

The Highland Council

Minutes of Meeting of the **Communities and Place Committee** held remotely on Wednesday 25 November 2020 at 11.30 am.

Present:

Mr G Adam	Mr A MacInnes
Mr B Allan	Mr D Macpherson
Mr R Balfour	Mr R MacWilliam
Mr J Bruce	Mr H Morrison (Vice Chair)
Ms K Currie	Mrs M Paterson
Mr C Fraser	Mr I Ramon
Mr R Gale	Mr A Rhind
Mr J Gordon	Mrs T Robertson
Mr A Henderson (Chair)	

Non-Members also present:

Mrs J Barclay	Mr G MacKenzie
Mr J Finlayson	

In attendance:

Ms C McDiarmid, Executive Chief Officer Communities and Place

Also in attendance:

Ms R Clarke, Local Development Officer, Applecross Community Company
Ms S Viitanen, Local Development Officer, Applecross Community Company
Mr O Kilbride, Chair, Applecross Community Company
Mr D Wilson, Local Senior Officer, Scottish Fire and Rescue Service

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

Mr A Henderson in the Chair

Business

1. Apologies for Absence Leisgeulan

Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of Mr D MacLeod.

2. Declarations of Interest Foillseachaidhean Com-pàirt

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

Item 4ii – Mr A Henderson (non-financial)

3. Good News Naidheachdan Matha

The Chair highlighted the following items of good news:-

- Martin MacDougall, a Street Cleaning Operative in Inverness City Centre, had won the Stagecoach Highland Community Hero Award and had gone on to win the National Stagecoach Community Hero award in recognition of the work he had done to support local children by providing them with free colouring books during lockdown.
- Six apprentice mechanics had finished their training and received their certificate:
 - Elliot Geddes, Wick
 - Alick Elrick, Brora
 - Kai Campbell, Fort William
 - Kyle Dempster, Fort William
 - Jon Hutchinson, Inverness
 - Scott Matheson, Inverness

A seventh mechanic, Gregor Rose from the Aviemore workshop, had completed his training a year early and had come to the Council Chamber last year to be presented with his certificate.

- Susan Messem, a trainee Food Safety Officer based in Sutherland, had passed her professional exams in August for the Higher Certificate in Food Premises Inspection. She would be looking to undertake additional qualifications in 2021 on food labelling and composition.

The Committee **NOTED** the good news.

4. Supporting Community Action and Involvement A' Cur Taic ri Gnìomhachd is Com-pàirteachas Coimhearsnachd

i. **Presentation: Applecross Community Company** **Taisbeanadh: Companaidh Coimhearsnachd na Comraich**

Roslyn Clarke, Local Development Officer, Applecross Community Company (ACC) gave a presentation on the work of ACC, the benefits it brought and what more the Council could do in support.

During discussion, the following issues were raised:-

- Members welcomed the presentation, which the Chair confirmed would be circulated to all Members, and commended ACC for the work it had done in response to Covid and the number of projects taking place in the community;
- on the point being raised, it was confirmed that Hartfield House was now a hostel run by The Applecross Trust;
- information was sought, and provided, on the number of children in the community;

- the Council's Tourism Committee was wrestling with the issues that lay ahead in terms of the anticipated increase in the number of visitors to Highland over the next few years and information was sought on the problems that had been experienced in Applecross and what was meant by a regional approach, the need for which had been referred to during the presentation. Detailed discussion ensued on issues including wild camping, waste, pressure on local facilities and infrastructure, the potential for slow and sustainable tourism, the need to educate visitors at the first point of contact, the need to strike a balance in terms of charging for parking etc and the impact of the North Coast 500 on the tourism market, including the environmental impact as a result of increased cleaning/laundry services. The Vice Chair of the Tourism Committee undertook to liaise with ACC separately on these issues;
- on the point being raised, it was confirmed that it would be helpful if three-phase electricity was extended to Applecross, particularly as this would enable light industry to take place;
- the work taking place in terms of local job retention and creation was commended;
- the R100 project was what would eventually delivery broadband to the community;
- an invitation was extended, and accepted, to deliver the presentation to the Wester Ross, Strathpeffer and Lochalsh Area Committee;
- views were sought, and provided, on how to address the issue of volunteer fatigue;
- reference having been made to the Highlands and Islands Enterprise Local Development Officer scheme, the importance of working with partners was emphasised;
- it was necessary to take inclement weather into account when investing in roads and passing places;
- affordable housing would keep families in the area and make Applecross even more of a vibrant community than it already was, and the work taking place in that regard was welcomed; and
- information was sought, and provided, on the means of charging for the community toilets.

