their being appropriate Member scrutiny of repairs and maintenance work which was carried out in house by the Council;
- the fact no additional external funding had been made available for compliance with the new standards for domestic fire detection;
- feedback on tenant satisfaction ratings following the completion of upgrading works be included in performance reports to the Committee;
- the importance of environmental works being undertaken in housing estates and the success of community garden schemes in some areas;
- the Chair expressed his support for the development of a local housing strategy for Caithness through a multi-agency approach and that he would have further discussions with Mr R Bremner on this matter, including the potential to replicate in Caithness the good work being undertaken in partnership through the Fort William 2040 vision; and
- officers had met with Highlands and Islands Enterprise and some RSLs and had discussed the the issues specific to Caithness and feedback would be provided.

* The Committee **AGREED** to **RECOMMEND** -

- i. the draft HRA Revenue Budget for 2020/21 (attached as Appendix 1 to the report);
- ii. a 3% increase for council house rents for 2020/21;
- iii. that this percentage increase (3%) be applied to all residential HRA rents and service charges and to Gypsy/Traveller site pitches;
- iv. that non-HRA rents for leased property be increased as stipulated in existing contracts; and
- v. that a report on the HRA Capital Plan (2022/2027) would be presented to the Committee in April 2020.

The Committee **AGREED**:-

- i. that Members be circulated with details of expenditure on the relevant budget headings along with comparators for the past 4/5 years;
- ii. to investigate the potential for the timescales for repair works and administration to be presented separately in the future reporting of void figures; and
- iii. further consideration be given to how a local housing strategy for Caithness could be taken forward through a multi-agency approach.

5. Homelessness: Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan Update Dìth Dachaigh: Plana Eadar-ghluasadan Taigheadais Luath

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

There had been circulated Report No HP/03/20 dated 17 January 2020 by the Executive Chief Officer – Customer and Communities.

During discussion, Members raised the following issues:-

- The Chair recommended that there be further consultation with Members in regard to the Homelessness Appeals process and this approach was welcomed;
- A request was made for a further session on how the Plan would be operated in the local communities;
- Concern was expressed regarding the anticipated legislative changes which could lead to the removal of Local Connections powers and the added pressures which might arise from this;
- With regard to the need for significant resources and developing alternative models for accommodation, reference was made to Social Bite, which was a successful social enterprise established by Josh Littlejohn to address homelessness, and it was queried whether this model or a joint partnership could be replicated in the Highlands; and
- The key solution to addressing homelessness was to provide additional affordable housing and further information was sought on the Council's plans for future new developments.

The Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the Scottish Government funding awards and progress against key RRTP Action Plan outcomes;
- ii. **NOTED** the implications for the Council in respect of the extended Unsuitable Accommodation Order due to come into force in March 2021;
- iii. **NOTED** the revisions to legislation in relation to Homelessness Intentionality and Local Connection and the proposed duty on prevention;
- iv. **AGREED** the introduction of a discretionary power to investigate in respect of the Homelessness Intentionality test and that further consultation be undertaken with Members on the Homeless Appeals Process; and
- v. **AGREED** an internal review of the homelessness service to ensure compliance with the extended Unsuitable Accommodation Order and homelessness legislative changes.

6. **Rent Arrears Management - Tenant Communication and Support** **Rianachd Fiachan Màil – Aithisg Conaltradh agus Taic Luchd-mail**

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

There is circulated Report No HP/04/20 dated 19 December 2019 by the Executive Chief Officer – Customer and Communities.

During discussion, it was indicated that the escalation process was reasonable but further information and assurance was sought and provided in regard to the impact of rent arrears on children and families.

The Committee:-

- i. **APPROVED** the rent arrears escalation process summarised at Appendix 1 to the report including the updated processes in regard to pre-notice requirements and Universal Credit cases;
- ii. **APPROVED** a revised reminder letter for tenants in arrears attached in Appendix 4 to the report and the removal of the second reminder letter on a trial basis;
- iii. **APPROVED** the move to proactive referral to support for all high value arrears cases;
- iv. **NOTED** the commitment to provide a more efficient and customer focussed arrears management process through delivery of IT solutions; and
- v. **APPROVED** the new Charging and Rent Arrears Management Policy for temporary homeless accommodation summarised in Appendix 5 to the report.

The meeting ended at 12.10pm.

The Highland Council

Minutes of Meeting of the **Communities and Place Committee** held in the Council Chamber, Council Headquarters, Glenurquhart Road, Inverness on Wednesday, 26 February 2020 at 12.05 pm

Present:

Mr G Adam	Mr D MacLeod
Mr J Bruce	Mr D Macpherson
Mr C Fraser	Mr H Morrison
Mr R Gale	Ms P Munro
Mr A Henderson	Mrs M Paterson
Mr B Lobban	Mr I Ramon
Mrs L MacDonald	Mrs T Robertson
Mr A MacInnes	

Non-Members also present:

Mrs M Davidson	Mrs A MacLean
Mr D Mackay	Mr P Saggars

In attendance:

Ms C McDiarmid, Executive Chief Officer Communities and Place
 Ms C Campbell, Head of Performance and Resources, Community Services
 Mr A Summers, Head of Environmental and Amenity Services, Community Services
 Ms A Clark, Acting Head of Policy, Chief Executive's Service
 Mr P Mascarenhas, Community and Democratic Engagement Manager, Chief Executive's Service
 Mr K Masson, Climate Change Officer, Chief Executive's Office
 Miss J MacLennan, Principal Administrator, Chief Executive's Office
 Miss M Murray, Committee Administrator, Chief Executive's Office

Also in attendance:

Ms E Whitham, Founding Director, MOO Food

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 J Gordon, Mr R MacWilliam and Mr A Rhind.

2. Declarations of Interest Foillseachaidhean Com-pàirt

There were no declarations of interest.

3. Good News Naidheachdan Matha

There had been tabled a list of good news and outstanding achievements. In particular Members' attention was drawn to the positive report received by the Inspector of Crematoria in respect of Kilvean Crematorium from the annual inspection conducted recently. Also the Council's Car Club had recently reached the one million mile mark. In relation to the latter, the Chair encouraged Members to register to use the Car Club given the significant savings and reduction in emissions that were being achieved.

The Committee otherwise **NOTED** the items of good news.

4. Role and Remit – Communities and Place Committee Dreuchd agus Raon-ùghdarrais – Comataidh nan Coimhearsnachdan agus nan Àiteachan

There had been circulated Report No. CP/1/20 dated 17 February 2020 by the Executive Chief Officer Performance and Governance.

The Committee **NOTED** the report.

5. MOO Food Project - Presentation Pròiseact Bìdh MOO – Taisbeanadh

A presentation was given by Ms Emma Whitham, Founding Director of MOO Food. MOO Food was an environmentally conscious community food company based in Muir of Ord in the Highlands of Scotland, established in March 2017. Its mission was to inspire environmentally friendly living and to build community reliance by bringing people together to grow food, knowledge and confidence. She detailed the various groups who had been involved and the growing spaces that had been made available along with the community orchard that had been planted and the community fridge which had been established. The MOO project had received support from various organisations, including the Highland Council, and particular mention was made of the Local Members and Ward Manager.

During discussion, the following issues were considered:-

- the MOO project had made a considerable difference to Tarradale Primary School, with all pupils involved, and the local community;
- it was hoped that similar projects could be replicated elsewhere. In response, it was explained that although resource materials had been prepared, it did need a driven volunteer to drive it forward;
- the Eco Food Share Larders charity had been set up to promote community fridges and it was hoped, if funding was successful, to recruit project officers. This pan-Highland approach was applauded;
- the number of volunteers involved with MOO was remarkable;

- growing food needed time and patience, something which one did not necessarily attribute to school children. However, before each lesson, a session of “mindfulness” was used which enabled pupils to focus. Using schools was recommended as the ethos of the project then also reached the wider family and it would be ideal if the education element of the programme could be rolled out to other schools. In this regard, it was suggested that it might be valuable if the Education Committee had a presentation from Tarradale Primary on how the MOO Project had improved learning in the school;
- the platform of food could be used to deliver other messages;
- the cost of food waste per household was estimated to be approximately £300;
- Councillor Bill Lobban requested a copy of the presentation and expressed the hope that something similar to MOO could be developed in the Badenoch and Strathspey area;
- the Council’s delivery of the Highland Good Food Growing Strategy was important. There were other ways in which the Council could help and reference was made to a Member amenities review workshop recently held in Caithness where it was identified that the Council-owned greenhouses and nursery in Thurso could be made available to the Thurso Grow Project; and
- Emma Whitham was warmly congratulated on her work and enthusiasm and the positive developments generated as a result.

The Committee **NOTED** the presentation and that the new Communities and Place Service would identify how to support the Highland Food Growing Strategy and enable community involvement in it.

6. Membership – Waste Strategy Working Group Ballrachd – Buidheann-obrach Ro-innleachd Sgudail

The Committee **APPROVED** the membership of its Waste Strategy Working Group as follows -

Mr J Bruce, Mr C Fraser, Mr R Gale, Mr A Henderson, Mr A MacInnes, Mr D Macpherson, Mr H Morrison, Mrs P Munro and Mrs T Robertson.

The Committee also **NOTED** that the next meeting of the Working Group would take place on 26 March 2020.

7. Community Asset Transfer Requests Iarrtasan Gluasad So-mhaoin Choimhearsnachd

There had been circulated Report No CP/2/20 dated 15 January 2020 by the Executive Chief Officer Communities and Place.

In response to a question it was confirmed that other occupiers at South Bonar Industrial Estate were content with the proposal from the Kyle of Sutherland Hub to expand their car park. With regard to the transfer of Kinlochewe public toilets, picnic area and parking request from Community Out West Trust (COWT), Members commended the proposal and cited the success COWT had had since it had taken over the operation of the toilets in April 2019. It was a model others

could follow and was an excellent example of how similar partnership working could be used going ahead.

The Committee **AGREED** the recommendations as detailed in the report concerning community asset transfer requests.

8. Scottish Government Consultation “Developing Scotland’s Circular Economy: Proposals for Legislation” Co-chomhairle Riaghaltas na h-Alba mu Bhile na h-Eaconamaidh Chuirteach a Thathar a’ Moladh

There had been circulated Report No CP/3/20 dated 17 February 2020 by the Executive Chief Officer Communities and Places.

During discussion, the following issues were considered:-

- the considerable waste generated from takeaways was highlighted and, although it could be investigated how some of it could be recycled, it was important to bear in mind that it would necessary to evaluate its viability given that some of the waste would be contaminated;
- rubbish accumulated around fast food “drive throughs” and it was important to educate drivers. Ways of identifying offenders were explored which would act as a deterrent;
- recycling facilities at filling stations would be useful for drivers disposing of rubbish;
- refuse was often found around roadworks and a call was made for national organisations to put a stop to this. Similarly, drivers often took the opportunity to dispose of rubbish while waiting at traffic lights; and
- ideally there should be a universal recycling scheme across Scotland.

The Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the consultation carried out by the Scottish Government on Developing Scotland’s circular economy: Proposals for Legislation;
- ii. **AGREED** to homologate the Council’s submitted consultation response as detailed in Appendix 1 of the report;
- iii. **NOTED** the subsequent letter from the Council Leader to the Minister, attached at Appendix 2 of the report, regarding the challenges faced in rural and island areas and the request for engagement on solutions and resourcing any new services arising from legislation.

9. Minutes Geàrr-chunntas

The Committee **APPROVED** the Minutes of the Meeting of the Waste Strategy Group held on 29 November 2019.

10. 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 involve the likely disclosure of exempt information

as defined in Part 1 of Schedule 7A of the Act, the relevant paragraphs being shown.

**11. Kilvean Crematorium Inspection Report
Aithisg Sgrùdaidh Luathreachan Chille Bheathain**

Paragraph 3

There had been circulated to Members only Report No CP/4/20 dated 10 February 2020 by the Executive Chief Officer Customer and Communities.

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

- i. **APPROVED** the recommendations contained within the report; and
- ii. **AGREED** Members' congratulations on the positive inspection be relayed to the staff involved.

The meeting ended at 1.10 pm.

The Highland Council

Minutes of Meeting of the **Economy and Infrastructure Committee** held in the Council Chamber, Council Headquarters, Glenurquhart Road, Inverness on Thursday, 6 February 2020 at 11.45 am.

Present:

Mr R Balfour	Mr B Lobban (Substitute)
Mr A Baxter	Mr D Louden
Mr B Boyd	Mr A MacInnes
Mrs C Caddick	Mr W MacKay (by video conference)
Mrs H Carmichael	Mr D MacLeod
Mr J Gordon	Mr D Rixson
Mr K Gowans	Mrs T Robertson
Mr J Gray	Mr A Sinclair

Non-Members also present:

Mr R Gale (by video conference)	Mr D Macpherson
Mr A Jarvie	Mrs M Paterson (am only)

In attendance:

Mr M MacLeod, Executive Chief Officer Environment and Infrastructure
 Ms K Lackie, Executive Chief Officer Performance and Governance
 Ms A Clark, Acting Head of Policy, Chief Executive's Service
 Mr C Howell, Head of Infrastructure, 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 A McCann, Economy and Regeneration Manager, Development and Infrastructure Service
 Mr M Johnstone, Area Property Surveyor, Development and Infrastructure Service
 Miss J MacLennan, Principal Administrator, Chief Executive's Office
 Ms F MacBain, Committee Administrator, Chief Executive's Office
 Mr A MacInnes, Administrative Assistant, Chief Executive's Office

Also in attendance:

Mr P Faciendar, Caithness & North Sutherland Regeneration Partnership Programme Manager
 Mr I Ross, Executive Board Chair, Caithness & North Sutherland Regeneration Partnership

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

Mrs T Robertson in the Chair

Business

1. Apologies for Absence Leisgeulan

Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of Mr A Henderson, Mr P Saggars and Ms M Smith.

2. Declarations of Interest Foillseachaidhean Com-pàirt

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

Item 4 – Mr K Gowans

Item 6 – Mr A Sinclair (non-financial)

Item 10 – Mr J Gray (non-financial)

Item 12 – Mr D Rixson and Mrs T Robertson (both non-financial)

3. Good News Naidheachdan Matha

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

At this juncture the Vice Chair expressed the Committee's thanks to Mr S Black, former Director of Development and Infrastructure and Executive Chief Officer Transformation and Economy and Mr K MacInnes, Principal Economy Officer for their contribution to the Service and the Council. Reference was made to their outstanding work, particularly in promoting the Highlands and helping to generate a vibrant local economy. The Committee extended their best wishes to both for the future.

4. Role and Remit - Economy and Infrastructure Committee Dreuchd agus Raon-ùghdarras – Comataidh na h-Eaconamaidh agus a' Bhun-structair

Declaration of Interest - Mr K Gowans declared a non-financial interest in this item on the basis that a family member was employed by 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. ECI/1/20 by the Executive Chief Officer Performance and Governance.

During discussion, the following issues were considered:-

- concern was expressed that confidential pink papers had been pigeon-holed instead of posted and, because they were not emailed, Members from outside Inverness sometimes did not receive them. This would be taken up with the convenor, with a solution for emailing confidential papers sought, pointing out that other organisations could email confidential information;

- with reference to the intention to devolve operational decision-making to Area Committees as much as possible, a faster pace of progress on this was urged and it was intended a report would be submitted to the next meeting of the Committee. The distinction was made between strategic and operational decisions;
- an announcement on plans to deal with the devolvement of Crown Estate assets was awaited from the Council's Administration;
- the importance of developing a Culture Strategy was emphasised. Reference was made to the need for it to be Highland-wide and not Inverness-centric and to the economic importance of culture and heritage. In response to comments that only Eden Court and High Life Highland were mentioned in the report, when many other organisations were involved in cultural activities, it was pointed out that the Council had particular interest in those two organisations, either owning them or some of their assets. Reference was made to the establishment of a Highland Cultural Strategy Board which it was believed had met once to hold a workshop for stakeholders and more information on this group was sought, including its Chair and any budget;
- reference was made to the wide remit of the Committee with suggested key priorities being climate change, Brexit, including harbours and fishing issues, faster paced progress with the City Region Deal, housing, having realistic budgets, the management of capital projects including school builds and the importance of attracting inward investment. The Service Plan would be presented to the Committee in May which would cover many of these priorities and that climate change was referenced in all reports;
- also, in relation to the scope of the Committee, the need to strengthen cost-benefit analysis of possible projects was suggested, as was the usefulness of giving Members appropriate access to data and financial monitoring information;
- confirmation was sought, and received, that roads would be given a high priority by the Committee and concern was expressed that the devolution of the roads budgets to Area Committees had not yet been undertaken. A report on this would be provided to the next meeting of the Committee and the complexity of the roads situation was summarised. It was pointed out that the Highland Council had recently been placed 25th out of 32 local authorities in the annual road condition survey;
- it was suggested the use of the word 'consider' in a report recommendation was ambiguous and not clear what the Committee was being asked to do; and
- it was pointed out that Sub Committees and Working Group memberships were worked out according to a formula to reflect the political composition of the Council. Any concerns about this would be addressed outwith the meeting.

