

# **Minutes of Meetings**

**To be submitted to the Council**

**on**

**13 May 2021**

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**The Highland Council**  
**No. 20 2020/2021**

Minutes of Meeting of the **Highland Council** held REMOTELY on **Thursday, 25 March 2021** at 10.35am and continued on **Friday, 26 March 2021** at 9.00am.

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

**Present:**

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

**In Attendance:**

Chief Executive	Executive Chief Officer, Performance & Governance
Executive Chief Officer, Communities & Place	Executive Chief Officer, Property & Housing
Executive Chief Officer, Education & Learning	Executive Chief Officer, Resources & Finance
Executive Chief Officer, Infrastructure & Environment	Executive Chief Officer, Transformation & Economy

**Mr B Lobban in the Chair (other than for Agenda items 18, 19 and 23 which were considered on 26 March when the Vice Convener (Mr A Henderson) took the Chair.**

Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of Mrs I MacKenzie, Ms E Roddick, Mr A Sinclair and Mr I Ramon.

### Preliminaries

Prior to the commencement of the formal business, the Convener advised the meeting of the considerable number of printed pages currently being produced/issued in respect of agendas and reports for meetings (and the significant costs involved in this regard) and that it was his intention to bring this issue to the Redesign Board to allow early consideration of alternative arrangements/new ways of working which could be put in place.

Also, the congratulations of the Council were conveyed to Brora Rangers FC following their recent victory over Heart of Midlothian FC in the second round of the Scottish Cup.

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

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

- Item 14 – Mr B Thompson and Mr A Jarvie (both Non-Financial)
- Item 15 – Mr D Rixson, Mr T Heggie, Mr K Gowans and Mr A Jarvie (all Non-Financial)
- Item 16 – Mr D Rixson (Non-Financial) and Mr S Mackie (Financial)
- Item 17 – Mr D Rixson (Non-Financial)
- Item 19 – Mr T Heggie and Mr K Gowans (both Non-Financial)
- Item 20 – Mr B Thompson, Ms L Munro and Mr A Jarvie (all Non-Financial)
- Item 23 – Ms L Munro, Mr A Christie and Mrs D MacKay (all Financial)
- Item 27 – Mr R Gale (Non-Financial)
- General – Mrs M Cockburn (Non-Financial)

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

It was **NOTED** that, following the By-Election for Ward 12 (Aird & Loch Ness) which had been held on Thursday, 11 March, Mr David Fraser had been elected as a Member of the Council.

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

## **4. 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 17 December 2020/7 January 2021 and of the Special Meeting held on 4 March 2021 as contained in the Volume which had been circulated separately which were **APPROVED**.

## **5. 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:-

In this regard, the Council **APPROVED** the Minutes of Meetings as circulated – subject to the following –

### **Education Committee, 11 February**

\*Starred Item 8 – Review of the Statutory Consultation Exercise to establish a Gaelic Medium catchment area for Gairloch Primary School – **AGREED**.

### **City of Inverness Area Committee. 18 February**

It was **AGREED** that additional wording should be included at Item 10c – Common Good Fund Budget Setting for 2021/22 and Capital Programme – to make reference to the need for the Common Good Fund to set a financial and investment strategy.

### **Corporate Resources Committee, 25 February**

\*Starred Item 8(b) – Treasury Management Strategy Statement and Investment Statement 2021/22 and the Prudential Indicators – **AGREED**.

### **Sutherland County Committee, 1 March**

\*Starred Item 5 – Implementation of 20mph Speed Limits – to be progressed as soon as possible within Sutherland (with consultation being undertaken with communities across the County) – **AGREED**.

### **Tourism Committee, 17 March**

\*Starred Item - Preliminaries – in light of the fact that the Scottish Government had announced the earlier than expected lifting of Covid-19 restrictions in relation to tourism and travel, a Special Meeting of the Tourism Committee to be held on either 21 or 22 April 2021 (or in the previous week) and depending on the ability of Officers to prepare the required reports in adequate time – **AGREED**.

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

There had been circulated Minutes of Meeting of the Community Planning Board held on 5 November 2020 (approved by the Board on 1 February 2021) which were **NOTED**.

## **7. Climate Change Working Group Buidheann-Obrach Atharrachadh na Gnàth-shìde**

There had been circulated Minutes of Meeting of the Climate Change Working Group held on 29 January 2021 which were **APPROVED**.

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

There had been circulated Minutes of Meetings of the Brexit Working Group held on 14 January 2021 which were **APPROVED**.

## **9. Recovery Board Bòrd Ath-shlànachaidh**

There had been circulated Minutes of Meetings of the Recovery Board held on 25

January 2021 which were **APPROVED**.