The Committee otherwise **NOTED** the presentation and that it would be circulated to all Members for information.

**ii. Community Asset Transfer Requests
Iarrtasan Gluasad So-mhaoin Coimhearsnachd**

Declaration of Interest: Mr A Henderson declared a non-financial interest in this item as a Trustee of Spean Bridge Village Hall 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 CP/13/20 dated 23 October 2020 by the Executive Chief Officer Communities and Place.

During discussion, the following issues were raised:-

- the Chair, as a Local Member, expressed support for the sale of the car park at Station Road, Corpach, to Kilmallie Community Centre. On the point being raised, it was confirmed that the possibility of implementing parking charges had been explored by the Council and had not been viewed as viable;
- information was sought, and provided, on the measures that were in place to protect the Council against organisations selling community assets for a profit in the future; and
- Members having emphasised the need to expedite the Men's Shed in Maryburgh, it was confirmed that progress was being made and it was anticipated that it would be brought to the Committee in February 2021.

The Committee **AGREED**:-

- i. the sale of the car park at Station Road, Corpach to Kilmallie Community Centre for £7,500, subject to the terms of transfer set out in section 2.1 of the report;
 - ii. the sale of Lochinver Mission Centre to Assynt Development Trust for £1, subject to the terms of transfer set out in section 2.2 of the report; and
 - iii. to homologate the decision to clarify the extent of land to be transferred at Spean Bridge Community Centre to Spean Bridge Community Centre SCIO, specifically that this was to include the associated car park.
- iii. Progress report on the Framework for Community Participation and Involvement**
Aithisg adhartais mu Fhrèam-obrach airson Com-pàirteachas Coimhearsnachd

There had been circulated Report No CP/14/20 dated 9 November 2020 by the Executive Chief Officer Communities and Place.

During discussion, the following issues were raised:-

- Members welcomed the report and expressed thanks to the Head of Policy and all those involved in the engagement work;
- many of the issues raised were pre-existing but Covid had brought them to the fore and it was necessary to take them forward and make Highland communities better places as a result;
- some of the issues raised were significant and it was questioned whether the Council was in a position to address them. It was necessary to manage expectations and it would be helpful to take some practical small steps towards fulfilling some of the larger ambitions outlined in the report;
- information was sought, and provided, on how it was proposed to follow up on the work taking place. It was added that the pandemic had uncovered some deficiencies in the Council's processes and, when it was over, it was necessary to take stock and make sure that preparations were in place in the event a similar situation arose in the future;
- information was sought, and provided, on what resilience plans looked like in light of Covid and what support could be offered to communities to develop them and ensure a consistent standard;

- some of the most vulnerable people did not engage with services or statutory bodies and information was sought, and provided, on how it was proposed to help them;
- on the point being raised, it was confirmed that the work set out in the report was being shared at both strategic Community Planning Partnership level and local Community Partnership level;
- planning for a pandemic was similar to planning for other emergency scenarios such as a major power cut or an extreme weather event and it was necessary to have processes in place so that there was no delay at the beginning in terms of mobilising volunteers, distributing supplies etc; and
- information was sought, and provided, on what engagement and information sharing was taking place NHS Highland and third sector organisations on the feedback gathered on mental health provision.