The Committee **NOTED** the report and **AGREED** to investigate whether the Highland Cultural Strategy Board was still functional.

5. Appointments to Sub Committees, Working Groups Cur an Dreuchd gu Fo-Chomataidhean, Buidhnean-obrach

The Committee **APPROVED** the membership of the following Sub-Committees, Working Groups:-

i. Strome ferry Working Group (9 Members)

At the Strome ferry Working Group meeting on 13 December 2019 it was recommended that, to ensure consistency, the membership of the Working Group continue unchanged as the Council moved forward with its new Committee Structure.

* Membership – Mr A Henderson, Mr H Morrison, Ms T Robertson, Mr A Mackinnon, Mr M Reiss, Ms I Campbell, Dr I Cockburn, Mr A MacInnes, Mr D MacLeod

ii. Education Transport Review Sub Committee (5 Members)

Membership – Mr R Balfour, Mr W MacKay, Mr D Louden, Mr Boyd, Mr P Sagers

iii. Harbours Management Board – (10 Members)

As many matters would now be reported directly to the Committee, the Committee **AGREED** that the Board would meet twice a year but this be kept under review.

Membership – Mr J Gray, Mr A Henderson, Mr W MacKay, Mr R Balfour, Mr D Louden, Mr B Boyd, Mr A MacInnes, Mr D MacLeod, Mr A Sinclair, Mr D Rixson.

iv. Town Centre Working Group – (12 Members)

Membership – Mr J Gray, Mr A Henderson, Mrs H Carmichael, Mr R Balfour, Mr D Louden, Ms M Smith, Mr B Boyd, Mr K Gowans, Mr P Sagers, Mr A Sinclair, Mr D Rixson, Mrs C Caddick

It was questioned if there was still a need for this Working Group, especially as priorities had been determined at Area level and that two thirds of the membership were from the Inner Moray Firth area. In response it was confirmed that this Working Group was only likely to meet if, under the current round of funding, there was funding that needed to be reallocated.

v. Highland Economic Forum – (1 Member)

Membership – Chair of Economy and Infrastructure Committee

6. Caithness & North Sutherland Regeneration Partnership - Presentation Com-pàirteachas Ath-nuadhachaidh Ghallaibh & Chataibh a Tuath – Taisbeanadh

Declaration of Interest - Mr A Sinclair declared a non-financial interest in this item as a Council appointed Board Member on the Caithness and North Sutherland Regeneration Partnership Advisory Board 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.

The Caithness and North Sutherland Regeneration Partnership annual update provided an opportunity to consider the challenges and opportunities facing the economy of the north as it transitioned from dependence on Dounreay. A presentation was given by Mr Peter Facienda, CNSRP Programme Manager alongside Mr Iain Ross, who was Chair of the Executive Board of the partnership.

During discussion, it was pointed out that although the Dounreay winding down process had been gradual, significant challenges that had been faced. It was hoped any economic stability now achieved would not be undermined by the loss of European funding sources and the importance of making a clear case to the UK Government to secure future investment was emphasised. Reference was also made to sector funding, with particular mention of on- and off-shore wind power, and to the importance of also investing in resources and training people for the economy and industries of the future.

The Committee **NOTED** the presentation.

7. Off Street Car Parking Policy Update Fios às Ùr mu Phoileasaidh Parcadh Far-Sràide

There had been circulated Report No. ECI/2/20 by the Acting Head of Policy.

During discussion, the following issues were considered:-

- officers were thanked for their detailed work and the effort that had gone into the report, including consideration of the needs of individual car parks;
- reference was made to opposition from some Members that had been reported in the Press and it was clarified that the process for implementing the policy was detailed in the report, including a process for solving issues that might arise during consultation, the policy having been agreed in late 2019;
- attention was drawn to the positive aspects of the project, including the aim to work in close collaboration with local partners and communities, the comprehensive local engagement plan, and the intention to share surplus income locally;
- it was suggested an economic impact assessment was required to appraise some individual parking sites, with reference to localities with out-of-town supermarkets with free parking which might reduce custom to town centre facilities;
- reference was made to the anticipated willingness of tourists to pay parking charges and to the possibility of providing discounts for local residents, either in the form of annual parking permits, or offering specific periods of parking, for example the first hour, free of charge;
- concern was expressed that a local opt out option was not detailed in the report, with specific reference to the Area Committees in Ross Shire, each of which might have differing views, and it was clarified this would be considered locally through the agreed process detailed in the report;
- the surplus income generated would be helpful for local road maintenance; and
- although additional charges were not ideal, and it was possible the new policy might encourage irresponsible parking, the proposal was welcomed

overall, although it was important that efforts were made to avoid causing detrimental impact to local businesses. This would be covered as part of the engagement process set out in the report.

The Committee **NOTED** the progress made towards implementation of the off-street car parking policy agreed at EDI Committee in October 2019.

8. Minutes Geàrr-chunntas

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

- i. North PAC – 8 October 2019;
- ii. South PAC – 29 October 2019;
- iii. North PAC – 26 November 2019;
- iv. South PAC – 4 December, 2019;

and, **APPROVED**:-

- v. Tourism Working Group of 28 November 2019;
- vi. Harbours Management Board of 13 November 2019 subject to, in relation to Item 6 (Corran Ferry Consultation), clarification that the funding for infrastructure would be from the Highland Council and not the Scottish Government.

In addition, in relation to Item 5 (Service Income Review), concern was also expressed at the delay, with commercial Harbour customers, in implementing the Council policy agreed in March 2019 regarding a surcharge for invoices and the implementation of late penalty fees and interest charges for invoices not paid in 30 days. There would have been financial implications as a result and the Committee **AGREED** clarification be provided at the next ECI Committee of the current position; and

- vii. Stromeferry Working Group of 13 December 2019.

9. Exclusion of the Public Às-dùnadh a' Phobaill

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

10. Land and Property Fearann agus Cuid-seilbhe

Paragraphs 6 and 9

Declaration of Interest - Mr J Gray declared a non-financial interest in part of this item as a member of Crown Church and left the room during discussion of that particular matter.

There had been circulated to Members only Report No. ECI/3/20 by the Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure and Environment.

Following discussion, the Chair, seconded by Mr B Lobban, **MOVED** the approval of the recommendations contained in the report.

As an **AMENDMENT**, in regard to the proposals for the Library Support Unit, Mr K Gowans, seconded by Mr D Loudon, moved that a decision be deferred to enable a full options appraisal to be undertaken and reported back to the ECI Committee.

On a vote being taken, the **MOTION** received 10 votes and the **AMENDMENT** received 5 votes, with 1 abstention, and the **MOTION** was therefore **CARRIED**, the votes having been cast as follows:-

For the Motion:

Mr R Balfour, Mrs H Carmichael, Mrs C Caddick, Mr J Gordon, Mr J Gray, Mr B Lobban, Mr D MacLeod, Mr D Rixson, Mrs T Robertson and Mr A Sinclair,

For the Amendment:

Mr A Baxter, Mr B Boyd, Mr K Gowans, Mr D Loudon and Mr A MacInnes.

Abstention

Mr W Mackay

Decision

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

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

Paragraphs 6 and 9

There had been circulated to Members only Report No. ECI/4/20 by the Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure and Environment.

The Committee **NOTED** the monitoring statements for General Fund and Property Account transactions as approved by the Head of Development & Regeneration under delegated authority as well the Budgeted Sales for 2019/20 and beyond.

As Mrs Robertson had declared a non-financial interest in the following item, Mr Gray assumed the role of Chair.

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

Paragraphs 6 and 9

Declarations of Interest:

Mrs T Robertson declared a non-financial interest in this item as a Director of Highland Housing Alliance but decided to leave the room.

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

There had been circulated to Members only Report No. ECI/5/20 by the Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure and Environment.

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

The meeting ended at 2.45 pm.

The Highland Council

Minutes of Meeting of the **Badenoch and Strathspey Area Committee** held in the Courtroom, Grantown Courthouse, Grantown-on-Spey on 11 February 2020 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

Mrs A Mackintosh, Principle Teacher, Modern Languages, Grantown Grammar School
Inspector V Tough, Police Scotland

Mr K Murray, Interim Education Quality Improvement Manager, Education & Learning Service (via VC)

Mr R Porteous, Roads Operations Manager (LNBS), Community Services

Ms S MacLennan, Housing Manager (South), Community Services

Mr J Henderson, Housing Investment Officer, Community Services

Ms M Mcleman, Principal Tenant and Customer Engagement Officer, Community Services

Mrs L Dunn, Principal 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 B Lobban in the Chair

Business

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

There were no apologies for absence.

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

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

Items 7, 8 & 9 – Ms P Hadley (financial)

3. **Presentation: Confucius Hub at Grantown Grammar School** **Taisbeanadh: Co-Ionad Confucius aig Sgoil Bhaile nan Granddach**

There was a presentation by Mrs Ann Mackintosh, Principal Teacher, Modern Languages, Grantown Grammar School on the development and progress of the Confucius Hub. During the presentation it was explained that the Hub had been transferred from Kingussie High School to Grantown Grammar School mainly due to staffing reasons.

It was explained that the Confucius Classroom was a network that had been set up across Scotland to help promote Chinese language and culture in schools. The Grantown Hub had one fully qualified Mandarin Teacher. Further information was provided on their work teaching the Chinese language in primary and secondary schools, not only locally in Badenoch and Strathspey but also in other areas of the Highlands via video link. Further information was provided on the types of initiatives that had been undertaken to stimulate learning of the Chinese culture and also on the personal successes of some individual students that had participated in the Hub. The presentation concluded with photographs from the 2019 Pupil Immersion Trip to China.

During discussion, the following main points were raised:-

- Disappointment was expressed that the Confucius Hub was no longer being operated in Kingussie High School, but Members were pleased that the project was continuing at Grantown Grammar School. However, concerns were expressed that opportunities were being missed by other schools by not being involved, therefore, the work of the Hub needed to be actively promoted and expanded across the Highlands;
- Further information was sought and provided on the qualifications that could be achieved through studying Chinese with the Hub; and
- The Chair requested that the presentation be made at a future meeting of the Council to increase awareness and participation in the cultural and learning opportunities available through the Hub.

Thereafter the Committee **NOTED** the presentation and **AGREED** that this be made at a future meeting of the Highland Council.

4. Police Area Performance Report Poileas – Geàrr-chunntas air Coileanadh Sgireil

There had been circulated Report No BSAC/01/20 dated 4 February 2020 by the Area Commander.

During discussion, the following main points were raised:-

- Members welcomed the positive report and highlighted that speeding and anti-social behaviour associated to cars were ongoing problems in small communities;
- The benefits of the Pubwatch initiative were emphasised and further information was sought and provided on how this scheme was operated;
- The introduction of Roadside Drug Testing kits was welcomed and further information was sought and provided on how long training on the usage of the kits would take;
- It was queried whether any statistical data was available on the number of incidents that were reported via the Police non-emergency number 101;

- It was queried, and assurances were provided, on the measures taken by the Police to ensure that young drivers fully understood their road safety and passenger responsibilities;
- It was confirmed that members of the public could report crime safely and anonymously via Crimestoppers;
- With regard to rural crime, it was indicated that much of this appeared to be opportunistic as opposed to organised; and
- It was anticipated that thefts of electric bikes were likely to rise given the increase in usage of these high value items.

The Committee **NOTED** progress made against the objectives set within the Highland and Islands Local Policing Plan 2017-20 Year 3, attached as Annex A to the report, for the period covering 1 April 2019 - 31 December 2019.

5. **Kingussie Associated School Group: Area Overview** **Buidheann Sgoiltean Co-cheangailte Cheann a' Ghiùthsaidh: Tar-sealladh Sgìreil**

There had been circulated Report No BSAC/02/20 dated 28 January 2020 by the South Area Care and Learning Manager.

During discussion, the following main points were raised:-

- Although the information in the report was interesting, concern was expressed that the report lacked focus and strategic direction. In particular, there was a need for future reports to contain information on educational attainment and how the Council could support and facilitate improvement of this across the Highlands;
- Disappointment was expressed at the lack of information being shared between the Corporate Parenting Board and Secondary Head Teachers. Communication in this regard needed to be improved to ensure that information on events and resources available for care experienced young people in secondary schools was being shared and opportunities were not being missed; and
- Further information was sought and provided regarding any forthcoming government inspections and whether there were any pinch points and/or capacity issues particularly in regard to the roll out of the increased funded hours for Early Learning.

The Committee **NOTED**:-

- i. the contents of the report;
- ii. that there had been a breakdown in reporting between the Corporate Parenting Board and Secondary Head Teachers and **AGREED** that this be investigated to ensure that information was shared; and
- iii. that the outcome of the recent HMIE of Kingussie Primary School would be the subject of a future report.

**6. Roads Maintenance Programme 2020/21
Prògram Càradh Rathaidean 2020/21**

There had been circulated Report No BSAC/03/20 dated 22 January 2020 by the Executive Chief Officer – Communities and Place.

During discussion, the following main points were raised:-

- Although an increased spend on the Roads Maintenance Programme would be welcomed, staff were commended for their excellent work and managing resources throughout the Badenoch & Strathspey area. However, further information was sought and provided on whether any additional staffing resource were required and the benefits that could be achieved;
- Concern was expressed at the detrimental impact that timber transport vehicles were having on the roads infrastructure and further information was sought and provided on the measures available to recover costs for damages including the Timber Transport Routes Fund;
- There was a need for early intervention in terms of Preventative Maintenance and maximising the life of roads;
- Given the mild winter to date, it was queried whether there was likely to be an excess of salt, and if so, whether the quality would deteriorate over time;
- It was noted that a significant number of entries contained within Appendix 2 related to the need for Surface Dressing and it was queried whether this treatment also included pot hole filling; and
- The need for white lining works to be undertaken was emphasised.

The Committee **APPROVED** the proposed 2020/21 Roads Maintenance Programme for Badenoch & Strathspey Area.

**7. Housing Revenue Account: Garage Rents 2020/21
Cunntas Teachd-a-steach Taigheadais: Màil Gharaidsean 2020/21**

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

There had been circulated Report No BSAC/04/20 dated 29 January 2020 by the Executive Chief Officer – Property and Housing.

The Committee **AGREED** a 3% rent increase be applied to Badenoch and Strathspey Garages for 2020/21.

**8. Housing Performance Report – 1 April 2019 to 31 December 2019
Aithisg Coileanaidh Taigheadais – 1 An Giblean gu 30 An Dubhlachd
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/05/20 dated 29 January 2020 by the Executive Chief Officer – Property and Housing.

During discussion, the following main points were raised:-

- Further data was sought on sub-letting and the measures taken to reduce this;
- Further information was sought and provided on the comprehensive level of housing support that was available to help tenants with their independent living to ensure sustainable tenancies; and
- Overall Members welcomed the report and the positive performance results. In addition, the need for the capital spend to be used prudently was emphasised and the Castle Road East project was referenced as an excellent example of good practice.

The Committee **NOTED** the information provided on housing performance for the period 1 April 2019 to 31 December 2019.

**9. Tenant Participation and Engagement Update
Fios às Ùr mu Luchd-màil agus Com-pàirteachas**

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/06/20 dated 28 January 2020 by the Executive Chief Officer – Property and Housing.

During discussion, Members indicated that the high Customer Satisfaction level of 81.82% was a reflection of the assiduous work being undertaken by staff and the excellent vision being demonstrated, particularly in regard to Youth Engagement, was highly commended. It was also recommended that Face to Face contact be continued as key method of engagement with tenants.

The Committee **NOTED** the recent tenant engagement activities in Badenoch and Strathspey.