**10. Redesign Board  
Bòrd Ath-dhealbaidh**

There had been circulated Minutes of Meeting of the Redesign Board held on 1 February 2021 which were **APPROVED**.

**11. Membership of Committees, etc  
Ballarachd Chomataidhean, msaa**

It was **NOTED** that Ms M Smith, Ms P Hadley, Mr C MacLeod and Mrs P Munro had now formed the group 'Highland Matters'.

In this regard, it was also **NOTED** that membership of the Council was now as follows:

Ind (27)/ SNP (18)/ Cons & Unionist (10)/ Lib Dem (9) /H.Matters (4)/ Lab (3)  
Suth Ind (1)/Real Ind (1)/Non-Aligned – 1

The formula in respect of the number of places on Strategic Committees remained unchanged at 7/5/3/3.

The Council also **AGREED** the following changes:-

Gaelic Committee – Miss J Campbell to replace Mr A MacKinnon  
Pensions Committee – Mr C Munro to replace Mr A MacKinnon  
Redesign Board – Mr D Fraser to replace Mr A MacKinnon  
Recovery Board – Mr C Munro to replace Mr A MacKinnon

**12. Question Time  
Am Ceiste**

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

**(i) Mr K Gowans**

**To the Chair of the Communities & Place Committee**

'At a time when we should be encouraging children to engage in outdoor play against the constraints of the pandemic, play areas are being closed are due to lack of funding for basic maintenance.

This is unacceptable.

With all the other challenges that children and families are facing as a result of the pandemic, the re-opening of play parks needs to be a priority to support health, well-being and exercise opportunities for everyone in our communities.

I have asked that these play parks are made available to children and families as a priority, unfortunately the responses I have received have indicated there is no budget that has been allocated to undertake the remedial work necessary to allow this Council to open these play areas.

It is clear that our play parks are being closed because of a long-term lack of investment in maintenance, despite the enormous benefit these provide throughout

our communities, and further, there is no indication that this funding issue has been addressed going forward.

Would you agree with me that this situation is completely unacceptable for our communities, unfair on Officers and reflects adversely on the Council, therefore core funding now must be made available to bring our play parks up to an acceptable operational level to support our communities through the pandemic and a new strategy needs to be developed by the Redesign Board?’

The response had been circulated.

In terms of a supplementary question, and given that children and families were being denied access to play areas and equipment at a time when such amenities had taken on an elevated importance as a result of the pandemic, it was queried whether the Chair of the Communities and Place Committee would agree to release funds to resolve the situation as a priority and provide core funding to ensure that there was adequate resource going forward.

In response, it was confirmed that the work around play parks had been devolved to Area Committees and as such the Chair did not have any authority to release funding. Whilst he could give no guarantees, he undertook to explore, along with Members of the Administration and leaders of the SNP group who were negotiating on the matter, whether any surplus funds were available for such purposes.

**(ii) Mr A Baxter**

**To the Chair of the Housing & Property Committee**

‘How much has the Highland Council spent, in each of the last three financial years, on using outside contractors to make repairs to council tenant heating systems?’

The response had been circulated.

In terms of a supplementary question, it was queried whether the Chair of the Housing and Property Committee agreed that the figures in the response which had been circulated were shocking and were a combination of the Council making the wrong choice and fitting unsuitable biomass boilers in tenants’ homes and relying on external contractors for repairs and what the Administration would do to recruit and train Council staff to undertake such work rather than relying on expensive contractors from out with the Council area.

In response, it was confirmed that the spend on maintaining heating systems was welcomed, some of which was needed regardless of the type of system installed. However, the point about unsuitable heating systems was accepted. Tenants deserved the most flexible, cheap and environmentally friendly heating systems possible and there had been a journey to get to that point although there had been a significant improvement over the past two to three years with a shift to electric heating systems and a reduction in the number of emergency repairs to some of the more problematic systems. There was a commitment to ensuring improvement in the heating systems used and supported repairs being carried out by Highland-based staff and in terms of whether repairs were carried out by in-house staff or external contractors, there were advantages to both options.

**(iii) Mr A Baxter****To the Chair of the Communities & Place Committee**

'How many winter maintenance vehicles have been out of service for more than a 24 hour period since the commencement of winter gritting operations on 14th October 2020 and what arrangements are in place to make sure that there is a continuity of service?'

The response had been circulated.

In terms of a supplementary question, it was queried as to the outcome of the report to the Commissioner and the Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency and the Council's internal investigations in respect of an incident whereby a wheel had come off a Highland Council gritting vehicle during the winter and what assurance staff and residents had that the Council's fleet was suitably resourced and safe.