The Committee **NOTED**:-

- i. the feedback from engagement work undertaken to date in sections 5 and 6 of the report;
- ii. the work planned and currently underway and that an update report on further outcomes from the various engagement strands would be presented to the next meeting of the Communities and Place Committee; and
- iii. key areas for action and development as a result of the feedback received so far.

iv. North Kessock Bottle Banks – Petition and Response

Athchuinge air a cur a-steach a thaobh a bhith a’ suidheachadh bhancaichean bhotal ann an Ceasag a Tuath, Siorrachd Rois

There had been circulated Report No CP/15/20 dated 4 November 2020 by the Executive Chief Officer Performance and Governance.

In introducing the report, the Head of Policy highlighted that, whilst not yet validated, a petition had yesterday been received requesting that the bottle banks be moved back to their original location. This demonstrated the strength of feeling on both sides.

The Chair added that it was important to take into account the capacity of the Election Office to administer the proposed community ballot. Given that a by-election was scheduled to take place in March 2021 and the Scottish Parliament Election was in May, it was proposed that the community ballot be held in January 2021.

During discussion, the following issues were raised:-

- Local Members summarised the background to the situation which had divided the community and expressed concern that the petition would divide it further, a counter-petition having already been received as highlighted by the Head of Policy. Doubt was expressed about the proposed community ballot, constituents having questioned whether the Council would be able to reinstate the bottle banks, if that was the finding of the ballot, when it had not been able to do so previously. However, the situation needed to be resolved and support was therefore expressed for the ballot subject to two

conditions, namely that prior to the ballot an attempt be made to mediate a solution using an external mediator who would engage with all parties, and that the outcome of the ballot be enforced, with a court order being obtained if necessary to ensure that the bottle bank was installed and protected at the agreed site;

- it was important that the will of the majority was upheld and that those who lost a democratic vote accepted it;
- glass was one of the best items for recycling and was seen as part of the circular economy. However, one of the downsides was the noise created at bottle banks and reference was made to the stipulations placed on hotels and bars in terms of not using bottle banks late at night;
- the decision of the public meeting in September 2017 should have been final and disappointment was expressed that the matter had been allowed to persist and had come to a strategic committee to be resolved;
- concern was expressed regarding the assertion in the petition that, if the bottle banks were returned to their original location, there would continue to be peaceful protest and letters of complaint;
- the situation had been and continued to be stressful for all concerned and there was merit in the suggestion of a mediator;
- Members praised the coastal garden developed by the North Kessock Ticket Office Project;
- on the point being raised, it was confirmed that the proposed ballot would use the North Kessock Primary School catchment area which included Charleston; and
- concern was expressed regarding the amount of time and public money that had been spent on this matter, and it was requested that information be provided on the total costs incurred.

Thereafter, clarification having been provided on the Council's petition process and the potential for external mediation, the Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the petition received regarding bottle banks in North Kessock;
- ii. **NOTED** the background to the current situation; and
- iii. **AGREED** that a community ballot be undertaken on the future location of the bottle banks to enable a final conclusion to be reached and enforced, subject to external mediation taking place beforehand if possible.

5. Update on Humanitarian and Welfare Needs and Support Fios às ùr mu fheumalachdan is taic daonnachdail is sochair

There had been circulated Report No CP/16/20 dated 9 November 2020 by the Executive Chief Officer Communities and Place.