10. Minutes
Geàrr-chunntas

There was circulated and **NOTED** Minutes of Meeting of the Badenoch and Strathspey Area Committee held on 11 November 2019 which were approved by the Council on 9 December 2019.

The meeting was closed at 12.25pm.

The Highland Council

Minutes of Meeting of the **Health, Social Care and Wellbeing** held in the Council Chamber, Council Headquarters, Glenurquhart Road, Inverness on Wednesday, 12 February 2020 at 10.30am.

Present:

Mrs Jennifer Barclay	Mr Willie Mackay (via VC)
Mr Bill Boyd	Mrs Isabelle Mackenzie
Mrs Biz Campbell	Mrs Linda Munro
Mrs Muriel Cockburn	Mrs Margaret Paterson
Mrs Margaret Davidson	Mr Denis Rixson
Mr John Finlayson	Mr Karl Rosie
Mr Andrew Jarvie	Ms Emma Roddick
Mr Derek Louden	Miss Nicola Sinclair (via VC)
Mrs Deirdre Mackay	Mr Callum Smith

Non-Members also Present:

Mr B Lobban
Mrs A MacLean
Mr D Macpherson

Officials in attendance:

Ms L Weber, Executive Chief Officer, Health and Social Care
Mrs K Lackie, Executive Chief Officer, Performance and Governance
Mrs F Malcolm, Interim Head of Health, Health and Social Care
Mr B, Porter, Head of Resources, Education and Learning
Ms K Ralston, Interim Head of Children's Services, Health and Social Care
Ms D Ferguson, Senior Ward Manager, Chief Executive's Office
Mr I Kyle, Children's Planning Manager, Health and Social Care
Ms J Jennett, Area Care and Learning Manager, Health and Social Care
Ms S Russel, Principal Officer – Nursing, Health and Social Care
Ms G Ward, Housing Policy Officer, Property and Housing
Mrs L Dunn, Principal Administrator, Chief Executive's Office
Miss M Zavarella, Administrative Assistant, 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 Committee.**

Ms Linda Munro in the Chair

1. Apologies for Absence Leisgeulan

There were no apologies for absence

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

Ms L Munro declared a financial interest in relation to any items which might arise during discussion in regard to Self-Directed Support on the grounds that she was a specialist advisor for Self-Directed Support but, having applied the test outlined in Paragraphs 5.2 and 5.3 of the Councillors' Code of Conduct, concluded that her interest did not preclude her involvement in the meeting.

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

The Committee **NOTED** the verbal update on the following good news items:-

- A short video was shown to celebrate the remarkable achievements of Grace Brian who was Highland Council's oldest and longest-serving foster carer having looked after over 250 children over the past 40 years. In recognition of the valuable role of foster carers, Highland Council had recently agreed a 20% fee increase and revised the payment structure providing a fee per child;
- there had been a multi-agency approach to create a series of training videos, which were available on YouTube, to support understanding Autism;
- the Christmas for Care-Experienced Young People had been a great success and the event had helped young people to create a sense of belonging; and
- the Council would be celebrating National Care Day on 21 February 2020 with events being held at Eden Court and an open invite was extended to Children and Young People, professionals and Corporate Parents to attend. In addition, Eden Court would also be broadcasting 'Instant Families' at 5.45pm on 24 February 2020 and Members were invited to attend and support this event.

**4. Role and Remit of Health, Social Care and Wellbeing Committee
Raon-ùghdarras Comataidh na Slàinte, a' Chùraim Shòisealta agus an t-Soirbheis**

There had been circulated Report No HCW/01/20 dated 3 February 2020 by the Executive Chief Officer, Performance and Governance.

During discussion, a progress update was sought and provided on the NHS Partnership Agreement as well as clarity regarding the deadline for finalisation of the Integration Scheme documentation. In addition, the need for the scrutiny sub groups to be open and transparent and to add value was emphasised.

The Committee **NOTED** the report.

**5. Refugee Resettlement Programme
Prògram Ath-àiteachaidh Fhògarrach**

There had been circulated Report No HCW/02/20 dated 20 January 2020 by the Acting Head of Policy.

During discussion, the following main points were raised:-

- Members commended staff and partners for their work and dedication in the successful delivery of the Programme. Local communities were praised for being so welcoming and Members were encouraged to provide an ambassadorial role to ensure that families felt welcomed, cared for, and supported;
- Further information was sought and provided on the support provided to the four families that had been relocated from Kinlochleven;
- In regard to overcoming the supply of interpreters out with the Inner Moray Firth area, it was queried whether these services could be provided by existing Syrian families that had been located across the Highlands and also whether the ESOL classes could be provided by video link which could help maximise resources;
- Although families were happy to be in Scotland, the frightful journey that they had gone through and losses endured was emphasised. In addition, the families that had been resettled were extremely worried about family members that had been left behind and further information was provided on the complex Family Links process;
- Further information was sought and provided on employability and supporting family members, many of whom were qualified professionals, into work;
- The challenges, as referenced in the report, in delivering a successful Programme were recognised but it was felt that availability of housing stock was the most significant. Further information was requested on future requirements and how housing needs for refugees could be incorporated into new build developments. It was further suggested that reports should be submitted to Area Committees to examine the housing options available at a local level; and
- In conclusion, the Chair expressed appreciation to staff, third sector partners, and communities for their collaborative working and vital support in ensuring the successful delivery of the Refugee Resettlement Programme and the positive outcomes that had been achieved for families resettling in Highland.

The Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the significant efforts by communities and partners which had delivered a successful Refugee Resettlement programme in Highland;
- ii. **NOTED** the unreserved support from all Highland Council services and partners to continue to be involved in future phases; and
- iii. **AGREED** to welcome around 25 further refugees to Highland in 2020/21 under the new Global Refugee Resettlement Programme with a further recommendation to come forward once more information was known about the future programme.

6. Chief Social Work Officer Report: 2018/2019
Aithisg Prìomh Oifigear Obrach-sòisealta: 2018/2019

There had been circulated Report No HCW/03/20 dated 27 January 2020 by the Executive Chief Officer, Health and Social Care.

During discussion, the following main points were raised:-

- Concern was expressed at the level of fuel poverty across the Highlands, which it was felt was difficult to measure, and confirmation was provided that further information would be provided to Councillor Jarvie on the criteria used. It was also indicated that a significant proportion of the Council housing stock within Caithness did not have access to gas central heating and it was queried whether external funding was available to support and accelerate the upgrade of replacement of Council house heating systems;
- In terms of poverty, the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) was not effective at identifying rural deprivation and it was suggested that the Socio Economic Performance (SEP) Index should also be used. The good practice of collaborative working at a local level was recognised but assurance was sought that sufficient work was being undertaken at a strategic level with the third sector to identify gaps and improve joint working;
- Although the recent increase and agreement to pay a fee per child was welcomed, concern was expressed that the current Foster Care fee rates were not sufficient to meet a child's needs and there was a requirement for this to be increased to a fair and competitive rate. Although the need for all relevant and legal checks to be undertaken were recognised, it was queried whether it would be feasible to speed up the foster carer appointment process. A further query was raised on whether the provision of appropriate accommodation was an issue for foster carers. It was further recognised that housing was a cross-cutting issue which could help overcome a number of challenges and it was therefore suggested that a joined-up approach was required with the Housing and Property Committee;
- It was highlighted that Community Payback was working well with reduced reoffending rates and this positive outcome was welcomed;
- Concern was expressed at the increasing recruitment challenges and the limited and competing workforce between Care at Home and Home Carers and it was queried how this labour pool could be expanded. Assurance was sought that implementation of the Living Wage was not the reason for the reduction in the weekly Care at Home package from 9.6 hours to 7.6 hours. In addition, concern was expressed at the significant increase in Delayed Discharge and whether this was also the result of a workforce issue;
- Concern was expressed that the report indicated that Mental Health Care capacity would reduce by between 40-50% over the next three years whilst service demand was increasing, and it was queried what training was being undertaken to replace retiring staff. Given the position, a request was made for periodic updates and the Chair proposed that there should be an update to each Committee on Mental Health; and
- It was highlighted that the number of Prospective Adopters and Permanence Orders were very low and the Child Protection data set outlined in Page 51 of the papers was useful but it was a short timeframe and it was therefore requested that year on year comparators be provided to monitor trends.

The Committee **NOTED** the issues raised in the annual report and **AGREED** that:-

- i. Year on year comparators be provided in respect of the Child Protection data set outlined on Page 51 of the papers; and
- ii. There be updates to each Committee on Mental Health.

7. Review of the Highland Practice Model Ath-sgrùdadh air Modal Cleachdaidh na Gàidhealtachd

There had been circulated Report No HCW/04/20 dated 3 February 2020 by the Executive Chief Officer, Health and Social Care.

During discussion, the following main points were raised:-

- The review of the Practice Model was felt to be vital and the likelihood of any potential liability was queried following the legal ruling on the Named Person Scheme. Although the aims of the scheme, i.e. to support the wellbeing of children and young people and provide early intervention were recognised, concern was expressed that the scheme assessed parenting and nurturing skills against a Government approved checklist and lacked sufficient emphasis on measuring tangible outcomes. In addition, it was felt that the scheme was fundamentally flawed as it had been indicated that the scheme operated on a consensual basis but there was no provision to opt out. It was critical to learn from the review to ensure that an accountable and transparent system was developed and an effective model implemented which targeted resources to where they were most needed;
- The Getting it right for every child (GIRFEC) approach had led to positive results and families understood the system including the purpose and their role in developing a Child Plan. The Highland Practice Model was being used as a blueprint across the country and positive feedback had been received with professionals indicating that it made it easier for them to help children and families and improved the assessment of children's needs which was the core purpose of the model;
- Both practice models (GIRFEC and the Named Person Scheme), had been effective and supported families whilst providing opt out options for parents. The purpose of the GIRFEC model was to provide a system which enabled early intervention and quick communication between agencies and professionals whilst providing the best possible support for young people; and
- The need to reflect and evaluate was recognised and the key aim was to achieve positive outcomes and provide the best support for children and young people across the Highlands.

The Committee **NOTED**:-

- i. the background to the proposed review of the Highland Practice Model and Named Person Scheme in Highland; and
- ii. plans for the review of the Highland Practice Model and Named Person Scheme in Highland.

8. The Development of the Integrated Children's Service Plan 2020 Leasachadh Plana Sheirbheisean Chloinne Amalaichte 2020

There had been circulated report No HCW/05/20 dated 24 January 2020 by the Executive Chief Officer – Health and Social Care.

The Committee **NOTED** progress being made in the drafting of the Integrated Children's Service Plan.

9. Partnership Arrangements with NHS Highland Ullachaidhean Com-pàirteach le NHS na Gàidhealtachd

There had been circulated Report No HCW/06/20 dated 4 February 2020 by the Executive Chief Officer, Health and Social Care.

During discussion, the following main points were raised:-

- The report indicated that there were no Risk implications for the Council which was difficult to understand given that there was a significant risk that increased resources would be required. However, the Executive Chief Officer Health and Social care explained that there was no risk whilst work continued in relation to the review of the partnership agreement for the delivery of Adult Social Care. The report also indicated that work might not necessarily be articulated within the Integration Scheme and further clarity was sought on this along with assurance that Members would be informed of the changes. In addition, further assurance was sought that Members would be consulted on the review of the partnership arrangements and whether the documents would be submitted to this Committee or full Council for approval prior to sign-off;
- In terms of the workstreams, concern was expressed that Workforce Planning had been designated as Priority Level 2 given the discussions raised earlier in the meeting in regard to recruitment challenges and it was felt that this should be assigned as a Level 1 priority. With regard to the Assessment Process, it was thought that a single point of contact system was already operated and confirmation of this was sought. The 3 conversations model was welcome and it was indicated that there were a number of good examples of this already taking place across local communities;
- Clarity was provided in regard to the intentions of reducing service users by signposting whereby the Executive Chief Officer Health and Social care explained that a single point of contact system was in operation by way of a phone number, but that a single door or hub system would mean someone could seek advice and support to first level queries from a range of professions;
- The establishment of the Health, Social Care and Wellbeing Committee was welcomed and would enable Members to have a dedicated focus on Adult Social Care. The purpose of Integration was to maximise resources and improve outcomes and staff were commended for the significant progress and improved collaborative working since commencement of the Partnership in 2012. The seamless working that was now in place was highly praised. However, the demand led pressures to deliver Adult Social Care services to an increasing elderly population over a remote and rural area continued. Therefore, further work was required including detailed information on the financial position as well as the implications going forward and associated timescales; there needed to be a co-ordinated approach to income maximisation; the role of Community Planning Partnerships was vital but the capacity and resource issues had to be addressed to enable them to achieve their potential; and new models and roles were required in order to address the workforce planning constraints whilst maximising service delivery;
- It was essential that the Council had meaningful scrutiny of service delivery and this had to be delivered as part of the review process; and

- Concern was expressed that there was a lack of communication with Members and at a local level with communities and this was impacting on the ability to work collaboratively. However, the Chair explained that the Council and NHS Highland had emphasised their desire to work collaboratively and she provided an assurance that she was fully committed to ensuring that appropriate communication measures were in place.

The Committee **NOTED** and **APPROVED** the current position and the proposed approach.

10. Minutes Geàrr-chunntas

The Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the Minutes of the Highland Child Protection Committee held on 20 August 2019;
- ii. **NOTED** the Minutes of the Highland Violence Against Women Partnership Group held on 28 August 2019;
- iii. **NOTED** the Minutes of the Highland Community Justice Partnership held on 19 September 2019;
- iv. **NOTED** the Minutes of the Highland Council/NHS Highland Joint Monitoring Committee held on 27 November 2019; and
- v. **APPROVED** the Minutes of the Adult Services Development and Scrutiny Sub-Committee held on 28 November 2019 and 16 January 2020.

The meeting ended at 12.55pm.

**The Highland Council
Caithness Committee**

Minutes of Meeting of the Caithness Committee held in Wick Town Hall, Bridge Street, Wick, on Wednesday 19 February 2020 at 10.00am.

Present:

Mr D Mackay

Mr A Sinclair

Mr M Reiss

Ms N Sinclair

Mr K Rosie

Officials in attendance:

Mr A Macmanus, Ward Manager, Chief Executive's Office

Ms A Donald, Education Quality Improvement Manager, Care and Learning Service

Dr F Grant, Head Teacher, Wick High School, Care and Learning Service

Ms J Jennett, Area Care and Learning Manager, Care and Learning Service (by VC)

Mr D Cowie, Principal Planner, Development and Infrastructure Service (by VC)

Mr D Chisholm, Planner, Development and Infrastructure Service (by VC)

Mr J Holden, Housing Manager (North), Community Services

Ms M Taylor, Housing Management Officer, Community Services

Ms A Macrae, Committee Administrator, Chief Executive's Office

Also in Attendance:

Inspector A Goskirk, Police Scotland

1. Apologies for Absence

Liesgeulan

Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of Mr R Bremner, Mr W Mackay and Mr S Mackie.

2. Declarations of Interest

Foillseachaidhean Com-pàirt

Item 8: Mr K Rosie and Ms N Sinclair (non-financial).

3. Minutes

Geàrr-chunntas

There were circulated and **NOTED** Minutes of the Caithness Committee held on 19 November 2019, which were approved by the Council on 9 December 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.

The Chair provided a response to the action that confirmation be sought from the Budget Leader as to whether an impact analysis was carried out in relation to any decision to introduce a recruitment freeze on schools in the area. He reported that the Budget

Leader had confirmed there was no absolute freeze on recruitment, and there was flexibility within the system. Specifically, each vacancy was considered by the Area Education Manager in the first instance and thereafter considered by the Weekly Governance Group, which was part of the Corporate Resources Committee.

In discussion, concern was expressed at the number of actions on the action tracker which remained outstanding and the need to follow up with officers to have those actions completed. It was also requested that the action tracker be appended to the minutes of the previous meeting circulated to the Committee.

The Committee **AGREED**:-

- i. the updates to the action tracker from the minutes of previous meetings; and
- ii. to follow up with officers on those actions which remained outstanding and that a copy of the action tracker be appended to the minutes of the previous meeting circulated to the Committee.

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

There had been circulated Report No CC/01/20 dated 10 February 2020 by the North Area Commander.