In response, it was confirmed that the details of the report on the incident would be obtained from the Transport Manager and a response provided to all Members of the Council.

**(iv) Mr A Baxter****To the Leader of the Council**

'Since my question to you at the full Council meeting on 10th September 2020, what steps have you taken to devolve further Council business and decision making to Area Committees?'

The response had been circulated.

In terms of a supplementary question, it was queried as to why, after four years of the current Administration and five years of the Leader being in her position, devolution to Area Committees had been in his opinion so 'timid' with no direct plan produced.

In response, it was confirmed that if Councillor Baxter wished to make further suggestions as to what he considered should be devolved then that would be taken into account. If he wished to see a move towards a strategic plan, it was suggested that this be raised at the next Area Chairs' meeting shortly after Easter.

**(v) Mr A Jarvie****To the Leader of the Council**

'At the last Council, I posed the following question before Question Time was removed from the agenda –

"As this Council enters its fourth budget, can you name four localism programmes that this Council has approved and successfully rolled out to communities?" You listed the top achievement of the localism programme as –

"The Council's decision to distribute the Crown Estate Funding to our 10 Area Committees at its meeting in September 2020"

If this is the top achievement of this Council's localism programme, why did you vote against it at the September 2020 meeting?'

The response had been circulated.

In terms of a supplementary question, it was highlighted that, at the last meeting of the Council, a question had been included on the agenda in respect of achievements in localism and one of the top achievements had been listed as the Crown Estates funding. However, it was noted that the Leader had voted against the funding methodology which had been agreed. It had also been agreed (at the last meeting) to remove Question Time from the agenda to allow time for discussion on urgent issues related to Covid-19 and Brexit but it was now queried as to whether this had in fact been an attempt to remove scrutiny from the original question.

At this point, the Convener confirmed that this supplementary question was not considered to be acceptable and as such there was no response required.

**(vi) Mr A Jarvie**

**To the Chair of the Education Committee**

'How many children in the Highlands with Additional Support Needs have a PSA or ASN Teacher resource and how many of these received that support in the Highlands before a formal diagnosis?'

The response had been circulated.

In terms of a supplementary question, it was queried as to how many children were waiting to get a diagnosis before they got PSA support in class. The legislation stated that children got support to meet their needs and a diagnosis could help but their needs did not simply change just because a diagnosis came along. As such, it was suggested that this was something that should be tracked and monitored by the Council to avoid children having to wait for too late into their education to get the right support if/when needed.

In response, it was confirmed that the relevant support was put in place as and when it was needed. The Council also took a holistic approach to supporting young people which included all learners but particularly those with additional support needs. With or without a diagnosis, a child received support when needed. Very clearly, if a child had a diagnosis and that diagnosis indicated that a very specific kind of resource or support was needed then that was provided.

**(vii) Mr S Mackie**

**To the Chair of the Education Committee**

'According to Endometriosis UK, endometriosis devastates the lives of women and their families and will effect up to one in ten Highlanders. Education at a young age is cited as the best way to raise awareness of the condition for both women and men and can help identify symptoms as early as possible.'

Given the prevalence of this endometriosis and the importance of understanding this condition in early life, what is currently being taught on this subject in Highland Schools?'

The response had been circulated.



In terms of a supplementary question, and given the work currently underway by Endometriosis UK, particularly around support for education authorities which was relatively widespread in English Schools, it was queried as to whether the Chair of the Education Committee would agree to meet with Mr Mackie, the relevant Council Officers and Endometriosis UK to see how Highland could be at the forefront of endometriosis education in schools.

In response, and in thanking Mr Mackie for the work which he had done and his interest in this topic (including looking to support how the Council could become more aware and support young people with endometriosis), it was agreed that the relevant Officers in the Education Improvement Team would take forward engagement with Endometriosis UK, the Health and Wellbeing Inclusion Officer and Mr Mackie as requested.

### **13. Notices of Motion Brathan Glusaid**

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

(i)'In response to increasing public concern on road safety resulting in several Area Committees passing motions in favour of 20mph speed limits in built up areas, and in order to sustain the uptake in active travel resulting from the Covid-19 pandemic and to advance the Council's climate change targets, the Council calls on the Administration Leadership to engage urgently with the Scottish Government to revive legislation which will make 20mph the default speed limit in built up areas and allow Councils to vary this depending on local opinion and make sufficient funds available for Councils to allow them to undertake the necessary traffic calming measures and signage'.