During discussion, the following issues were raised:-

- the Chairman reminded Members of a recent Council press release which had detailed the various funds available;
- eventually a time would come to review how effective the support had been, especially during the first six weeks of the Covid pandemic;
- a Member contended that the Covid Discretionary Budget had been managed poorly and that scrutiny of the decision-making process was being hampered as the Member Gold Covid Group minutes had still not been made available. At the

peak of the pandemic applications to relieve Covid hardship had been refused and yet there was still money unspent which, later on the agenda, was now proposed to be used for play parks. It was important to ensure that money intended for hardship relief and to stimulate communities to help each other was used only for that purpose;

- the elderly and vulnerable were spending more time in their homes and were therefore using more fuel to heat their homes and it was suggested that the UK Government could be lobbied to increase the winter fuel payment. Alternatively, it was queried if the Council itself could supplement the amount;
- it was queried if the Covid Ward Budget could be rolled over into the next financial year and clarified this would be discussed under item 11 later on the agenda;
- some Wards had spent a significant proportion of their Covid Ward Budget and it was disappointing that this had not been the experience across all Wards; and
- in response to a question, it was confirmed that the Scottish Welfare Fund was administered by the Council's Welfare team.

The Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the update on humanitarian and welfare needs response across Highland, including:
 - the focus on food and fuel insecurity for the second wave of covid-19;
 - the new supports in place for people who had to self-isolate under Test and Protect;
 - the local hub support arrangements in place to respond to food insecurity requests and should a local outbreak occur;
 - the different supports in place to address financial insecurity;
 - the supports in place to address fuel insecurity; and
 - the supports in place related to mental health and wellbeing;
- ii. **NOTED** the new roles Local Authorities now had in supporting the Test and Protect process;
- iii. **NOTED** the Connecting Scotland programme and the number of devices that had come to Highland to support digital inclusion; and
- iv. **AGREED** that the Chair of the Committee write to Scottish Government and Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations requesting that employability clients on low incomes, disabled people on low incomes and older people on low incomes are identified as eligible for the third phase of the Connecting Scotland Programme.

6. Local Fire and Rescue Plan for Highland 2021-2024 Plana Ionadail Smàlaidh is Teasairginn airson na Gàidhealtachd

Under the Police and Fire Reform (Scotland) Act 2012, the Local Authority had responsibility for monitoring and scrutinising performance of the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service against the Local Fire and Rescue Plan for their area. Each Local Plan had to be approved by the Local Authority and reviewed every three years.

On behalf of the Local Senior Officer for Highland, Derek Wilson, there had been circulated the Local Fire and Rescue Plan for Highland 2021-2024. Undoubtedly the pandemic had affected what the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS) could deliver and this was reflected in the Plan. It was likely therefore that it would be

reviewed during the three year period of the Plan. He went on to highlight the main elements and the seven local priorities.

During discussion, the following issues were raised:-

- deliberate and wild fires had increased this year, especially over the summer months, and it was hoped the Council and the SFRS could work together to highlight the need to dispose of disposable barbecues properly and that campfires could not be lit randomly. This had further been exacerbated when recycling centres had been closed and individuals with a build-up of material had taken to burning rubbish which had subsequently got out of control;
- with more community defibrillators now in place it would also be useful if the SFRS could train people in Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR). In this regard, and in response to a question, it was confirmed that a register of the location of community defibrillators was maintained by the Scottish Ambulance Service;
- a plea was made for the road safety virtual reality initiative to be rolled out to rural areas;
- information as to the retirement age for full-time and retained fire fighters was requested as was the possibility of retired full-time firefighters returning to assist as volunteers;
- the current recruitment campaign was welcomed and it was confirmed new banners and adverts had been procured and every attempt was made with communities to encourage applicants;
- firefighters had previously needed to respond to fires within a specified time but, especially in rural and remote areas, this deterred many from applying and a more flexible approach was welcomed;
- some might be deterred from applying as a firefighter due to the requirement to take two weeks off from their permanent job for the initial training and a more flexible approach needed to be adopted;
- as a result of Covid it was queried if there had been an increase in individuals joining the SFRS. In response, there was no significant increase although more had wanted to take an active part in the community. However, the pandemic had delayed medicals for Retained Duty System firefighters;
- unwanted fire alarms signals could not always be avoided, despite the best intentions of the property owners, but the problem was those who didn't engage to drive these down; and
- appreciation was expressed for the scope of the work undertaken by full-time and retained fire fighters and the Local Senior Officer, in welcoming these comments, confirmed that he would relay them, recognising the morale booster it was for the staff.