In discussion, Members raised the following issues:-

- a reduction in speeding in Thurso had been observed in recent months which was encouraging;
- confirmation was sought and provided that the public were in the main observing the new 20mph speed limits which had been introduced in Wick and that policing of the limit had been particularly focused on schools;
- an explanation was sought and provided on the process for testing drivers for drugs;
- in terms of drugs misuse in the area, this was a complex area and the issues were constantly changing in terms of the types of drugs and how they were being sourced and delivered;
- the importance of working in partnership and of having a joined up approach to tackle the underlying causes and change the culture around alcohol and drugs misuse and the positive work being undertaken in the area including by Safer Caithness, Caithness Community Partnership, licensees, and the Caithness Drug and Alcohol Forum. There was the potential for the Icelandic Model for preventing adolescent substance use to be piloted in Caithness as an effective approach going forward;
- concern at ongoing issues of vandalism at the public toilets in Riverside, Wick. It would be helpful to highlight to the public the resourcing challenges Police Scotland faced in terms of prioritising incidents at the toilets against those involving people's wellbeing. The Area Inspector advised that he would investigate the potential for a media communication to be issued to the public on this matter;
- the improved detection rates in relation to shoplifting were exceptional and stores in the area be commended in this regard;

- concern at the figures in relation to missing persons and at the significant amount of resources Police Scotland had to invest in these cases; and
- the number of thefts from motor vehicles was extremely low and was a reminder that Caithness was a safe place in which to live;

The Committee **NOTED** following scrutiny, progress made against the objectives set within the Highland and Islands Local Policing Plan 2017-2020 Year 3, for the period covering 1 April 2019 - 31 December 2019.

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

There had been circulated Report No CC/02/20 dated 7 February 2020 by the Interim Chief Executive Officer Education and Learning.

The Education Quality Improvement Manager provided an update on progress with staffing at Wick High School and Keiss and Bower Primary Schools. She also provided a summary of the HMIe inspection reports in relation to Thrumster Primary School and Noss Primary Schools highlighting the key strengths and areas for improvement which had been identified and confirming that no follow up visits would be undertaken.

Dr F Grant, Head Teacher, Wick High School reported that she was on secondment for a period of six months with the Education Quality Improvement Team. Her role was to support schools in the North, including in Caithness, with the main agenda of raising attainment. Her other role was to help develop learning and modern teaching strategies in schools across all areas of the Highlands.

Members congratulated Dr Grant on her secondment and looked forward to her contribution and strong leadership in North schools.

In response to a question, it was confirmed the most recent figures on school leaver destinations at Wick High School were due to be published by the Scottish Government by the end of the month.

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

7. Caithness Educational Trusts Urrasan Foghlaim Ghallaibh

There had been circulated Report No CC/03/20 dated 7 February 2020 by the Interim Chief Executive Officer Education and Learning.

In discussion, Members welcomed the recommendations set out in the report and the proposals to simplify and streamline what was currently a complex process and minimise officers time in administering the trust funds. The proposals would achieve a fairer outcome and the reallocation of responsibility to the relevant schools was welcomed.

The Committee **AGREED**:-

- i. the funds that are noted in Appendix 1, schedule 3,4 and 5 are allocated to the school and that the head teacher uses this for the benefit of any/all pupils;
- ii. that a process is set up to automatically issue these funds in April of each financial year which will provide clarity around the remaining budget for the coming year;
- iii. that an application window be applied and that based on available funds and received applications the amount set aside for the year be allocated on that basis. This will require some advertising on the Council website and by other means to encourage applications at a certain time;
- iv. the amount set aside for bursary payments be agreed by the Committee at the beginning of the financial year with data available to inform decision making; and
- v. the sum allocated in each year provides opportunity and fairness with new applicants receiving priority over returning applicants, with a new maximum being set per person.

8. Caithness and Sutherland Town Centre Strategy Ro-innleachd Meadhan Baile Ghallaibh agus Chataibh

Declaration of Interests – Ms N Sinclair and Mr K Rosie declared non-financial interests in this item as a Director of Wick’s Heart and Board Member of Thurso Community Development Trust 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 them from taking part in the discussion.

There had been circulated Report No CC/04/20 dated 4 February 2020 by the Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure and Environment.

In discussion, Members commended the officers on their work in producing the Strategy and raised the following issues:-

- welcoming that the Strategy reflected the local priorities which had been identified by local Members and the community in relation to Wick Town Centre and that the comments on traffic management aligned with the recent introduction of the 20mph limits and enforcement of the Market Square pedestrian zone;
- support for the Action Programme on the basis local Members and the community were eager for the Strategy to be more action focused following the extensive consultations which had been carried out;
- the potential to engage with other parties with a high level of expertise in urban regeneration and regional development. The Principal Planner referred to there being opportunities for other parties to get involved in the actions to be identified in the Action Programme and in the work of local organisations such as the Thurso Community Development Trust. At a wider strategic level, there was the potential for anyone to engage with the Scottish Government’s consultation on the National Planning Framework;
- clarification was sought and provided that the harbour area was identified in the Strategy as part of Thurso Town Centre and following the consultation feedback had been identified as one of the key opportunities in the Action Programme. It was noted that Thurso Community Development Trust had identified a number of projects in the harbour area; and

- in terms of the place making priorities for Thurso, the challenges associated with developing the attractive river corridor setting in view of the flood risk in this area and the uncertainty around whether a flood prevention scheme would be progressed.

The Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the issues raised in consultation responses to the Draft Caithness and Sutherland Town Centre Strategy (Section 5 and Appendix 1) and revisions to the Strategy (Appendix 2);
- ii. **AGREED** that the Strategy, finalised in line with the decisions of the two Area Committees, be submitted to Scottish Ministers for consideration as per the statutory process for adoption of Supplementary Guidance;
- iii. **NOTED** that the Strategy will be a material consideration for development management purposes with immediate effect;
- iv. **AGREED** to the adoption and issuing of the submitted version of the Strategy as statutory Supplementary Guidance to the Caithness and Sutherland Local Development Plan upon completion of the requisite 28 day period for consideration by Scottish Ministers, subject to any directions from Ministers indicating otherwise; and
- v. **NOTED** that the associated Action Programme will be drawn together by officers in consultation with Ward Members and the parties mentioned in it and subsequently will be published and promoted to those parties and the wider communities.

9. Housing Revenue Account: Garage Rents 2020/21 Cunntas Teachd A-steach Taigheadais: Màil Gharaidsean 2020/21

There had been circulated Report No CC/05/20 dated 5 February 2020 by the Executive Chief Officer Housing and Property.

In discussion, Members raised the following issues:-

- a written comment received from Mr R Bremner on the need for a discussion on using the income generated from garage rents to demolish and improve areas, including the provision of off street parking for tenants rather than using environmental monies for redevelopment;
- concern was expressed at the lack of repairs being undertaken to garages in general and a proposal that no rent increase be applied to garage rents in Caithness and consideration given to an overall strategy for garages and garage sites going forward;
- a 3% rent increase be applied to garages and garage sites in Caithness in 2020/21 given the relatively small increase involved and to ensure there was the income stream officers had anticipated to carry out repairs. This was on the basis that a report be submitted to the Committee in August 2020 providing more detailed information and costings on the potential options for garages and garage sites in Caithness, including a local assessment of demand and condition, to enable decisions on future investment and use; and

- noting that Mr D Mackay did not support the proposal to apply a rent increase in 2020/21.

The Committee **AGREED** that :-

- i. a 3% rent increase be applied to Garages and Garage Sites in Caithness for 2020/21; and
- ii. a report providing more detailed information and costs on the potential options for garages and garage sites in Caithness be submitted to the Committee in August 2020 to enable decisions on future investment and use.

10. Housing Performance Report – 1 April 2019 to 31 December 2019 Aithisg Coileanaidh Taigheadais – 1 Giblean 2019 to 31 Dùbhlachd 2019

There had been circulated Report No CC/06/20 dated 4 February 2020 by the Executive Chief Officer Housing and Property.

The Area Housing Manager advised the incorrect version of appendix 2 had been attached to the report and he would arrange for the correct appendix to be circulated to Members.

The Chair reported that a number of written comments on the report had been received from Mr R Bremner, details of which he provided.

In regard to the reduction in arrears since the previous quarter, it was reported this reflected the work undertaken by the Council's Housing Policy team with the DWP, the Housing Team's robust approach to rent arrears and the advice and assistance provided to tenants. The fact that tenants had a better understanding of how Universal Credit worked was also a factor.

Thereafter, it was confirmed the figures for homeless presentations did not include any cases as a result of Council evictions due to rent arrears. The Loch Street garages project was being advanced separately to the strategic discussion on the future options for garages. There were complex issues around community asset transfer and access to be resolved. There was an expectation that environmental monies would be committed, however there was a need to ensure the proposals were deliverable and fitted with the overall strategy for garages to be considered by the Committee.

The Area Housing Manager confirmed he would arrange for responses to be provided to Mr Bremner on his other written comments. He would provide a response to all Members on the clarification sought on the environmental budget.

A further point was raised on the importance of external maintenance to improve the appearance of Council properties going forward.

The Committee **NOTED** following scrutiny, the information provided on housing performance in the period 1 April 2019 to 31 December 2019.

The meeting ended at Noon.

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, 19 February, 2020 at 10.30 a.m.**

Present:

Mr A Baxter (items 10 to 15)
Mr A Henderson

Mr N McLean
Mr D Rixson

In attendance:

Mrs C McDiarmid, Executive Chief Officer, Communities and Place
Mrs D Ferguson, Senior Ward Manager (Ross, Skye and Lochaber)
Mr S Dalgarno, Development Plans Manager
Mr S Eastaugh, Access Officer, Inverness and Nairn
Mr F MacDonald, Head of Property Services (by VC)
Mr A Henderson, Principal Project Manager (by VC)
Mr N Young, Transport Planning Officer (by VC)
Mr R Gerring, Transport Planning Manager (by VC)
Mr R Porteous, Roads Operations Manager, Community Services
Ms L MacKellaich, Road Safety Officer
Ms S MacLennan, Housing Manager (South)
Mr J Henderson, Housing Investment Officer (by VC)
Mr A MacInnes, Administrative Assistant, Chief Executive's Service

Also in attendance:-

For item 4:-

Mr A Nicolson, Programme Manager, Highlands & Islands Enterprise (item 4)
Mr A McKenna, Fort William, Inverlochy & Torlundy Community Council
Mr M Drayton, Fort William, Inverlochy & Torlundy Community Council
Mr A Farquhar, Fort William, Inverlochy & Torlundy Community Council
Mr I Langley, Spean Bridge, Roy Bridge & Achnagarry Community Council (in abeyance)
Dr M Foxley, Ardgour Community Council
Mr J Hutchison, Kilmallie Community Council
Mr S Stoddart, Duror and Kentallen Community Council

Inspector Isla Campbell, Lochaber Area Inspector, Police Scotland (item 5)
Ms V Trefler, HITRANS (item 8) (by VC)

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

Business

1. Interim Chair

The Chairman had indicated that he would be late in attending the Meeting and therefore Members were invited to appoint an Interim Chair.

Mr A Henderson was unanimously appointed as Interim Chair for this meeting.

2. Apologies for Absence Leisgeulan

Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of Mr B Allan and Mr B Thompson.

3. Declarations of Interest Foillseachaidhean Com-pàirt

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

Item 13 – Mr D Rixson (non financial)
Items 8 & 10 – Mr A Henderson (non financial)

4. Fort William 2040 An Gearasdan 2040

There was circulated Report No LA/1/20 by the Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure and Environment.

Representatives from Community Councils in Lochaber had been invited to attend the meeting for a question and answer session on this item.

During discussion, the following main points were raised:-

- It was queried how the new vision theme of a low carbon place worked alongside the potential for natural gas as a fuel source in Fort William. It was explained that this was linked to the plans for the Smelter and given the reliance on other fossil fuels being transported to the area by truck, a gas network for Fort William would lower the carbon footprint for the town. However, there had been a declaration of a climate emergency made by The Highland Council so the appetite for new infrastructure that would deliver gas to the town had disappeared. HIE were now working with The Highland Council and Zero Waste Scotland in order to look at approaches to deliver all the new infrastructure and existing provision in Fort William in a net zero carbon format.
- It was requested that the carbon emissions on North Road, Fort William should be monitored as the air quality for walkers and cyclists on this road seemed to be poor;
- It was queried if the Council had an environmental policy that would consider low carbon in the future. It was advised that a climate change strategy was being developed which would help understand what tangible measures would be needed to meet the zero climate change commitment. The Council also had a carbon management plan which considered how the Council's operations could reduce its carbon emissions. There was not a community strategy as yet and this was currently being considered at the Council's Climate Change Working Group. All suggestions on how the Council could reduce its carbon emissions would be welcomed.
- While the aspirational project of a fixed link at Corran Narrows was preferred, in the meantime there was a need for a replacement programme for the MV Corran Ferry and road improvements on the A861 to be included in the Fort William 2040 Plan. Members were supportive of this.
- The Crown Estate Scotland Board were in active discussion with a number of coastal communities including Fort William 2040 regarding a number of projects. This required strong leadership and full time project officers in order to

implement projects. The Crown Estate could provide funding for FW2040 projects.

- The invitation to Community Councils to attend the meeting while welcomed could not be regarded as consultation on the report as there was a need in future for a community consultation event, prior to the report being submitted to the Lochaber Committee. In response, it was intended that the approach to consultation helps reinforce the intention that the Council was taking a collaborative approach and that it was a transparent exercise and an open forum for updating the FW2040 plan and being responsive to changes. The proposed approach to consultation in the coming year was detailed in the report. Views on any additional consultation activities that should be undertaken were welcomed.
- Corpach Port expansion project also mentioned the possibility of the creation of a Harbour Trust and Harbour Authority for Loch Linnhe. It was requested that the creation of a Loch Linnhe Harbour Trust and Harbour Authority should be a project on its own.
- Ambitions for the Waterfront were included in the plan, such as Cruise Ship Reception Facilities. It was advised that currently a Harbour Master from a different port had to be brought in every time a Cruise Ship visited Loch Linnhe.
- Reference was made to the aspirational project for a community transport scheme in South Lochaber. If a scheme was found that was deemed viable to progress, this would be developed as an active project in the FW2040 plan. Given the importance of this initiative to South Lochaber, Members supported this project moving from an aspirational project to an active project.
- In relation to the enhanced community/sports/cultural centre within Fort William, it was explained that HIE had commissioned an options appraisal which would involve assessing the current infrastructure for indoor sports and culture within the area and a review of future provision. This work would be held in conjunction with Linnhe Leisure, High Life Highland and The Highland Council.
- The Lochaber area lacked a cultural hub, and therefore this was an aspiration within the Plan.
- An active travel route for a way to the Isles was suggested to be added to the Plan and reference was made to discussions that had been held with Sustrans on a walking/cycle route to the Isle of Skye.
- the need for better coordination between independent projects was highlighted, so that these projects were better integrated.

Thereafter, the Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the comments made through the FW2040 consultation and **AGREED** the proposed updates to the FW2040 online document summarised at Appendix 1, specifically:
 - a) the inclusion of a new Vision theme relating to “A Low Carbon Place”;
 - b) updates to the FW2040 Masterplan at Appendix 2 and corresponding Delivery Programme at Appendix 3;
 - c) the list of new / aspirational projects listed at Appendix 4; and
 - d) also **AGREED** the following aspirational projects to be added to the active FW2040 Plan as decided at the meeting:-
 - replacement programme for the MV Corran Ferry;
 - A861 road improvements.
 - the creation of a Harbour Trust and Harbour Authority for Loch Linnhe
 - Community Transport Scheme in South Lochaber

- ii. **AGREED** that the updated FW2040 online document should be a material consideration for development management purposes forming an integral part of the West Highland and Islands Local Development Plan Action Programme;
- iii. in response to the independent evaluation of FW2040 detailed at Appendix 5, **AGREED** that the Council's Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure and Environment and HIE Area Manager jointly write to Scottish Government to seek better spatial coordination of spending by government departments and agencies and to suggest that Fort William be a pilot for such a place based approach to investment;
- iv. **AGREED** that the updated FW2040 material approved by Committee as set out above, be incorporated within other illustrative and explanatory material and published as an updated FW2040 online Storymap as soon as practicable;
- v. **NOTED** the intention to continue to monitor and review FW2040 progress as outlined in section 7 of the report.