During discussion, Members raised the following issues:-

- there had already been widespread support for the introduction of 20mph speed limits from Local Committees following an upsurge in popular concern about road safety;
- the current Traffic Regulation Orders were considered to be overly bureaucratic and took up a lot of Officers' time and as such a change to legislation to make 20mph the default speed limit would considerably help this situation;
- road traffic arrangements had been changed during the past year due to the Covid-19 pandemic but as these arrangements now began to revert to what had been in place previously, there was a need to find an appropriate and permanent solution to take account of the health and environmental benefits associated with increased levels of cycling and walking in local communities;
- this was a complex area but it was felt that the Scottish Government needed to change the law to ensure that 20mph was the default speed limit in built up areas in particular, not least to also address issues related to road safety;
- Highland Council had to join with other Local Authorities and CoSLA to lobby the Scottish Government on this issue and in this regard it was highlighted that this was especially important prior to the Summer season when it was anticipated that there would be a significant increase in cars, campervans, etc across the Highlands;
- it was the case that increasingly traffic was taking precedence over people in local areas and this had to be changed, not least in terms of the implications for health and safety;

- it had been stated that a reduction in the speed limit from 30mph to 20mph would only add a few minutes to a car journey and this should be recognised;
- whilst there was no issue with the proposal to implement the 20mph speed limit in specific areas where it had been proved that this was required, and empowering local communities in this regard, there was concern about making this a 'default' position across all areas. As such, it was suggested that there was a need for more clarity on the definition of a 'built up' area within this Notion of Motion;
- research had shown that there was a considerable degree of bureaucracy and cost associated with the implementation of 20mph speed limits and it should be acknowledged that it involved much more than the changing of a sign in a specific area;
- it was also the case that there had been some unintended consequences in areas where a 20mph speed limit had been introduced and there was evidence which suggested that it had not in fact reduced the number of casualties or collisions;
- it was felt that there should be new signs at the entrances to towns and villages to highlight any new 20mph speed limits which were being introduced as this would provide clarity for drivers;
- there was concern about the high level of fumes from vehicles which were waiting at 'islands' on the approach to towns and villages and as such consideration should be given as to whether there was any way to change this situation, perhaps through the removal of these 'islands' if possible;
- it was the case that mandatory traffic calming measures had to be appropriate for specific areas;
- it was disappointing that Police Scotland were not placing a priority on implementing 20mph speed limits at present in the Highland area and it was hoped that this would change in future;
- there was a need to convey thanks to the Road Safety Team for the work currently being undertaken in local areas;
- it was the case that there were many roads in Inverness where speed limits were not adhered to at present and this was real concern;
- it was felt that alternative approaches should be considered to deal with this problem and a focus not only given to new speed limits which could be very costly and bureaucratic;
- it had to be highlighted that there were roads in Inverness, including in the Central Ward, where speed limits differed on the same stretch of road and this was causing additional problems in addition to non-compliance;
- in terms of the reduction in speed limits, it was pointed out that even a small reduction in speed had a major effect in reducing the harm caused if a pedestrian was struck by a motor vehicle;
- new 20mph speed limits had been put in place in some areas of the Highlands but had had limited impact as Police Scotland had been very open in confirming that they were not able to enforce them due to restricted manpower. However, it was noted that this was not the case in all areas and in some cases these limits were being enforced and observed more widely; and
- in terms of road safety, it had to be accepted that education of drivers was key to addressing the issues which had been raised.

Thereafter, Mr G Adam, seconded by Mr R Gale, **MOVED** the terms of the Notice of Motion as detailed.

As an **AMENDMENT**, Mr A Jarvie, seconded by Mr S Mackie, moved that that the Council should agree to make representations to and lobby the Scottish Government

to legislate for easier implementation of 20mph zones. Also, for the creation of a Government budget to assist Local Authorities with the rollout of 20 mph zones and to further enable Local Authorities to deliver Government targets.

On a vote being taken, the **MOTION** received 57 votes and the **AMENDMENT** received 8 votes, with 4 abstentions, and the **MOTION** was therefore **CARRIED**, the votes having been cast as follows:-