The Committee **APPROVED** the Local Fire and Rescue Plan for Highland 2021-2024.

7. Support for exporting businesses in preparation for EU exit Taic airson ghnòthachasan às-mhalairt ag ullachadh airson an AE fhàgail

There had been circulated Report No CP/17/20 dated 13 November 2020 by the Executive Chief Officer Communities and Place.

During discussion, the following issues were raised:-

- the fees proposed were significantly lower than those set by the Council previously so it was queried how sustainable the fee level was and if there was any scope, in the future, to reduce it to support exporting businesses; and
- the additional requirements that would be placed on the Environmental Health Service from 1 January 2020 would place further strain on officers and it was important to ensure there was capacity and for a contingency plan to be prepared should the need arise. It was vital that officers had the resources they required to be able to fulfil the Council's statutory duties.

The Committee:-

- NOTED** the work undertaken by officers to date to prepare for supporting exporting businesses to the EU;
- NOTED** the Environmental Health Team's role in Export Health Certification;
- AGREED** revised fees for Export Health Certificates from 1 January 2021 as set out in Appendix 2, drawing on work underway nationally;
- AGREED** to delegate authority to the ECO Communities and Place to set a fee for Supporting Attestations, following consultation with the ECO Resources and Finance and the Chair and Vice Chair of the Communities and Place Committee;
- AGREED** to delegate authority to the ECO Communities and Place the flexibility to further revise the fees for Export Health Certificates following consultation with the ECO Resources and Finance and the Chair and Vice Chair of the Communities and Place Committee in the event there were any developments regarding EU Exit which would benefit the Council and local businesses (eg a national fee being proposed) before the mid-year review proposed below; and
- AGREED** a review of the demand for Export Health Certificates for EU trade and non-EU trade for the first six months of 2021 to commence in July 2021 and be reported to the following Communities and Place Committee in August 2021 along with any revision of fees if required.

8. Licensing of Residential Caravan Sites Ceadachd làraich charabhanaichean còmhnaidheach

There had been circulated Report No CP/18/20 dated 16 November 2020 by the Executive Chief Officer Communities and Place.

During discussion, the following issues were raised:-

- there was a degree of disparity between Highland Council and other Local Authorities in relation to fees and it was suggested that the fee for one unit be reduced but that it be increased for 11-20 and 21-40 units. However, the Chairman drew Members attention to how the fees were calculated and the intention was that they would cover costs;
- people who lived full time in caravans were quite often vulnerable and it was hoped this licensing would offer greater regulation;
- it was confirmed that the regulations applied to sites where caravans were used as the main residence of occupiers and vacating them for short periods would not change their nature; and
- in response to a question, the position regarding the application of Council Tax to residential caravans would be provided to Councillor D Macpherson.

The Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the licensing system for mobile home sites with permanent residents;
- ii. **NOTED** the proposed timescale and phasing for implementation in the Highland area over the next 12 months;
- iii. **APPROVED** the fees for Residential Caravan site licence applications for 2020/21 and 2021/22 as set out in the report; and
- iv. **APPROVED** that cost recovery for enforcement action be based on the appropriate productive hourly rate for the grade of officer taking the action with full cost recovery proposed unless it cost more to pursue the cost or where the site owner had made their best efforts to comply with any enforcement action.

9. Burial and Cremation Policy and Management Rules Poileasaidh agus Riaghailtean Stiùiridh Tiodhlacaidh is Losgaidh-chuirp

There had been circulated Report No CP/19/20 dated 16 November 2020 by the Executive Chief Officer Communities and Place.