5. **Police Scotland Local Committee Performance Report** **Aithisg Choileanaidh Comataidh Ionadail Poileas Alba**

There was circulated Report No. LA/2/20 by the Lochaber Area Inspector, Police Scotland.

During discussion, the following main points were raised:-

- The current Local Policing 3 year Plan was coming to an end and Police Scotland were seeking comments via an on line survey for the next term of the Policing Plan;
- There had been a reduction of 492 people detected for speeding in the area in 2019/20 compared to 2018/19;
- Where possible, Police Officers would liaise with Community Councils, either by attending meetings or by correspondence to discuss any police matters.

The Committee **NOTED** progress made against the objectives set within the Highland and Islands Local Policing Plan 2017-20 Year 3, attached as Annex A to the report, for the period covering 1 April 2019- 31 December 2019.

6. **Lochaber Local Access Forum – Annual Report** **Fòram Intrigeadh Ionadail Loch Abar – Aithisg Bhliadhnail**

There was circulated Report No. LA/3/20 by the Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure and Environment.

In particular, reference was made to unauthorised mountain bike trail building, ways of managing it and the new guide for land managers and riders produced by the National Access Forum.

The Committee **NOTED** the Lochaber Local Access Forum Annual Report.

7. Fort William Offices Update

There was circulated Report No. LA/4/20 by the Executive Chief Officer Housing and Property.

Members praised the outcome of the new Fort William Offices project which transformed a derelict old building into modern flexible office accommodation. It was hoped that this project would act as a template to repurpose other old buildings.

It was noted that by relocating to the new Offices the Council were able to discontinue leasing three other properties in the Town, generating annual revenue savings of over £375,000. This money would be used to finance the new Offices and was not surplus money. It was confirmed that by moving to the new Offices there had been a reduction in running costs.

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

8. Fort William Active Travel Masterplan Refresh Cunntas as Ur mu Phriomh Phlana Siubhal Gniomhach a Ghearasdain

Declaration of Interest - Mr A Henderson declared a non-financial interest in this item as the Chair 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 discussion.

There was circulated Report No. LA/5/20 by the Executive Chief Officer, Infrastructure and Environment.

During discussion, the following main points were raised:-

- In relation to the College Link route, there was a need to continue discussions with the College as the College had aspirations for a new College at Blar Mor.
- feedback was sought on shared use paths between cyclists and pedestrians. It was advised that shared use was not seen as an exemplar in an urban environment and would not meet the criteria for funding from Sustrans. However, shared use paths would be appropriate in low volume routes. There had been instances where poor behaviour by road users had required the intervention of the Council with advisory signing. In terms of the enforcement issue, when a cyclist uses a footway that is not permitted for cycling, this is an offence and would be a Police matter. Transport Scotland in other projects in Highland were bringing forward shared use proposals.
- With reference to proposed developments at Blar Mor, the Fort William Spine route was planned close to the Blar, but not directly to it. It was confirmed that any future developments would be considered in the active travel planning.
- An assurance was sought that there would be access to active travel routes for emergency vehicles as it may be a good route in an emergency. It was confirmed that there were no plans to close any roads to emergency vehicles.
- Lochaber Environmental Group were active on bike projects and they were extremely proactive. It was advised that there was a lot of funding that the Council could not apply for and instead the Council had given support for funding bids to various Groups, including the Lochaber Environmental Group.

Thereafter, the Committee:-

i **NOTED** the contents of the report, in particular the recent policies that identify walking, wheeling and cycling at the top of the sustainable transport hierarchy;

ii **APPROVED** the use of the Fort William Active Travel Masterplan as a material consideration when dealing with development proposals and as a supporting document for funding bids; and

iii **AGREED** to delegate the Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure and Environment to liaise with other bodies, including Transport Scotland, with a view to identify funding opportunities and a delivery programme to target early improvements across the Fort William active travel network.

9. Town Centre Fund Update

The Committee **NOTED** that four Lochaber projects received grants from the Town Centre Fund. All projects were on target to fully commit their allocation by end-March 2020, as follows:

Caol Regeneration Company - Caol Co-op car park - public realm improvements - £65,000;

Caol Regeneration Company - Thomas Telford Corpach Marina – contribution to professional fees linked to marina project - £77,045;

Fort William Marina and Shoreline CIC – Canopy, Cameron Square, Fort William - £30,570;

Highland Council - Fort William High Street public realm improvements (priority works – lighting) - £26,352. This project had been amended from a lighting scheme to delivery of a ‘greener’ High Street by installing trees and renewing street furniture.

10. Corran Narrows Options Development Study – Interim Update Sgrùdadh Ceangal Stèidhichte Caolas a’ Chorrain – Cunntas san Eadar-àm

Declaration of Interest - Mr A Henderson declared a non-financial interest in this item as the Chair 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 discussion.

There was circulated Report No. LA/6/20 by the Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure and Environment.

During discussion, the following main points were raised:-

- In terms of engagement with the community on the Study, it was advised that the Consultant had used all information gathered from previous engagements and reports on the views of the community on the benefits of having a fixed link at Corran Narrows. Due to the timescale for the Study to be completed and submitted to Transport Scotland further community engagement at this point had not been feasible, but there had been engagement with various representatives within The Highland Council and other Partner agencies. However, for the next stage of the process, wider community engagement would be critical.
- The Corran Ferry had an impact on a much wider geographical area than the area in close vicinity to it. It was explained that last year the A830 road from

Fort William to Mallaig had been shut for approximately 10 hours and the only alternative route was the Corran Ferry. Therefore when considering societal impacts, the corran narrows crossing was a strategic component for the transport network in the Lochaber area.

- The Corran Ferry was enormously important to the economy of the west Lochaber area.
- It was advised that Officers had already engaged with Transport Scotland regarding the Strategic Transport Projects Review and highlighted the traffic conditions and difficulties in Fort William on the A82 and A830 and that the Corran Ferry helps to address any closures of the trunk road. The Consultant would be encouraged to recognise the wide impact that the Corran Ferry had for the wider Lochaber area and the connection to the Island of Mull.
- In terms of the power generation option, it was queried if the potential for raising revenue income for any fixed link project would be included in the Study. It was advised that any project coming forward would not hinder power generation opportunity.

Thereafter, the Committee:-

i **NOTED** the contents of this report; and

ii **AGREED** to delegate the Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure and Environment to:

- a. submit the final report to Transport Scotland at the earliest opportunity;
- b. prepare a future briefing for Ward 21 Members; and
- c. present follow up reports to the Lochaber Area Committee and Economy and Infrastructure Committee.

11. Lochaber Area Roads Maintenance Programme 2020-2021 Prògram Càradh Rathaidean 2020-2021

There was circulated Report No. LA/7/20 by the Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure and Environment.

During discussion, the following main points were raised:-

- In terms of drainage at Kinlochourn, this road was badly affected by water and efforts were being made through improved drainage to get the water of the road.
- In relation to the cyclic verging budget, there was a lot of interest now in cutting verges as little as possible for wildlife preservation, and it was queried if there were any savings to be achieved in this budget. However, it was also noted that there was a counter argument that verges were not being cut enough. It was confirmed that biodiversity was an issue being considered when cutting verges. The budget also included repairs to verges.
- It was confirmed that East Bay Road, Mallaig surfacing works had been costed;
- It was advised that no surface recycling had been undertaken last year due to budget constraints. The same position would apply next year if the budget remained the same as last year's budget.
- It was queried if the Council was maximising funding from the Strategic Timber Transport Fund. For example, the Trislaig Road and Drimnin Road had significant volumes of timber transport and they were deteriorating quickly. It was confirmed that the Council was working with the Highland Timber Transport

Partnership in developing a portfolio of roads for consideration of funding under the scheme and the Trislaig and Drimnin roads would be included in this.

- There was a feeling in the Lochaline community that Calmac were encouraging more HGVs to cross from Fishnish to Lochaline and then onto the Corran Ferry rather than go via Oban. There seemed to be a larger volume of HGV's on that road, leading to significant deterioration of the road. An undertaking was given by the Officer to look into this.
- It was confirmed that the Lochaber, Nairn, Badenoch and Strathspey area would now have its own road gully emptying machine, so there would be an uplift in road gully emptying in the area.
- It was felt that the Mallaig road scheme, Caol road scheme and Morar road scheme should be capital works schemes as they were equally as populated as any of the A class roads in the area. In particular, it was requested that the Mallaig road scheme and Morar road schemes be included in the capital budget works.
- It was advised that where abutment washout repairs were on hold, the bridges were still being inspected. The Council was in a better position now regarding bridge inspections allowing Officers to monitor repairs required to bridges.

Thereafter, the Committee:-

i **APPROVED** the proposed 2020/21 Roads Maintenance Programme for Lochaber Area, with the addition of the Mallaig and Morar road schemes being included in the capital budget works;

ii **AGREED** that the Trislaig Road and Drimnin Road would be included in the list of roads for consideration of funding from the Strategic Timber Transport Fund; and

iii **AGREED** that the issue that Calmac might be encouraging HGVs to use the Ardnamurchan Peninsula route would be looked into.

12. 20 mph Zones in Lochaber Villages Sònaichean 20msu ann am Bailtean Loch Abar

There was circulated Report No. LA/8/20 by the Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure and Environment.

During discussion, reference was made to continuous requests from the communities in Ballachulish and Kinlochleven where there was widespread support for the introduction of village wide 20 mph zones. It was understood that Roads Engineers relied on collision data when considering road safety schemes, but it was felt that a proactive approach should be taken and road safety schemes should be introduced to help prevent accidents happening. Therefore, it was hoped that a way could be found to find funding to support these communities with the introduction of 20 mph village wide zones.

The Committee **AGREED**:-

i funding sources for the implementation of any new 20 mph schemes be sought corporately with an update report to be taken to a future Economy and Infrastructure Committee; and

ii Community Services continue to seek funding sources/opportunities for implementation of new schemes.

13. 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/9/20 by the Executive Chief Officer, Property & Housing.

It was advised that there had been discussions in Ward 21 regarding spending money on environmental improvements in the Claggan area and given that it was near the end of the financial year, confirmation was sought, that if those discussions were not concluded that the funding could be carried forward into the next financial year. It was confirmed that the funding could be carried forward into the next financial year.

The Committee **NOTED** the information provided on housing performance in the period 1 April 2019 to 31 December 2019.

14. Housing Revenue Account: Garage Rents 2020/21
Màil Gharaidsean 2020/21

There was circulated Report No. LA/10/20 by the Executive Chief Officer Property and Housing.

The report provided information on garage rents for Lochaber and invited the Committee to set rent levels for garage and garage sites held on the Housing Revenue Account for 2020/21.

Following consideration, the Committee **AGREED** a 3% rent increase to apply to Lochaber Garages and Garage Sites.

15. Minutes
Geàrr-chunntas

The Committee **NOTED** for information Minutes of Meeting of the Lochaber Committee held on 6 November, 2019 which were approved by the Council on 9 December, 2019.

Concern was expressed that the Lochaber Committee minutes had been amended by the Council's Administration at the Council meeting held on 9 December, 2019. The amendment had been in relation to the Committee's discussion on Corran Ferry fares. It was emphasised that these minutes were a record of the Lochaber Committee's discussions and as had previously been drafted, they had been an accurate record of what had been said at the 6 November, 2019 meeting. While the Budget Leader and Chief Executive may have disagreed with what had been said, neither of them had been at the meeting and therefore as it had been an accurate record of what was said, it was felt very inappropriate for the Council's Administration to change the content of the minute. There had been no prior indication given to the Chairman of the Lochaber Committee who had made the comments, that the minute was to be changed at the Council meeting and this was disappointing.

It was confirmed that an indication had been given by the Budget Leader and Chief Executive that as a result of the Lochaber Committee agreeing to the introduction of

pedestrian charging on the Corran Ferry that it would not be necessary to go ahead with the increase in Corran Ferry fares that was already planned for the next financial year.

It was further highlighted that the minutes were a legal document that would be relied upon for scrutiny purposes in future.

The meeting ended at 1.05 p.m.

The Highland Council

Minutes of Meeting of the **City of Inverness Area Committee** held in the Council Chamber, Town House, Inverness on Thursday 20 February 2020 at 10.00 am.

Present:

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

Officials in Attendance:

Ms L Denovan, Executive Chief Officer - Resources & Finance
 Mr M MacLeod, Executive Chief Officer - Infrastructure & Environment
 Ms T Urry, Head of Roads and Transport, Community Services
 Mr J Kelman, Principal Project Manager, Development and Infrastructure Service
 Ms F McInally, ICATN Programme Manager, Development and Infrastructure Service
 Mr J Taylor, Road Operations Manager (Inverness)
 Mr R MacLeod, Housing Manager (Inverness)
 Mr D Haas, Inverness City Area Manager
 Miss J MacLennan, Democratic Services Manager, Chief Executive's Office
 Miss M Murray, Committee Administrator, Chief Executive's Office

Also in attendance:

Ms F Hampton, Director of the Inverness Castle Project, High Life Highland
 Mr S MacKellar, LDN Architects
 Mr P Strachan, Chair, Inverness BID
 Chief Inspector M MacInnes, Area Commander (Inverness), Police Scotland

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

Mrs H Carmichael in the Chair

Business

1. Apologies for Absence Leisgeulan

Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of Mrs G Campbell-Sinclair and Ms E Knox.

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

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

Item 4 – Mr K Gowans (non-financial)

Item 13 – Mr A Jarvie (non-financial)

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

Members were informed that the following individual had been recognised in the New Year's Honours List: -

Robert Melville Fowler, Counter Terrorism Strategy Liaison Officer, Highlands and Islands, Police Scotland, had received an MBE for services to Law and Order.

In addition, the Provost provided an update on the Winter Payments Scheme, explaining that, as of today, the total paid was £128,604. There had been 1531 successful applicants and, with applications being received daily, it was anticipated that in the region of 1600 awards would have been made by the closing date on 29 February 2020. This was an increase on last year's total of 1517, and a success story for the Committee.

The Committee **NOTED** the position.

4. **The Spirit of the Highlands / Inverness Castle Project – Update** **Pròiseact Spiorad na Gàidhealtachd / Caisteal Inbhir Nis – cunntas às ùr**

Declaration of Interest: Mr K Gowans declared a non-financial interest in this item on the grounds that his wife was an employee 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 his involvement in the discussion.

Members of the Inverness Castle Project Team provided an update on the transfer of ownership of the South Tower to the Council and progress in the programme to transform the Castle from serving as the Sheriff Court court to a visitor attraction.

Specific updates were also provided on plans to maximise on the energy efficiency of the new attraction, the proposals to landscape the esplanade, and the programme for the Doors Open Weekend in May.

During discussion, the following issues were raised:-

- clarification was sought in terms of the condition of the building and the possible need for any future repairs following which it was confirmed that the purchase price had now been agreed and there were no expectations of any issues in this regard;

- there was a need to consider the wider context of energy efficiency arrangements in older buildings and specifically how energy conservation could be merged with building conservation in future;
- in welcoming the positive progress with this flagship project for the Highlands, it was suggested that increased capital costs should mean reduced revenue costs in future. In this respect, it was confirmed that there would be a focus on offsetting capital costs against the longer term benefits in relation to revenue costs as part of the future feasibility study;
- it would be essential to make this project an exemplar of low carbon and a real opportunity now existed to share the findings elsewhere in future in terms of best practice;
- detailed consideration had to be given as to how best to use the extensive landscaped areas around the Castle and this had to include a focus on introduction of native plants wherever possible in order to reflect the historical importance of the Castle and ensure that the project was both powerful and welcoming, highlighting the stories that affected its history through the ages;
- the potential use of 'Wrap', as had been used during the work to the frontage of the Town House, should be considered;
- it would be beneficial to involve interested groups and the general public where possible and to encourage them to submit ideas and proposals for consideration;
- the unique opportunity in respect of archaeology and specifically the work which would be undertaken around ground investigations was particularly important and should be widely publicised;
- there would need to be a detailed focus on plans for the stairs linking Bank Road and Castle Hill as part of the future access strategy; and
- it was suggested that consideration should be given to the involvement of the National Trust for Scotland and local interest groups as this could perhaps provide valuable insight and contributions for the project as it progressed.

The Committee:-

- NOTED** the update; and
- AGREED** that consideration be given to how the proposed energy efficiency feasibility study could be applied to other older buildings in the City.