### **For the Motion**

Mr G Adam, Mr B Allan, Mr R Balfour, Mrs J Barclay, Mr A Baxter, Mr B Boyd, Mr R Bremner, Mr I Brown, Mrs C Caddick, Mrs I Campbell, Miss J Campbell, Mrs H Carmichael, Mr A Christie, Dr I Cockburn, Mrs M Cockburn, Ms K Currie, Mrs M Davidson, Mr M Finlayson, Mr C Fraser, Mr D Fraser, Mr R Gale, Mr J Gordon, Mr K Gowans, Mr A Graham, Mr J Gray, Ms P Hadley, Mr T Heggie, Mr A Henderson, Ms E Knox, Mr B Lobban, Mr D Louden, Mrs L MacDonald, Mr A MacInnes, Mr D Mackay, Mrs D Mackay, Mr W Mackay, Mr G Mackenzie, Mr A Mackinnon, Mrs A MacLean, Mr C MacLeod, Mr R MacWilliam, Mrs B McAllister, Mr J McGillivray, Mr H Morrison, Mr C Munro, Ms L Munro, Mrs P Munro, Mrs M Paterson, Mr M Reiss, Mr D Rixson, Mrs T Robertson, Mr K Rosie, Mr G Ross, Ms N Sinclair, Mrs M Smith, Mr B Thompson and Mrs C Wilson.

### **For the Amendment**

Mr A Jarvie, Mr C Smith, Mr D MacLeod, Mr D Macpherson, Mrs F Robertson, Mr J Bruce, Mr P Saggars and Mr S Mackie.

### **Abstentions**

Mr J Finlayson, Mr L Fraser, Mr N McLean and Mr A Rhind.

### **Decision**

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

(ii) 'Highland Council welcomes the prospect of funding streams coming directly to Highland through the UK Government's commitment to a Levelling Up Fund, a Community Renewal Fund and in future a Shared Prosperity Fund.

However, the Council is concerned that presently Highland is not recognised as one of the UK's priority areas for the two funding streams which were announced in the UK Budget 2021. The Council is of the view that Highland should be a priority area and agrees to lobby to ensure that this is addressed urgently with reports coming back to the next Council meeting as to progress.'

During discussion, Members raised the following issues:-

- Highland had currently been placed in the lower categories in connection with the Levelling Up Fund and the Community Renewal Fund but it was suggested that the methodology which had been used in this regard had had some significant omissions. In this respect, it was suggested that, with help from Officers, the specific data sets which were required should be compiled and submitted to the UK Government to allow reconsideration of Highland's placement within the categories;
- it was acknowledged that the UK Government had already put in place a number of new arrangements which had significantly benefitted the

Highlands, including the Furlough Scheme and the current Vaccination Programme, but it was felt that there were issues which were relevant to adjusting placement within the stated categories for these Funds and these had to be highlighted as soon as was possible;

- in terms of being able to replace the European funding which had previously been allocated to the Highland area, it was critical that any issues in relation to allocation from the new Shared Prosperity Fund were resolved as soon as possible;
- it was essential that the necessary work on the data sets was initiated and completed as quickly as possible with a progress report to the next meeting of the full Council;
- this was an extremely timely Notice of Motion on what was a very complex set of issues and the urgency in taking the necessary action could not be overstated;
- it was noted that, alongside written correspondence, dialogue would be undertaken with MPs and meetings arranged with senior politicians as needed;
- a substantial piece of work was already being undertaken by Council Officers on this issue, in conjunction with Highlands & Islands Enterprise, and this was welcomed;
- it was recognised that many areas of the country would be impacted through the loss of European funding and as such it was suggested that there could be a role for the Brexit Working Group in helping to ensure that all matters were addressed in order to maximise the allocation from the new Funds to the Highland area;
- it was felt that it was a fundamental weakness that other Local Authorities appeared to have been better prepared in the past to take advantage of opportunities and situations like this than Highland Council and it was therefore essential to move to a position of anticipating (at a very early stage) likely policy announcements from both the UK and Scottish Governments in future. As such, it was suggested that this should be taken forward by all Members of the Council on the basis of working together and making use of the individual strengths and capabilities of individual Members (and Officers) for the benefit of the Highland area;
- there had to be a consistent and coherent strategy of communication in future at all levels of the Council in order to take full advantage of funding opportunities as and when they became available, perhaps through a policy and research unit;
- it was suggested that a very strong case should be made that the Highlands could not be viewed as 'one entity' as the situation was very different in Inverness from other parts of the area and as such there were varying degrees of need when it came to 'levelling up' and regeneration; and
- a summary of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats should be included as part of the work to be undertaken on this process.

### **Decision**

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

(iii)'Highland Council calls on the UK Government to reverse the decision to cut the Overseas Aid Budget. Were this implemented, it would have one of the most devastating impacts on the world's poorest people of any decision made by any Government short of going to war. As there is a link to the GDP, the Overseas Aid Budget will, as a matter of course, be reduced by £3bn which will have a massive and devastating impact and to add a further £4bn is inhumane and an embarrassment to any

civilised country.

It is estimated by one of the Government's own supporters that this cut will cost 100,000 lives, 5.6 million children will not be vaccinated, 4 million people will be deprived of clean water and 1 million girls will lose their education.