During discussion, the following issues were raised:-

- Members welcomed the report and expressed appreciation to all staff involved in burials and cremations for the understanding and compassion shown to families. The need to recognise and encourage staff was emphasised, and particular reference was made to grave diggers who might undertake multiple burials in a day, often in difficult weather conditions;
- information was sought, and provided, on how the rules would be enforced in a way that was sensitive and specific to each bereaved family's circumstances, and what personnel would be used in this engagement;
- it was requested that a report be presented to a future meeting of the Committee on the how the final management rules had been received following implementation;
- it was questioned whether the rules requiring prior notice of any proposals to play music, including bagpipes and drums, and of a large number of attendees, which was not defined, were necessary. In addition, it was queried whether the rule prohibiting dogs, with the exception of guide dogs, in burial grounds was going to be enforced;
- in relation to the crematorium, the need to be user-friendly and flexible was emphasised. In particular, concern was expressed regarding access being granted only ten minutes prior to a funeral commencing, with attendees being kept outside even if there was not another service beforehand;
- it was queried whether the rule relating to bringing into the crematorium any object that might be considered dangerous included the customary 'Sgian Dubh' when in Highland dress;
- information was sought, and provided, on the cost difference between erecting a head stone in Nairn and Inverness;
- it was imperative that the Management Rules were communicated to the public, one suggestion being a booklet that undertakers could give to families;
- the Council had limited resources and it was necessary to consider how it was going to be able to deliver the outcomes of the review; and
- consideration should be given to reducing the Council's fees, which it was contended were too high.

Thereafter, the Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** that the Council undertook around 1500 burials and 1200 cremations a year across the Highland area. The Council currently had 268 burial grounds and operated Inverness Crematorium, located at Kilvean, Inverness;
- ii. **NOTED** that further amendments might be required to the policy arising from the review undertaken by the Competition and Markets Authority and these would be reported to a future meeting of the Committee;
- iii. **AGREED** the refreshed burial and cremations policy attached at Appendix 1 of the report which addressed the internal audit actions agreed;
- iv. **AGREED** that consultation be undertaken on the updated draft management rules for burials grounds and the Inverness Crematorium as set out in Appendices 2 and 3 of the report, taking into account the points raised during discussion, in keeping with the legislative requirements to consult;
- v. **AGREED** that a report on the outcome of the consultation and the final management rules be considered at the next meeting of the Committee;
- vi. **AGREED** that appropriate guidance and signage be provided to communicate the final management rules; and
- vii. **AGREED** that a report be presented to a future meeting of the Committee on the how the final management rules had been received following implementation.

10. Communities and Place Revenue Monitoring Report to 30th September 2020 Sgrùdadh Teachd-a-steach Buidseit airson Cairteal 2 2020/21

There had been circulated Report No CP/20/20 dated 6 November 2020 by the Executive Chief Officer Communities and Place.

The Committee **NOTED**:-

- i. the improved outturn forecast from Q1 with the budget gap forecast to reduce from £4.84m to £3.272m;
- ii. that the budget gap reported was associated mainly with shortfalls in income, disrupted by Covid;
- iii. the achievement of savings was hampered by Covid impacts, although £646k were achieved, a further £330k partially achieved so far and only £71k not achievable this year. Work continued to apportion all savings agreed to the new service structure;
- iv. expenditure controls, including for recruitment, were helping to reduce the budget gap;
- v. ongoing mitigation would include expenditure controls, income recovery and claiming all potential Government grant; and
- vi. an income project to clarify, manage and forecast income better was underway in the service to help reduce risks to the overall budget.

11. Proposals for Covid Ward Funds and Investing in Play Parks Molaidhean airson Maoin Uàird Covid agus Tasgadh ann am Pàircean Cluiche

There had been circulated Report No CP/21/20 dated 11 November 2020 by the Executive Chief Officer Communities and Place.