5. Yearly Annual Report on Inverness Business Improvement District (BID) Aithisg Bhliadhnaid mu Sgìre Leasachadh Gnothachais Inbhir Nis

There had been circulated Report No. CIA/1/20 dated 6 January 2020 by the Inverness City Area Manager.

Mr P Strachan, Chair, Inverness BID, gave a presentation in amplification of the report, during which he expressed thanks to the Council for its increased focus on Inverness City Centre.

During discussion, the following issues were raised:-

- Inverness had a worldwide reputation and its natural beauty had been greatly enhanced over the years through partnership working with BID.

Support was expressed for the initiatives outlined in the report, with particular reference being made to the Coach Friendly Project, City Summer Floral Displays, Security Task Team and Taxi Marshalls, Amenity Ambassadors, and Gull Management;

- BID had done a fantastic job in terms of raising awareness of how important the city centre was, increasing footfall and improving safety;
- charities that occupied premises in the city centre, such as Inverness, Badenoch and Strathspey Citizens Advice Bureau, were excluded from BID activities as they did not pay a levy, and BID was missing an opportunity to develop something unique by tapping into a different sector that could add value to the work already taking place. The voluntary sector had experience of motivating and mobilising volunteers, and many volunteers would want to enhance the city centre. In particular, there could be opportunities for intergenerational work and learning experiences. The Chair of Inverness BID thanked Members for their comments and undertook to take them back to the BID Board, Members of which had strong connections to the charitable sector, for consideration;
- the need for businesses to be involved in the discussions regarding transport in the city centre was emphasised, and Councillor MacWilliam, Chair of the Inverness Community Partnership Transport Subgroup, invited the Chair of Inverness BID and any BID members who wished to attend to the next meeting of the Subgroup. This was welcomed by the Chair of Inverness BID. Members added that people spent more money when they came in to the city centre by public transport or bicycle, and information was sought, and provided, on what BID was doing to encourage active travel; and
- Members commended the work that had taken place in terms of gull management was welcomed, and information was sought, and provided, on what could be done to further reduce the number of gulls. Information also having been sought on whether anything could be done to reduce the number of pigeons and rabbits, the Provost confirmed that officers worked closely with Environmental Health in that regard.

The Committee **NOTED**:-

- i. the work as detailed in the report; and
- ii. the presentation provided by Inverness BID representatives and the on-going development of partnership working.

6. Police – Area Performance Summary Report Poileas – Geàrr-aithisg Coileanadh Sgìreil

There had been circulated Report No. CIA/2/20 dated 10 February 2020 by Chief Inspector Mairi MacInnes, Area Commander.

In introducing the report, Chief Inspector MacInnes thanked Members for their ongoing support of the policing team in Inverness and provided the following operational updates:-

- further to previous discussions regarding rural house break-ins, the two vacancies in Fort Augustus had been filled so the rural policing team was now fully resourced and in a better position for the forthcoming summer season;

- all officers in Inverness were now trained in the use of handheld mobile data devices which allowed them to access their entire desktop database. This had been transformational as it had reduced time spent in the office and enabled officers to be out more often and to be more visible;
- new drug driving legislation had come into force in October 2019, meaning that if someone was believed to be driving under the influence of drugs they could be given a roadside test involving a mouth swab. Road policing officers, as well as a number of operational officers, had been trained in the use of the new test, and a number of people had failed the test; and
- the findings of the “Your Police” public consultation survey had been published. In Highland, the top priority was road safety, followed by selling or using drugs, which was in line with local and national priorities.

In addition, reference was made to the four domestic house break-ins that had taken place in Inverness in recent weeks, and the importance of reporting suspicious activity, particularly doorstep crime and any unusual activity in the street, to the police was emphasised.

During discussion, the following issues were raised:-

- in relation to community policing in Culloden and Ardersier, it was questioned what was happening in the evenings as Members had been advised that there was no one on shift to attend Community Council meetings. This was cause for concern as it was during the evening that antisocial behaviour took place. The areas that young people congregated were well known to the police, and information was sought on how this was being addressed. In response, it was explained that the provision of the beats team had been reviewed as it was not sustainable in its previous format, and there was now a team of officers as well as dedicated beat officers. Contact would be made by one of the beats team prior to Community Council meetings and a report would be submitted. If there were ongoing issues that required a police presence every effort would be made to attend. There were response teams to deal with any ongoing anti-social behaviour. Further discussion ensued, during which Members commented that Community Councils expected and valued a police presence at meetings, even when there was a low level of crime in the area, and it was necessary to inform them of the new arrangements. Likewise, Community Council meetings were a source of information for the police, and it was important not to lose that link. In addition, whilst it was recognised that there was now a team of officers, it was suggested that consideration be given to identifying a named officer for each area that people could contact. This would allow for more consistent communication and effective relationship building. Chief Inspector MacInnes undertook to feed back Members’ comments to the community beats team;
- with regard to the robberies that had taken place in Fort Augustus the previous summer, local business operators would value a meeting to discuss the coming season and what they could do to protect themselves. In particular, there was a need for a way to deposit money safely, and reference was made to ATMs overseas which doubled as night safes and operated without personnel. The banks had not done enough for Highland communities and the Council Leader undertook to raise the matter with them again. Chief Inspector MacInnes confirmed that she could arrange a meeting with local businesses as suggested;

- concern was expressed regarding an illegal rave that took place in Glenmoriston every autumn. Last year, to the distress of residents, it had taken place close to houses, and the Council Leader sought a meeting with the police to discuss how to prevent or move it. Chief Inspector MacInnes confirmed that the police were aware of the event and undertook to liaise with the Council Leader in terms of the work that had been carried out and the plans it was hoped to have in place this year;
- in relation to the Driver Engagement North initiative and the associated interactive driving simulator to assess a driver's reactions and abilities, Members queried whether such an assessment could be applied for, commenting that many senior citizens would welcome the opportunity to participate. Chief Inspector MacInnes suggested that Councillor Campbell email her in that regard and she would endeavour to find out; and
- in terms of antisocial behaviour, concern was expressed regarding drivers racing on the A9 at Drumossie Brae late at night. The B9006 road to Culloden Battlefield was another area of concern in terms of speeding. Chief Inspector MacInnes undertook to look in to the matter.

The Committee otherwise **NOTED** the progress made against the objectives set within the Highland and Islands Local Policing Plan 2017-2020 Year 3, attached as Annex A to the report, for the period covering 1 April 2019 to 31 December 2019.

7. Inverness Community Safety Partnership (ICSP) Com-pàirteachas Sàbhailteachd Coimhearsnachd Inbhir Nis (ICSP)

There had been circulated Report No CIA/3/20 dated 30 January 2020 by the Inverness City Area Manager.

During discussion, the following issues were raised:-

- in relation to the support provided to Inverness Foodstuffs, reducing food waste would have an impact on climate change, and it was helpful to report positive impacts as well as negative ones;
- the update on what was an effective and well-managed Community Safety Partnership was welcomed; and
- Councillor Campbell, as the Committee's representative on the ICSP, commented that she was privileged to contribute to the Partnership's mission statement, and invited Members to contact her if they had any matters they wished to put forward for consideration by the Partnership.

The Committee otherwise **NOTED**:-

- i. the work of ICSP since the last report dated May 2018 to date;
- ii. the work of the Operation Respect Daytime Group;
- iii. the updated ICSP Constitution and Terms of Reference and the agreed new governance, oversight and accountability structures and reporting lines of communication arrangements which were now aligned to the Safer Highland Partnership directly through the Inverness Community Partnership; and
- iv. that the Inverness City Area Committee would continue to receive an annual update on the work of the Inverness Community Safety Partnership

in addition to any updates as part of regular Police and Fire scrutiny reports.

8. Inverness Community Safety Partnership – Operation Respect City Centre 2019 Winter Festival Period Evaluation Report
Com-pàirteachas Sàbhailteachd Coimhearsnachd Inbhir Nis – Aithisg Mheasaidh Ùine Fèis Geamhraidh 2019 ‘Operation Respect’ Meadhan a’ Bhaile

There had been circulated Joint Report No CIA/4/20 dated 6 February 2020 by the Operation Respect Festive Partners.

During discussion, Members commended the success of Operation Respect and expressed thanks and appreciation to all those involved. Working in partnership made for a much more effective initiative, and the city centre had benefited from it.

In relation to the top three crime types, information was sought on the reasons for the increase in the number of common assaults on emergency workers. Chief Inspector MacInnes undertook to investigate and get back to Councillor McAllister.

The Committee otherwise **NOTED** the evaluation available to date on the effectiveness of Operation Respect - City Centre for Winter 2019.

9. Riverside Way – Update and Next Steps
Slighe na h-Aibhne – Ath Cheumannan

There had been circulated Report No. CIA/5/20 dated 6 February 2020 by the Executive Chief Officer, Infrastructure and Environment.

In addition, there had been tabled a letter dated 20 February 2020 from Sustrans who, it was explained, had been unable to send a representative to the meeting.

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

During discussion, the following issues were raised:-

- it was disappointing that there was not a representative from Sustrans to provide more information;
- it had been confirmed in the report that there had been a significant decrease in traffic in the area concerned but this was not considered to be accurate;
- the information in respect of the current number of cyclists using this particular route was also queried and it was questioned as to whether there were examples/case studies from other areas where a cycle contraflow had been successful;
- it had to be highlighted that this might not be the best use of public money under the circumstances;
- there were concerns about future arrangements for coach parking in the area;

- whilst being supportive of active travel as concept and also 20mph zones, the local community were not in agreement with these particular proposals and as such there was a need for the Council to strengthen its consultation and engagement processes;
- Ballifeary Community Council had asked for a strategy for the entire area between the River and the A82 and it would be more beneficial if this could be provided as an alternative;
- the setting up of a workshop to engage local people in the design would be welcomed;
- on the basis that many within the local community were against a one-way system in this area, other options should be investigated;
- the current contraflow on Ardross Terrace was currently very dangerous for cyclists and this should be taken into account;
- full and detailed consultation and discussion with the local community should have been undertaken before a decision was taken on the design;
- constructive consensus on the way forward would be advantageous in terms of taking this forward with local residents;
- there were serious concerns about the proposed road markings which had been contained within the diagrams in the report;
- it was essential to balance the interests of all road users in the area whilst going ahead with the Road Traffic Order in order to be able to identify the best possible solution for the long term; and
- there was a need to undertake repairs to the road surface outside the RNI building as a matter of priority.

Following further general discussion, Mr A Jarvie, seconded by Mr C Smith, **moved** that the Experimental Road Traffic Order Regulation Order should not proceed at this stage.

As a **first amendment**, Mr R MacWilliam, seconded by Mr B Boyd, moved the following addition to recommendation iii(b) of the report:-

“which will include an options appraisal for alternative designs to be completed in conjunction with the Ballifeary Community Council and other stakeholders.”

As a **second amendment**, Mr A Christie, seconded by Mrs H Carmichael, moved the recommendations in the report.

At this point, the City Area Manager advised the Committee that whilst the first amendment was competent, it should be noted that if agreed, Officers would be required to take findings from the Experimental Scheme back to the community for formal consideration before presenting these findings to the Committee.

On a vote being taken between the **first amendment** and the **second amendment**, the **first amendment** received 5 votes and the **second amendment** received 13 votes, with 3 abstentions, the votes having been cast as follows:-

For the First Amendment:

Mr B Boyd, Mr I Brown, Mr K Gowans, Mr R MacWilliam and Ms E Roddick.

For the Second Amendment:

Mr R Balfour, Mrs C Caddick, Miss J Campbell, Mrs H Carmichael, Mr A Christie, Mrs M Davidson, Mr A Graham, Mr J Gray, Mrs I MacKenzie, Mr D Macpherson, Mrs B McAllister, Mrs T Robertson and Mr G Ross.

Abstentions:

Mr G Cruickshank, Mr A Jarvie and Mr C Smith.

On a subsequent vote being taken between the **motion** and the **second amendment**, the **motion** received 4 votes and the **second amendment** received 14 votes, with 3 abstentions. The **second amendment** was therefore **carried**, the votes having been cast as follows:-

For the Motion:

Mr B Boyd, Mr G Cruickshank, Mr A Jarvie and Mr C Smith.

For the Second Amendment:

Mr R Balfour, Mr I Brown, Mrs C Caddick, Miss J Campbell, Mrs H Carmichael, Mr A Christie, Mrs M Davidson, Mr A Graham, Mr J Gray, Mr D Macpherson, Mrs B McAllister, Mrs T Robertson, Ms E Roddick and Mr G Ross.

Abstentions:

Mr K Gowans, Mrs I MacKenzie and Mr R MacWilliam.

The Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the contents of the report, including the background, and preliminary engagement feedback;
- ii. **NOTED** that the effects of the Experimental Road Traffic Regulation Order (ERTRO) would be carefully monitored and reviewed in compliance with the statutory requirements and in the interests of road safety; and
- iii. **AGREED** that it be delegated to the Executive Chief Officer (Infrastructure and Environment) to:-
 - a. advertise the Experimental Road Traffic Regulation Order, with cycle contraflow, for part of Ness Walk and part of Bught Road (between Bishops Road and Bught Drive);
 - b. bring back a report to Committee in the event there were sustained objections to the ERTRO;
 - c. subject to there being no objections, make and implement the ERTRO;
 - d. act as the specified officer of the authority in terms of section 10 of the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984; and
 - e. subject to the making of the ERTRO, arrange ongoing engagement with the Community Council and those who had raised concerns at any stage of the process, and submit a Review Report to a future Committee as soon as possible after the ERTRO has been in operation for a period of 6 months.

10. Road Maintenance Programme 2020/21
Prògram Càradh Rathaid 2020/21

There had been circulated Report No. CIA/6/20 dated 5 February 2020 by the Executive Chief Officer (Infrastructure and Environment).

During discussion, Members raised the following issues:-

- Officers were thanked for the considerable level of work which had been undertaken;
- it had to be acknowledged that the amount of money available for the maintenance of roads was minimal and as such there was a need for all Members to support an increase for the Council's Roads Budget during the budget setting process;
- roads across the area had deteriorated sharply over the past few weeks due to the severe weather conditions;
- it was therefore proposed that, in addition to the recommendations in the report, the Chairs of the E&I and Corporate Resources Committees should be asked to complete the exercise to understand the Highland's Roads Budget allocations and plan ahead how best to use any additional funds, both capital and resources, for roads and to address the key issue of investment in arterial routes in urban areas as a matter of importance and within as short a timescale as possible;
- there was also a need to examine the roads allocation formula from an evidence based point of view;
- liaison with both the UK and Scottish Governments should be undertaken; and
- in relation to road repairs, contact should also be made with utility companies who often undertook extensive work which affected the condition of the road network across the Highlands.

The Committee **APPROVED** the proposed 2020/21 Roads Maintenance Programme for City of Inverness Area.

The Committee also **AGREED** the following as proposed at the meeting by the Leader of the Council –

'To ask the Provost (on behalf of the City Committee) to ask the Chairs of the Environment & Infrastructure and Corporate Resources Committees to complete the exercise to understand the Highland's Roads Budget allocations and plan ahead how to best use any additional funds, both capital and resources, for roads and to address the key issue of investment in arterial routes in our urban areas.

Also, to ask the Committee Chairs to take forward the work with pace after completion of the budget process'.

11. Housing Performance Report – 1 April 2019 to 31 December 2019 Aithisg Dèanadais Taigheadais – 1 Giblean 2019 gu 31 Dùbhlachd 2019

There had been circulated Report No. CIA/7/20 dated 6 February 2020 by the Executive Chief Officer (Property and Housing).

During discussion, Members raised the following issues:-

- in relation to tenancy management, and specifically the average re-let time target of 35 days, it was suggested that consideration should be given to undertaking an assessment of properties before they were vacated by tenants in order to identify any repairs required at this early date which could lead to a subsequent reduction in the re-let timescale;
- in regard to the HRA Capital Programme for the Inverness City and Area, and in particular the current underspend on Equipment and Adaptations, it was noted that projects were carried forward to the next financial year as and when necessary; and
- also in relation to the HRA Capital Programme, and specifically Heating Replacements in Inverness, there was concern at the high percentage of tenants currently opting out of energy efficiency works and it was suggested that further information should be provided in this regard, including any potential safety implications arising from upgrades not being undertaken.

The Committee **NOTED** the information provided on Housing Performance in the period 1 April 2019 to 31 December 2019.