This cut is not only cruel it is also short sighted as any action that reduces medical help and hygiene in the middle of a global pandemic puts the whole world at greater risk. Please oppose this action and ask the UK Government to maintain the Overseas Aid Budget at .7% of GDP.'

During discussion, Members raised the following issues:-

- this was a short-sighted and inhumane decision by the UK Government which broke a manifesto commitment and would have the effect of severely impacting people who were among the poorest and most vulnerable across the world;
- cutting essential aid in the middle of a global pandemic increased the risks for everyone and came at a time when what was actually required was a global strategy with collective responsibility to deal with the issues arising from Covid-19;
- this cut represented a reduction of almost 30% in funding in real terms and the catastrophic impact of that at the present time had to be recognised;
- it also had to be acknowledged that the reputation of the United Kingdom had been severely diminished across the world as a result of this decision;
- in poorer countries, investment in the education of both women and girls had been proved to boost economic growth, improve health and reduce conflict and this had been greatly helped by the Overseas Aid Budget so to reduce that budget now risked undermining all the of the valuable work which had already been undertaken in previous years;
- it should be highlighted that the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, to which the United Kingdom was a signatory, embodied a number of principles which were now effectively being ignored by the UK Government through implementation of this reduction in the budget;
- it was the case that substantial sums of money had been allocated by the UK Government to various issues in relation to Covid-19 and as such it was not acceptable that this came at the same time as such a drastic reduction to the Overseas Aid Budget;
- it was acknowledged that the Overseas Aid Budget had been criticised in the past through concerns about 'wastefulness' but this had to be compared against similar accusations which had been made in respect of more recent expenditure in relation to Covid-19 issues;
- it was a fact that the Overseas Aid budget had shaped lives through community development which was a science forged by aid over the previous 40 years and as such this was a very poorly time decision in regard to its reduction;
- whilst acknowledging the issues which had been raised in relation to the reduction in this budget, it was also important to highlight that the UK Government had allocated more funding to the Covid-19 Vaccines Global Access scheme (COVAX) than any other country in the world. As such, this was a global initiative which aimed to provide equitable access to vaccines for the poorest countries at a vitally important time and this also had to be recognised;
- also, there was a hugely significant effort currently being undertaken 'behind the scenes' to combat the virus and the UK was at the forefront of this

(contributing more than all the other European countries combined) in terms of genomic sequencing which might be unseen work but was nevertheless of vital importance, not least at the present time; and

- it was hoped that this reduction in the Overseas Aid Budget would be urgently reconsidered at this time to allow the United Kingdom to continue to be regarded as a world leader in this regard.

### **Decision**

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

(iv) In recognising the opportunity which the Covid-19 recovery presents to permanently change the working culture of this Local Authority, the Council agrees to establish a Property and Workforce Committee which will have the remit of tying together the various stands and good work done so far into one Committee, to develop a cohesive policy to rationalise the property holdings and to offer flexible and attractive working options to existing and prospective staff.

Rationalisation of property does not simply mean to sell at market value. It opens up the possibilities of more asset transfers to our communities and even to demolish and relocate the Council HQ and for the Council to take the lead in developing the old site, using the increased proceeds to invest in the Highlands.

During discussion, Members raised the following issues:-

- there had been discussions undertaken within various Committees over the past year in relation to the possibilities for the Council to change the way that it worked, including the physical fabric and structure, on a permanent basis. However, these discussions had taken place in isolation and as such the proposed Notice of Amendment sought to bring this together through the formation of one new Committee to allow consideration of all options available in a sensitive and rational way;
- in thanking the proposers of the Notice of Motion for their engagement on this issue, it was highlighted that there had already been substantial work undertaken within the Housing & Property Committee and the Redesign Board, with potential savings already identified, and as such it was not felt that there was a need to create another new Committee;
- there had already been considerable change to the Committee structure over recent years and cognisance had to be taken of both the additional workload and cost which would be associated with creating another Committee at this time;
- this was a very important issue for the Council but it had to be highlighted that considerable discussion on various elements of future proposals would also be expected to be undertaken at a local level across the Highlands and as such it was suggested that another Committee at HQ level was necessarily needed; and
- the Workforce Planning Review, which included a focus on places of work in future, had already been the subject of considerable work and was now nearing completion.

Thereafter, Mr A Jarvie, seconded by Mr A Baxter, **MOVED** the terms of the Notice of Motion as detailed.

As an **AMENDMENT**, Mr B Thompson, seconded by Mr R Bremner, moved the following that the Council should agree to recognise the opportunity which the Covid-19 recovery presented to permanently change the working culture of the Local

Authority and to continue to develop a cohesive policy to rationalise property holdings and offer flexible and attractive working options to existing and prospective staff.