During discussion, the following issues were raised:-

- it was contended that the Council had failed to maintain its play parks over several years and there was a strong argument to be made for investment so children and young people had somewhere to go. However, the level of Covid Ward Funds had initially, understandably given that the demand was unknown, been set at £500 and this had hampered some community groups, necessitating them to apply repeatedly. The underspend was not therefore to be welcomed as much stronger community capacity could have been established at an earlier stage;
- the Council's dialogue regarding Recovery suggested Covid-19 was in the past but caution was urged as, nine months on from lockdown, restrictions were still in place. Covid Ward Funds should therefore continue for community capacity building. Furthermore, redirecting the Fund for play park maintenance would go little way to addressing the backlog of work required;
- approaches to the Covid Ward Funds varied between Wards, some concentrating on the longer term impacts of Covid such as mental health and unemployment;
- devolving funding for play parks to Area level was to be welcomed and this needed to be made explicit in the recommendations;
- alternative ways to address play park maintenance were suggested including Community Payback; and
- whilst a long-term strategy was undoubtedly required to address play parks, the Covid Ward Funding needed to be directed at supporting the most vulnerable in communities, particularly during the winter months.

The Committee:-

a. **NOTED:-**

- i. the decision made at Council on 1 October 2020 sought the Committee's views in the first instance on investing in play parks for conclusion by the December Council meeting. The Committee's views were sought to report to the December Council meeting;
- ii. that the initial enhanced allocation to Covid Ward Funds had been distributed based on vulnerability to Covid, which took into account ill health and old age indicators, and that this needed to be re-visited given the Council decision on 1 October 2020 and the socio-economic impacts now affecting more communities;
- iii. that a review of the Covid Ward Funds was already planned to adapt to changing circumstances;
- iv. that Ward Members needed to identify and agree through Area Committees what proportion of their fund they wanted to set aside for projects to assist children and adults post Covid, such as contributing to Play Park equipment alongside funding for food and humanitarian assistance so that Ward Managers could administer the fund, with decisions on awards of £10k and over made at Area Committees in keeping with the Scheme of Delegation;
- v. that the Council had a large play estate, with 339 play areas with 2043 individual units of play equipment;
- vi. that the annual budget for play areas was £187,600 and the estimated backlog of repairs and maintenance amounted to £3.436m;
- vii. the options for investing £100k of additional investment and that given the scale of the backlog this investment alone would not make a significant impact on the estate; and

viii. the option to adopt a place-based approach, using local knowledge and community effort and resources alongside Members and staff advice to solve problems together and to identify possibilities for a more sustainable approach to the play estate. There were good practice examples of this approach in Wards already.

* b. **AGREED TO RECOMMEND** to the Council meeting in December on the Covid Ward Fund that:-

- i. some level of Covid Ward resource be retained for welfare and humanitarian needs and supporting joint working with community bodies;
- ii. the enhanced award be equalized up as set out in Appendix 2 costing £240k to be funded from the hardship fund that was currently set aside to reduce the budget gap in 2020/21;
- iii. increased flexibility in the fund be permitted by raising the maximum award for community groups from £500 to £1500, removing the restrictions on spend per month and any unspent fund could be carried forward into 2021/22; and
- iv. officers draw up new criteria for Covid hardship grants to ensure that community groups are encouraged to support community resilience activities, including provision of clear communication and defined rationale of reasons for declining applications, and a timely appeals process.

* c. **AGREED TO RECOMMEND** to the Council meeting in December that budgets for play park management be devolved to Area Committees in consultation with Wards.

12. Fleet Cabhlach

i. **Operational Fleet Compliance, Policies and Procedures** **Gèilleadh, Poileasaidhean agus Modhan-obrach a' Chabhlaich Obrachaidh**

There had been circulated Report No CP/22/20 dated 16 November 2020 by the Executive Chief Officer Communities and Place.

The Committee **NOTED**:-

- i. the requirements in section 1 relating to the Operator Licence, that the licence was due for renewal in February 2021 and that the Council's performance was currently rated externally as compliant;
- ii. the requirement in section 2 relating to the White Fleet; and
- iii. that the refreshed Fleet policies and procedures reflected legislative requirements and were aligned to the Council's budget.

ii. **Developing the approach to greening the fleet** **A' leasachadh dòigh-obrach gus an cabhlach a dhèanamh nas uaine**

There had been circulated Report No CP/23/20 dated 12 November 2020 by the Executive Chief Officer Communities and Place.

The Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the national target for local government to decarbonise its light fleet by 2025 and the Council's target for the region to be carbon neutral by 2025;
- ii. **NOTED** the estimated 8% reduction in emissions arising from fleet vehicles' use of petrol, diesel and gas oil from 2012/13 to 2019/20;
- iii. **NOTED** the progress made to decarbonise travel and fleet to date by:
 - a. reducing staff travel (with staff travel and member costs reduced by 36% between 2017/18 and 2019/20);
 - b. providing car club vehicles as an alternative to grey fleet use;
 - c. reducing fleet numbers;
 - d. reducing leasing costs;
 - e. supporting more efficient use of fleet through route optimisation and telematics, driver behaviour monitoring and training;
 - f. replacement of vehicles where affordable with fully electric small vans and cars;
 - g. training the mechanic workforce to maintain electric vehicles; and
 - h. accessing Scottish Government funding for installing charging points and fleet replacement;
- iv. **NOTED** that links were being made with the feasibility into an Energy from Waste plant including the potential to convert energy generated to hydrogen for Council and other fleet use as part of the development of a hydrogen strategy for the region;
- v. **NOTED** the current higher costs of procuring Ultra Low Emission Vehicles (ULEV) even with whole life cycle costing, plus charging infrastructure. While costs might fall as technology improved and take up increased, budget provision and external funding were not yet identified to meet decarbonising targets. However, work was underway to quantify the costs for a phased replacement programme and to identify all potential funding sources to inform future budget setting;
- vi. **NOTED** progress reports on further phases of work would come to this Committee and be included in the wider reporting to the Climate Change Working Group; and
- vii. **AGREED** the phased approach proposed to green the fleet by focusing initially on cars and light commercial vehicles building on progress to date and reducing the overall mileage travelled (with service targets set), rightsizing the fleet and replacing vehicles with ULEV alternatives within affordability. An action plan had been attached at Appendix 2 of the report. Later phases would focus on heavy goods vehicles and fleet use by contractors and suppliers.

13. Waste Sgudal

i. Waste Projects Update

Fios às ùr mu phròiseactan airson sgudal a ghluasad is a ghlanadh

There had been circulated Report No CP/24/20 dated 16 November 2020 by the Executive Chief Officer Communities and Place.

During discussion, the following issues were raised:-

- Scottish and Southern Electricity Network had been commissioned to report on the grid connection investment requirements for the potential scale of the Energy from Waste (EfW) facility being considered and Councillor R McWilliam requested sight of the report as soon as it was available; and
- it was reflected that during the Covid-19 pandemic many people had disposed of considerable amounts of rubbish, a resource which could have been used by an EfW facility. The future use of the plant was to be welcomed.

The Committee **NOTED** that:-

- i. the bid preparation and submission stage of the Inverness waste transfer station process would have concluded by the date of this Committee, moving on to the evaluation and recommendation stages thereafter;
 - ii. the tender specification for the Aviemore waste transfer station would be released to the market this month;
 - iii. discussions to identify the most suitable site in Fort William for the waste transfer station requirement were continuing;
 - iv. the next phase of the planned progressive restoration of Seater landfill site would be undertaken during 2020-21;
 - v. specifications were being developed for interim, medium-term waste management contract requirements to take to the market during 2021; and
 - vi. work continued to ascertain the feasibility of progressing a proposal for an energy-from-waste facility.
- ii. Membership of Waste Strategy Working Group
Ballrachd Buidheann-obrach Ro-innleachd Sgudail**

The Committee **AGREED** that Mr R MacWilliam would replace Mrs L MacDonald on the Waste Strategy Working Group.

The meeting concluded at 5.05 pm