12. Housing Revenue Account: Garage Rents 2020/21

There had been circulated Report No. CIA/8/20 dated 6 February 2020 by the Executive Chief Officer (Property and Housing).

The Committee **AGREED** that a 3% rent increase be applied to Inverness Garages and Garage Sites.

13. Inverness-Scotland.com Website Làrach-lìn Inverness-Scotland.com

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 his involvement in the discussion.

There had been circulated Report No. CIA/9/20 dated 11 February 2020 by the Inverness City Area Manager.

During discussion, and in agreeing with the recommendation within the report, it was suggested that consideration should also be given to provision of a timeline in relation to working with partners on this issue, with a suggestion of a period of approximately six months which could be reviewed thereafter if necessary.

The Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the current position with the Inverness-Scotland website; and
- ii. **AGREED** that this site be discontinued while an alternative was agreed with the Council's partners that also reflected current developments and new

requirements with the address temporarily redirected to ensure the user experience was protected.

**14. 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/10/20 dated 7 February 2020 by the Inverness City Area Manager.

The Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the financial monitoring report as circulated, that overall expenditure was within agreed budgets and that further information on expenditure on Commemorative Bedding would be provided for Mrs T Robertson; and
- ii. **NOTED** the current status of capital projects.

**b) Budget Setting for 2020/21 and Capital Programme
Suidheachadh Buidseit airson 2020/21 agus Prògram Calpa**

There had been circulated Joint Report No. CIA/11/20 dated 10 February 2020 by the Executive Chief Officer (Resources and Finance) and the Inverness City Area Manager.

The Committee **AGREED** the Common Good Fund budget for 2020/21 as detailed within the report and appendices.

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

There had been circulated Report No. CIA/12/20 dated 4 February 2020 by the Inverness City Area Manager.

In this connection, there had been circulated separately a copy of supporting documentation as Booklet A.

The Committee **NOTED** that the Grants Budget for 2019/20 had been fully allocated and the changes in consideration of grant applications; and

APPROVED the following applications for funding:-

- Floral Displays 2020 - £61,138 – on the basis that further detail on proposed spend in future years would be provided for the Grants Sub Committee;
- Coach Ambassador 2020 - £10,500
- Operation Respect Task Team Easter/Summer 2020 - £8,560
- Inverness Gull Project 2020 - £12,000
- Inverness Community Safety Partnership 2020 - £9,700

**d) Gypsy Travelling People Site
Làrach Luchd-siubhail Siopsach**

There had been circulated Report No. CIA/13/20 dated 23 January 2020 by the Inverness City Area Manager.

The Committee **APPROVED** expenditure of £61,846 to clear the area of debris and vegetation and to provide a weed suppressant geotextile covered with a hardcore surface.

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

The Committee **AGREED** the following:-

Inverness Common Good Fund Sub-Committee – Ms E Roddick to replace Mr R Laird as put forward by the SNP Group.

Victorian Market Stakeholder Management Group – Ms E Roddick to replace Mr R Laird as put forward by the SNP Group.

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

The Committee **APPROVED** the appointment of Ms E Roddick to replace Mr R Laird on Merkinch Enterprise and the Merkinch Partnership.

It was also **AGREED** that Mr D Macpherson should be appointed to the Inverness Civic Trust.

**17. Minutes
Geàrr-chunntas**

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

- i. City of Inverness Area Committee held on 21 November 2019 – **NOTED**;
- ii. Inverness City Arts Working Group held on 6 November 2019 – **APPROVED**;
- iii. Inverness Events and Festivals Working Group held on 18 November 2019 – **APPROVED** – subject to removal of 'B McAllister from the attendance list;
- iv. Victorian Market Stakeholder Management Group held on 3 December 2019 – **NOTED**; and
- v. Inverness Common Good Fund Grants Sub-Committee held on 3 February 2020 – **APPROVED**.

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

The Committee **AGREED** that, under Section 50A(4) of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973, the public should be excluded from the meeting for the following item on the grounds that it involved the likely disclosure of exempt

information as defined in Paragraphs 6 and 9 of Part 1 of Schedule 7A of the Act.

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

There had been circulated to Members only Joint Report No CIA/14/20 dated 4 February 2020 by the Head of Development and Regeneration and the Property Manager (Estates).

The Committee **NOTED** the terms of the report as circulated.

The meeting ended at 3.40pm.

**The Highland Council
Sutherland County Committee**

Minutes of Meeting of the Sutherland County Committee held in the Chamber, Council Offices, Drummuie on Monday 24 February 2020 at 10.30am.

Present:

Ms K Currie

Mr H Morrison

Mr R Gale

Ms L Munro

Mr J McGillivray

Officials in attendance:

Ms H Ross, Senior Ward Manager, Chief Executive's Office

Mr P Tomalin, Ward Manager, Chief Executive's Office

Ms A Donald, Education Quality Improvement Manager, Care and Learning Service

Ms K Wood, Head Teacher, North Coast Campus, Care and Learning Service

Mr C Simpson, Principal Tourism and Film Officer, Development & Infrastructure Service

Mr D Cowie, Principal Planner, Development & Infrastructure Service

Mr D Chisholm, Planner, Development & Infrastructure Service

Mr J Holden, Area Housing Manager (North), Community Services

Ms A Macrae, Committee Administrator, Chief Executive's Office

Also in Attendance:

Chief Inspector J Wilson, Police Scotland

Mr R Gale in the Chair

**1. Apologies for Absence
Leisgeulan**

An apology for absence was intimated on behalf of Mrs D Mackay.

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

There were no declarations of interest.

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

There had been circulated Report No SCC/01/20 dated 18 February 2020 by the North Area Commander.

In discussion, Members raised the following main issues:-

- whether the Police supported a local campaign for the introduction of a 30mph speed limit on the A836 between Ardgay and Bonar Bridge. The Chief Inspector advised that the Council would require to carry out speed measurements and the Police analyse the accident data in this location prior to an assessment being made, and undertook to raise this matter with the Roads Policing Inspector;

- clarification was sought and provided on the increase in detections of drug driving offences, this being mainly due to the Police having the modern equipment to carry out drug tests;
- the process for changing /extending speed limits in response to the speeding culture and increased volume of traffic being observed in North West Sutherland. The Chief Inspector advised local Members to convene a case conference involving all the relevant agencies and community councils to develop a problem profile to take this forward;
- the need for a more informed discussion on how to better manage incidents and adopt a more pragmatic approach to cases of missing persons involving vulnerable young people in care given the significant impact on care staff, allied professionals and Police resources, and the opportunity to raise this with the Community Planning Board and local community partnerships;
- a proposal by the Sutherland Drug and Alcohol Forum to introduce a Sutherland Pub Watch scheme in the area. The Chief Inspector advised that a data protection issue had arisen in relation to such schemes and he would feedback to the relevant officer once a solution had been confirmed; and
- additional 'keep left' road signage in six different languages had been erected in North and West Sutherland in conjunction with local community councils and had proved to be effective over the past 18 months. The Chief Inspector undertook to investigate potential funding sources to extend this type of signage in the area.

The Committee following scrutiny **NOTED** the progress made against the objectives set within the Highland and Islands Local Policing Plan 2017-2020 Year 3, for the period covering 1 April 2019- 31 December 2019.

4. Investing in Sutherland Tourism **A' Tasgadh ann an Turasachd Chataibh**

There had been circulated Report No SCC/02/20 dated 14 February 2020 by the Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure and Environment.

In discussion, regret was expressed at the decision by Scottish Ministers to refuse the planning application for Coul Links Golf Course. Following a short adjournment, the Chair confirmed that with Members agreement he would write to the Scottish Government Minister for Rural Economy and Tourism inviting him to attend a future meeting of the Committee to discuss the future economy of Sutherland in view of the decision to refuse planning permission for Coul Links Golf Course.

Thereafter, Mr J McGillivray confirmed he would be inviting those groups and agencies who had opposed the planning application to meet and discuss with Sutherland Members the future socio-economic opportunities at Coul Links, and the state of the Sutherland economy as a whole.

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

- the income generated by the North Coast 500 and benefits to the Highland economy was encouraging, however concern was expressed at the adequacy of the infrastructure along the route to deal with the high volume of visitor numbers;
- the need to explore in more depth the opportunities from a commercial perspective for the Council and for private operators to better promote the network of facilities already available, specific reference being made to toilets and facilities for the disposal of waste from motorhomes;

- the transient visitor levy should also apply to motorhomes/camping and the potential to lobby the Scottish Government on this issue, the Council's having already raised this point in its consultation response to the introduction of the levy;
- if parking was provided in the centre of communities it was more likely visitors in motorhomes would use the local facilities available. It was confirmed this approach was being progressed through some of the Rural Tourism Infrastructure Fund projects, including in Lochinver and Helmsdale and if successful it was likely other communities would follow suit;
- frustration in communities about motorhomes congregating in areas outwith campsites and the need for the definition of wild camping to be clarified. It was confirmed the Scottish Government was reviewing the advice issued with the Scottish Outdoor Access Code to emphasise the definition did not include motor vehicles. The North Coast 500 Roads Sub Group would be asked to investigate those areas where motorhomes were congregating such as the Kyle of Tongue to ensure they were appropriately managed;
- the potential to limit the number of parking spaces for motorhomes in some areas and also to consider charging, albeit enforcement could be an issue in this regard;
- the North Coast 500 Roads Sub Group to be asked to consider the provision of height barriers in off road car parks and those adjacent to cemeteries to prevent parking in some areas;
- the potential to more accurately record the actual number of motorhomes visiting the area from 1 April 2020 for the following year on the basis it was considered the figures were being underestimated;
- the lack of engagement with communities or compensation for any disruption from film companies visiting the area, any financial contribution being on a voluntary basis;
- discussions be held with the Principal Tourism and Film Officer on the opportunities for eco-tourism in relation to Coul Links; and
- concern the figures in the report produced by the North Coast 500 on the economic impacts of the route on communities may not be robust, no information having been provided on the methodology used, and the opportunities to improve the accuracy of the data to better inform future tourism strategies and investment.

The Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the current situation regarding tourism in Sutherland; and
- ii. **AGREED** that the Chair write to the Scottish Government Minister for Rural Economy and Tourism inviting him to attend a future meeting of the Committee to discuss the future economy of Sutherland in view of the decision to refuse planning permission for Coul Links Golf Course.

5. North Coast Campus Overview Sealladh Coitcheann air Campas a' Chost a Tuath

There had been circulated Report No SCC/03/20 dated 7 February 2020 by the Interim Chief Executive Officer Education and Learning.

Members were circulated with a written update on the North Coast Campus which provided further information on staffing, additional support needs, funding, buildings, lever destinations, exclusions and the school roll. The Head Teacher advised that the Campus structure was working well and had increased the range of opportunities available to children and staff, the pupils attained well in comparison to others and

staffing issues were ongoing and of significant concern. The Campus continued to work to support children with additional needs and to ensure a positive destination for all pupils.

In discussion, Members expressed their concern that the demountable unit which accommodated the music rooms at Farr High School was in a state of disrepair and could not be used and at the lack of alternative space within the School. It was understood there were surplus high quality demountable units available to the Council and therefore that a letter be sent to the Leader of the Council and Chair of the Education Committee seeking an urgent resolution to this matter. It was also important that local Members were made aware of any issues within the Campus so that they could provide support and make representations where necessary.

During further discussion, Members welcomed the excellent performance within the Campus and raised the following main points-

- It was a credit to the ethos of the Campus to have so many pupils attending from other catchment areas;
- confirmation was sought and provided that transport costs for those pupils travelling from outwith the catchment area was not funded by the School;
- concern at the lack of support for children with additional support and other needs and an explanation was sought and provided on the level of support available to the School including outwith the education system and how this was accessed;
- a point that High Life Highland had been allocated funding for mental health training through active schools coordinators, and the need to ensure this was being rolled out;
- the need for a joined up approach within the Council on the potential to use vacant properties in the area to provide accommodation for probationary teachers;
- confirmation was sought and provided that opportunities for staff to achieve dual accreditation in primary and secondary subjects was being progressed, on the basis flexibility within the system was required to address the staffing challenges outlined; and
- the provision of video conferencing facilities at Farr High School be explored with the Sutherland Community Partnership.

The Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** following scrutiny, the content of the report; and
- ii. **AGREED** to write to the Council Leader and the Chair of the Education Committee expressing concern at the lack of accommodation for the music rooms at Farr High School and seeking an urgent resolution to this matter.

6. **Caithness & Sutherland Town Centre Strategy** **Ro-innleachd Meadhan Baile Ghallaibh agus Chataibh**

There had been circulated Report No SCC/04/20 dated 4 February 2020 by the Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure and Environment.

In discussion, it was confirmed that comments received from interested groups in communities had been taken into consideration, specific reference being made to those submitted by the Go Golspie Development Trust. The Principal Planner explained that some of the comments received had been outwith the scope of the

Strategy or related to settlements which had not been identified as town centres in the Caithness and Sutherland Local Development Plan.

Thereafter, clarification was sought on the potential action to work with Transport Scotland to assess the need for and identify traffic management measures and the improvement of accessibility for pedestrians and cyclists alongside and across the A9 trunk road in Golspie. The Principal Planner advised the wording of this action had been influenced by the consultation feedback, in particular comments received from Transport Scotland. The Action Programme would be more specific in terms of identifying responsibilities and timescales and it was anticipated Transport Scotland and the Council would be key parties. There would also be liaison with Ward Members and Golspie Community Council.

A further comment welcomed the fact officers had within the Strategy taken into account the local comments received in relation to Dornoch.

The Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the issues raised in consultation responses to the Draft Caithness and Sutherland Town Centre Strategy (Section 5 and Appendix 1) and revisions to the Strategy (Appendix 2);
- ii. **AGREED** that the Strategy, finalised in line with the decisions of the two Area Committees, be submitted to Scottish Ministers for consideration as per the statutory process for adoption of Supplementary Guidance;
- iii. **NOTED** that the Strategy will be a material consideration for development management purposes with immediate effect;
- iv. **AGREED** to the adoption and issuing of the submitted version of the Strategy as statutory Supplementary Guidance to the Caithness and Sutherland Local Development Plan upon completion of the requisite 28 day period for consideration by Scottish Ministers, subject to any directions from Ministers indicating otherwise; and
- v. **NOTED** that the associated Action Programme will be drawn together by officers in consultation with Ward Members and the parties mentioned in it and subsequently will be published and promoted to those parties and the wider communities.

7. Housing Revenue Account: Garage Rents 2020/21 Cunntas Teachd A-steach Taigheadais: Màil Gharaidsean 2020/21

There had been circulated Report No SCC/05/20 dated 10 February 2020 by the Executive Chief Officer Property and Housing.

In discussion, Members raised the following main issues:-

- a cautious approach was required in regard to any decision to identify garages as storage units and potentially increase the rent to reflect commercial charges;
- a reasonably priced storage area could potentially be a popular option going forward;
- support was expressed for the proposed 3% rent increase to be applied to Garages and Garage Sites in Caithness for 2020/21;
- a report be submitted to a future meeting of the Committee providing more detailed information and costings on the potential options for garages and garage sites in Sutherland, including a local assessment of demand and condition, to enable decisions on future investment and use.

The Committee **AGREED** that:-

- i. a 3% rent increase be applied to Garages and Garage Sites in Caithness for 2020/21; and
- ii. a report providing more detailed information and costs on the potential options for garages and garage sites in Sutherland be submitted to a future meeting of the Committee to enable decisions on future investment and use.

8. Dornoch Common Good Quarterly Monitoring Report Aithisg Sgrùdadh Ràitheil Math Coitcheann Dhòrnaich

There had been circulated Report No SCC/06/20 dated 12 February 2020 by the Executive Chief Officer Communities and Place and Executive Chief Officer Resources and Finance.

The Ward Manager reported that following consultation with Members, the Council had rejected the offer made by Historylinks museum to purchase the museum site on the basis it was not in the best interests of the Dornoch Common Good Fund.

The Senior Ward Manager provided an update on the decision to withdraw the current consultation on a proposal to dispose, by new lease, of an area of Common Good land to Royal Dornoch Golf Club (RDGC) who were the existing tenants on the basis the terminology used and description in the consultation document of 'a fair market rent' could potentially be misleading. The Council was also now aware of a separate negotiation between Dornoch Area Community Council and RDGC which might have an impact on the lease. On this basis, a review of the current position was required and negotiations had re-opened. All those who had already responded to the consultation would be notified of the position and would have a further opportunity to respond once a new consultation was available.