Also, that Members should further welcome the focus of the Council's Redesign Board in respect of workforce planning and rationalisation of property. As such, rationalisation did not simply mean to sell at market value but to open up the possibilities of more asset transfers to communities or even to demolish and relocate the Council HQ. Also, for the Council to take the lead in developing the old site and to use the increased proceeds to invest in the Highlands.

On a vote being taken, the **MOTION** received 10 votes and the **AMENDMENT** received 54 votes, with 2 abstentions, and the **AMENDMENT** was therefore **CARRIED**, the votes having been cast as follows:-

### **For the Motion**

Mr A Baxter, Mr J Bruce, Mr D MacLeod, Mr A Jarvie, Mr W Mackay, Mr D Mackay, Mr S Mackie, Mr D Macpherson, Mr P Saggars and Mr C Smith.

### **For the Amendment**

Mr G Adam, Mr B Allan, Mrs J Barclay, Mr B Boyd, Mr R Bremner, Mr I Brown, Ms I Campbell, Miss J Campbell, Mrs G Campbell-Sinclair, Mrs H Carmichael, Mr A Christie, Mrs M Cockburn, Dr I Cockburn, Ms K Currie, Mrs M Davidson, Mr M Finlayson, Mr J Finlayson, Mr C Fraser, Mr D Fraser, Mr L Fraser, Mr R Gale, Mr K Gowans, Mr A Graham, Mr J Gray, Mr T Heggie, Mr A Henderson, Ms E Knox, Mr B Lobban, Mr D Louden, Mrs L MacDonald, Mr A MacInnes, Mrs D Mackay, Mr G Mackenzie, Mr A Mackinnon, Mrs A MacLean, Mr C MacLeod, Mr R MacWilliam, Mrs E McAllister, Mr J McGillivray, Mr H Morrison, Ms L Munro, Mrs P Munro, Mr C Munro, Mrs M Paterson, Mr M Reiss, Mr A Rhind, Mr D Rixson, Mrs F Robertson, Mrs T Robertson, Mr K Rosie, Mr G Ross, Ms N Sinclair, Mrs M Smith and Mr B Thompson.

### **Abstentions**

Mr R Balfour and Mr N McLean.

### **Decision**

The Council **AGREED** to recognise the opportunity which the Covid-19 recovery presented to permanently change the working culture of the Local Authority and to continue to develop a cohesive policy to rationalise property holdings and offer flexible and attractive working options to existing and prospective staff.

Members further welcomed the focus of the Council's Redesign Board in respect of workforce planning and rationalisation of property. As such, rationalisation did not simply mean to sell at market value but to open up the possibilities of more asset transfers to communities or even to demolish and relocate the Council HQ. Also, for the Council to take the lead in developing the old site and to use the increased proceeds to invest in the Highlands.

## 14. Revenue Budget 2021/22 to 2023/24 – Update Buidseat Teachd-a-steach agus Cìs Comhairle

### Declarations of Interest

**Mr B Thompson and Mr A Jarvie declared non-financial interests in this item as Directors of High Life Highland but, having applied the test outlined in Paragraphs 5.2 and 5.3 of the Councillors' Code of Conduct, concluded that their interests did not preclude them from taking part in the discussion.**

There had been circulated Report No. HC/2/21 dated 12 March 2021 by the Executive Chief Officer, Resources and Finance.

During discussion, Members raised the following issues: -

- it was queried as to why there had been little corporate and/or press communication in regard to the current budget position and the relatively large surplus;
- in response to information being sought on the reduction to the numbers of Early Education Support Officers which it was felt had not been fully explained in earlier budget reports, it was pointed out that this had been fully explained in Appendix 9 of the Council's March budget report and involved a rebasing of overall investment, with no job losses, and ongoing progress to be regularly reported to the Education Committee;
- there was concern in relation to the poor state of the road network in many parts of the Highlands and the need for immediate action to be taken to tackle this issue where possible, especially the extensive number of potholes that were a significant safety issue and of considerable worry to many constituents;
- also, in relation to the road network, avoiding short-term repairs and implementing a longer-term 'spend to save' approach was suggested;
- long-term cost reduction should be a key consideration and in this regard several of the projects agreed by the Council as part of the budget setting process would benefit from further investment. As such, and rather than rushing to spend all available funds on roads, it was suggested that the best long-term use of resources should be fully considered at the Council meeting in June;
- in response to concern about the damage being done to the road network by large vehicles involved in windfarm construction and the timber industry, attention was drawn to the schemes in place to seek contributions towards road maintenance from those industries;
- in relation to the procurement of resources, it was disappointing that some quarries were only open at night;
- further information would be helpful on the outcomes from the installation of solar panels on Council buildings;
- attention was drawn to the significant and unquantifiable issues facing the Council, such the implications from Brexit, ongoing Covid-19 issues and the level of further funding which might be forthcoming;
- ongoing consultation with communities on their investment aspirations was vital;
- the need for improved sustainable play park provision was highlighted;
- in terms of the road network, it should be recognised that additional staff and equipment were required for road maintenance in at least several Council areas;
- it was vital that if the final decision on expenditure of the surplus for 2020-21 was to be taken at the Council meeting in June, projects were ready to be started immediately after that meeting;