In discussion, reference was made to the importance of negotiations progressing rapidly and seeking to adhere to the original time schedule for concluding this matter. The Senior Ward Manager provided an assurance the Council's legal officers had already acted timeously and were committed to responding as quickly as possible going forward.

A further point was raised in relation to the potential for the Fund's current balance to be provided to Dornoch Area Community Council on a monthly/quarterly basis, and stated in the report. In response, it was confirmed officers would have informal discussions with the Chair of the Community Council in relation to this matter.

The Committee **NOTED** the position of the Dornoch Common Good Fund, as shown in the Q3 monitoring statement against budget.

9. Urgent Additional Item Development of Care Home on North Coast of Sutherland

The Chair agreed the following item be considered as an urgent additional item to allow Members to discuss and consider a response to the delay in the development of a new care home in North Sutherland

Mrs L Munro expressed her concern at the significant delay in the development of a new care home in North Sutherland, this being sixth year of the North Coast redesign, and at the impact this delay was having on staff and families. Local GPs had written to the Leader of the Council and the Chief Executive on this matter and

a response was awaited. She had also written at the end of the previous week expressing her concern and seeking a response. There were suggestions this would be dealt with as part of the capital budget considerations, however it had been agreed previously that the new care home would be funded from slippage in the relevant NHS Highland budget. She therefore suggested that a meeting of the Sutherland Members be held immediately after the Committee to discuss this and other current issues of concern in the area.

The Chair suggested this was a further example of the area being disregarded in a number of different ways and a lack commitment to the people and investment in the economy of Sutherland.

The Committee **AGREED** to express its concern at the significant delay around the development of a new care home in Sutherland and that Members have further discussions on the approach to be taken on this matter outwith the meeting.

10. Minutes Geàrr-chunntas

There had been circulated and **NOTED** Minutes of the Sutherland County Committee held on 14 November 2019 which were approved by the Council on 9 December 2019.

The meeting closed at 1.10pm.

**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 Thursday 30 January 2020 at 10.30 am.

Present:

Mr R Bremner (by video-conferencing)	Mr D Louden
Mrs G Campbell-Sinclair	Mr G MacKenzie
Mrs H Carmichael	Mr S Mackie
Mr A Christie (substitute)	Mr A Mackinnon
Dr I Cockburn	Mr D MacLeod
Mrs M Davidson	Mr D Macpherson
Mr R Gale	Mr M Reiss
Mr T Heggie	Mrs T Robertson (substitute)
Mr B Lobban	Mr P Saggars

Non Members also Present:

Mr J McGillivray (by video-conferencing)

Officials in attendance:

Mrs D Manson, Chief Executive
 Ms L Denovan, Executive Chief Officer – Resources and Finance
 Mrs K Lackie, Executive Chief Officer – Performance and Governance
 Mr E Foster, Head of Corporate Finance and Commercialism, Corporate Resources Service
 Mr A Maguire, Head of Development and Regeneration, Development and Infrastructure Service
 Mr M Mitchell, Finance Manager, Corporate Resources Service
 Mr R Campbell, Estates Strategy Manager, Development and 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

Prior to the commencement of formal business on the agenda, a point of order was raised in relation to the late receipt of three reports. In response, the Chair acknowledged this point and apologised for the delay in distributing these papers to the Committee.

Business

**1. Apologies for Absence
Leisgeulan**

Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of Mrs C Caddick and Mr D Rixson.

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

There were no declarations of interest.

**3. Corporate Resources Committee: Role and Remit
Comataidh nan Goireasan Corporra: Dreuchd agus Raon-ùghdarrais**

There had been circulated Report No RES/01/20 dated 17 January 2020 by the Executive Chief Officer – Performance and Governance.

The Committee **NOTED** the report.

**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:-

(i) Appeals and Disputes Committee

Chair and Vice Chair of the Corporate Resources Committee, Chair and Vice Chair of the relevant Service Committee, Mr R Bremner, Mr D Louden, Mr G MacKenzie, Mr P Saggars, Mr D MacLeod and Mr R Gale.

(ii) Central Safety Committee

Employer's Representatives – Chair of the Corporate Resources Committee, Mr D Louden, Mr G MacKenzie, Mr S Mackie and Mr R Gale.

Staff Side Representatives – Trade Union representatives from Unison (1 place), GMB (1 place), UNITE (1 place), UNITE/UCATT (1 place) and 1 representative from BDA, CSP or RCN to be confirmed on a rolling basis.

(iii) Employment Release Sub-Committee

Chair and Vice Chair of the Corporate Resources Committee, Chair and Vice Chair of the relevant Service Committee, Mr R Bremner, Mrs G Campbell-Sinclair, Mr G MacKenzie, Mr S Mackie, Mr P Saggars, and Mrs C Caddick.

(iv) Head of Service Recruitment Panel

Chair and Vice Chair of the Corporate Resources Committee, Chair and Vice Chair of the relevant Strategic Committee (or the Leader and Depute Leader of the Council where the Chief Executive's Office or Corporate Resources Service is involved), Mr R Bremner, Dr I Cockburn, Mr G MacKenzie, Mr P Saggars, Mr D MacLeod and Mr D Rixson.

(v) Highland Council Staff Partnership Forum

Elected Member Group – Leader and Depute Leader of the Council, Chairs of the Strategic Committees and the Leader of the Opposition (or their Deputes/Vice Chairs).

Staff Side Group – Trade Union representatives from Unison (2 places), GMB (2 places), UCATT (1 place), UNITE (1 place) and RCN/CSP/BDA (1 place).

(vi) Non Domestic Rates Appeals Committee

Chair and Vice Chair of the Corporate Resources Committee, Dr I Cockburn, Mr D Louden and Mr P Saggars.

At this point in the meeting it was highlighted that Members participating remotely through video-conferencing had not received the table of nominations to the above Sub-Committees and Working Groups and it was requested that these be Emailed to the relevant Members.

It was further highlighted that as reports in relation to agenda items excluded from the public were not electronically distributed, Members attending through video-conferencing had not received these. It was requested that in future, reports in relation to confidential items of business on the agenda be sent electronically.

The Chair advised that the confidential reports in relation to items 14 and 15 on the agenda would be Emailed immediately to the Members attending the meeting remotely.

5. **Good News** **Naidheachdan Matha**

The Committee **NOTED** the update.

FINANCIAL MONITORING **SGRÙDADH IONMHASAIL**

6. **Corporate Revenue Monitoring Report to 31 December 2019** **Aithisg Sgrùdaidh Teachd-a-steach Corporra gu 31 Dùbhlachd 2019**

There had been circulated Report No RES/02/20 dated 22 January 2020 by the Executive Chief Officer - Finance and Resources.

The Chief Executive reported that a key message in relation to the Accounts Commission's Best Value Audit Report (BVAR), was the need for the Council to increase the pace of change. Significant progress had been made over the previous year and positive results achieved. New governance structures were being put in place and a report would be submitted to the Council along with the budget proposals which linked the Council's performance with sustainability and on the significant impact of the Change Fund. The Accounts Commission had reinforced the need for Members and officers to collaborate and work together including with partners to make the Council more efficient and sustainable whilst improving performance.

The Chair thanked the staff for the improved financial position of the Council with a net year underspend of £0.452m being forecast, and for embracing the culture change across the organisation. He looked forward to working with Members going forward. He accepted the information in the report on the General Fund in Appendix 1 should be presented in a more understandable manner and all the elements included in Appendix 5, showing the unallocated corporate savings. There were risks associated with a budget, however he was confident of an improved underspend position at the end of the financial year. He also reported on the new governance arrangements which had been put in place to ensure close monitoring of the budget on a weekly basis.

In discussion, Members raised the following main issues:-

- the need for the Council to reinvest in roads, this having been identified as a priority by communities, and for proposals to be brought back to Members;
- the Chief Executive be tasked with reviewing those savings identified for the current year which had not yet been achieved;
- the root causes of overspends on budgets be identified rather than a continued reliance on vacancy management to achieve savings;
- it was suggested the BVAR was particularly focused on the previous five years and a separate point that if changes to Council tax banding had not been introduced then the Council would have been in a serious financial position;
- the BVAR covered a period of ten years and all the political groups should accept responsibility for bringing forward savings proposals that had not been realistic or implemented without a sound strategy or rationale over this period;
- the Council Tax freeze in previous years had significantly affected the funding received from the Scottish Government. It had also helped many people in the Highlands financially;
- credit for the changes to the leadership team and governance structures which had been put in place, however it was important not to be complacent going forward;
- concern at the level of unallocated savings shown in the budget, and the fact it was unlikely they would be delivered due a lack of ownership and accountability. This budget line should be removed and incorporated into the relevant service budgets;
- if unallocated savings were to be included in the budget there should be a clear statement on the process for allocating them and by what date, the accountable budget holder identified and the Committee at which they would be scrutinised;
- Members be provided with more detailed information on the individual budget lines which were significantly overspent but which did not appear in the report, i.e., payments to external contractors, hired labour and temporary agency staff;
- the need to be mindful of NHS Highland's current financial position and the potential impact this might have on the Council's budget;
- consultation on difficult proposals should be conducted well in advance of the budget to allow informed decisions to be made and proposals to be implemented early in the financial year. Lessons had to be learned from the reviews of ASN provision, public conveniences and car parking charges;
- the potential to consult and engage with the Citizens Panel more effectively;
- the SNP Group had to date not been consulted on the budget proposals for the next financial year. The Chair confirmed he and the Depute Leader would meet with the Group next week, advising the budget process had been delayed due to the General Election;

- concern at the impact the voluntary severance scheme had on the reserves, the Council having one of the lowest levels in Scotland. This created difficulties for the Council in terms of increasing the level of reserves and bringing forward new spending initiatives;
- in terms of education and national benchmarking, the Council's performance had declined in comparison to other local authorities who had also experienced reductions in their funding;
- information be provided on the impact of that underspend on the Education budget on schools in Highland including the proposals to mitigate the increased pressures placed on staff;
- the Education service was at the early stages of a process of transformation and it was hoped this would deliver substantial improvements with regard to national local government benchmarking framework. Discussions were ongoing with teachers to ensure there was a shared understanding of ambitions. Members would receive regular reports on the transformation at the new Education Committee; and
- the Council had to be more business orientated to deliver efficiencies and improve performance, for example, the need to follow up on opportunities around former Janitor's houses.

The Chair reiterated that new governance arrangements had been put in place to ensure budget lines were monitored on a weekly basis and there was more accountability going forward.

The Chief Executive confirmed that in terms of the Education spend, more detailed information would be brought to Members. Tighter controls around budgets and policies were being introduced and performance issues were being addressed. National benchmarking was being carried out in a number of areas, including external assessments. This was particularly important in terms of those local authorities who were performing better with less resources.

The Committee **APPROVED** the financial position of the General Fund and HRA revenue budgets as at 31 December 2019 and **NOTED** the estimated year end forecast.

7. Corporate Capital Monitoring Report to 31 December 2019 Aithisg Sgrùdaidh Calpa Corporra gu 31 Dùbhlachd 2019

There had been circulated Report No RES/03/20 dated 23 January 2020 by the Executive Chief Officer - Finance and Resources.

The Chair advised that as part of the new governance arrangements, slippages on the budget were being monitored on a weekly basis.

In discussion, confirmation was sought and provided on reasons for the increase in the underspend since the previous quarter, the variance on the HRA in respect Government Grant Income in terms of Council house building and around the adjustment shown for the flooding grant in 2019/20.

In response to a question, the Chair advised that the HRA Capital and Revenue monitoring reports would be presented to the Housing and Property Committee and thereafter to the Corporate Resources Committee.

The Committee **APPROVED** the financial position of the General Fund and HRA Capital Programmes as at 31 December 2019.

**CORPORATE RESOURCES SERVICE
SEIRBHEIS NAN GOIREASAN CORPORA**

**8. Treasury Management – Summary of Transactions
Rianachd Ionmhais – Geàrr-chunntas Ghnothaichean**

There had been circulated Report No RES/04/20 dated 10 January 2020 by the Executive Chief Officer - Finance and Resources.

During discussion, the following main points were raised:-

- concern was expressed at the Council's increasing level of Gross External Debt and it was queried what options were being explored to reduce this debt which had been on an upwards trajectory since 2011;
- this concern was acknowledged; however, it was indicated that debt for a corporate entity such as the Council was not necessarily bad, and that it could be financially advantageous if prudently managed and brought significant benefits to the local economy such as housing and infrastructure. However, a cautious approach was welcomed, and it was suggested that a workshop should be held to consider the debt levels in more detail and future investment funding models, including the legal feasibility of utilising the Pension Fund to build new infrastructure on the proviso that the Fund generated good returns on their investment. Support for this approach was endorsed by a number of Members;
- it was highlighted that the Council had agreed in 2012 to invest in capital to help the Highlands through the recession and this had been most beneficial. Although any ideas in respect of reprofiling the debt were welcome, it was stressed that the level of debt reflected the vast number of assets that the Council had to maintain;
- the more acute issue was the repayment of the debt and extensive efforts had been made with the UK and Scottish Governments to reprofile the Council's debt;
- debt was only an issue if it could not be repaid; however, there was need for close monitoring of short-term debt should there be a sudden increase in inflation and the potential impact of this on the Council;
- a request was made for the Leader of the Scottish Conservative and Unionist party to raise the issue of the Council's housing debt, which had been written off for many local authorities, with Senior UK Government officials. The Leader of the Scottish Conservative and Unionist party confirmed that he would raise this issue with the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Scotland Mr Douglas Ross, MP; and
- The Chair welcomed further discussion on the debt issue and recommended that the Council's Treasury Advisers be invited to attend the workshop.

The Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the Treasury Management Summary of Transactions as circulated; and
- ii. **AGREED** that a workshop facilitated by the Council's Treasury advisers be organised on the Council's external debt.

**9. Banking and Related Financial Transactions – Authorised Signatories
Bancaireachd agus Gnothachasan Ionmhasail Co-cheangailte – Luchd-
soidhnigidh Ùghdarraichte**

There had been circulated Report No RES/05/20 dated 16 January 2020 by the Executive Chief Officer - Finance and Resources.

The Committee **APPROVED**:-

- i. the addition of Liz Denovan, Executive Chief Officer Resources and Finance to the list of authorised signatories for banking and related financial transactions with immediate effect;
- ii. a change to 10.7 of the Financial Regulations to allow additional Principal Accountants to authorise online banking transactions; and
- iii. the following Principal Accountants to be able to authorise online banking transactions:-
 - a. Fiona Callum, Principal Accountant, Corporate Finance; and
 - b. Alison McDonald, Principal Accountant, Corporate Finance.

**10. Late Submission of Expenses Claims
A' Cur A-steach airson Cosgaisean Anmoch**

It had previously been agreed by Corporate Resources Committee that late submissions of Elected Members expenses claims would be presented to the Committee for approval.

The Committee **APPROVED** the following claims:-

- i. Councillor Deirdre Mackay £106.20 mileage; £302.00 subsistence for the months of July and August 2019; and
- ii. Councillor Linda Munro £1,272.60 mileage; £75.00 subsistence for the months of July, August and September 2019.

**MINUTES OF MEETINGS
GEÀRR-CHUNNTAS CHOINNEAMHAN**

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

There had been circulated Minutes of Meeting of the Commercial Board held on 18 December 2019 – the terms of which were **APPROVED**.

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

The Committee **NOTED** the Minutes of the Non-Domestic Rates Appeals Committee held on 19 December 2019.

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

The Committee **AGREED** to resolve 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.

14. Land Acquisition
Seilbheachd Fearainn

Paragraphs 6 and 9

There had been circulated to Members only Report No RES/06/20 dated 10 January 2020 by the Executive Chief Officer – Transformation and Economy.

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

15. Update on Tain Campus
Cunntas às Ùr mu Champas Bhaile Dhubhthaich

Paragraphs 6 and 9

There had been circulated to Members only Report No RES/07/20 dated 23 January 2020 by the Executive Chief Officer – Finance and Resources.

The Committee **AGREED**:-

- i. the recommendations as set out in the report; and
- ii. that local Members be kept informed of progress and a communication be issued to local communities on this item.

The meeting ended at 12.25pm.