- issues suggested for additional expenditure included roads, play parks, and post-lockdown recovery measures for education;
- it was noted that the Leader of the Council had agreed to hold a further meeting with the Chair and Vice Chair of the Easter Ross Area Committee to discuss the serious and ongoing challenges with road maintenance across that area of the Highlands. In that regard, the Leader also confirmed that she was available to meet with any Member at any time to discuss issues which they wished to bring to her attention;
- while the Council's performance on roads maintenance compared unfavourably to other local Authorities in Scotland, it had to be acknowledged that the Highland area had the largest road network in the country. As such, it was suggested that the Scottish Government should be lobbied for a fairer share of capital investment relative to total asset base to be allocated to the area;
- any future investment by the Council had to take the 'carbon footprint' fully into account;
- road maintenance staff were thanked for their tremendous work, often with insufficient resources, across the Highlands;
- attention was drawn to the urgent work required to improve white lining on roads in many parts of Highland, some of which was faded and a safety issue. In this regard, reference was also made to the busy tourist season which was anticipated and the toll which this could take on the roads, as well as the potentially poor impression which it would give to visitors and the inconvenience and danger to local residents;
- it was important that a thorough, consistent and fair approach was used to decide on future investment, noting that all Members had issues of concern in their local areas;
- of the surplus of £44.1m, it was noted that £9.8m had been allocated to Phase 1 investment priorities, with £24.7m for non-allocated reserves, which left a sum of £9.6m still available to invest; and
- as an example of a spend to save initiative, attention was drawn to the Health and Prosperity Strategy which aimed to invest £3.69m over two years to produce cost avoidance of £18.7m; and
- it was suggested that the debate on investment in roads should be tackled as part of the Change and Transformation Programme and a Special Meeting arranged in this regard.

### **Decision**

Members **NOTED** the contents of the report and how the plans for Phase 2 investment would be developed for presentation at the June meeting of Council.

### **15. Annual Report of Statutory Performance Indicators and Best Value 2019/20 Aithisg Bhliadhnaidh Thaisbeanairan Coileanaidh Reachdail agus Luach as Fheàrr 2019/20**

### **Declarations of Interest**

The following Members declared non-financial interests in this item but, having applied the test outlined in Paragraphs 5.2 and 5.3 of the Councillors' Code of Conduct, concluded that their interests did not preclude them from taking part in the discussion:-

**Mr T Heggie and Mr A Jarvie (Directors of High Life Highland)**  
**Mr D Rixson (Council representative on the Lochaber Housing Association)**  
**Mr K Gowans (Family member employed by High Life Highland)**

There had been circulated Report No. HC/3/21 dated 11 March 2021 by the Chief Executive.

During discussion, Members raised the following issues: -

- the importance of the report and the value of continuous improvement was highlighted, including the new methods of recording performance which were welcomed;
- it should be noted that the information contained in the report covered the period from April 2019 to March 2020 (and therefore did not cover the Covid-19 crisis period) but further improvements had been made since that time;
- in terms of ranking, the Council had fallen from 20th to 24th in Scotland in respect of educational attainment which was a disappointment and it was queried as to whether this was due to schools being too full and lacking appropriate tools and support. In response, it was confirmed that the draft action plan for Education, which had been shared with the Education Committee in February 2021, aimed to address improvement needs, particularly in relation to attainment, and regular updates would continue to be provided;
- the Council's ranking under Environmental Services for various road types had also fallen, with one having dropped from 24th to 27th and it was suggested that new ways of working were perhaps now required to tackle the backlog of road maintenance. In this regard, the road maintenance staff were commended and thanked for their hard work during challenging circumstances and severe weather on a road network which was the longest in Scotland;
- the reduction in street-light energy consumption since 2017 was welcomed;
- it was queried as to why road maintenance performance appeared to be on target to be better than the average of the three previous years when it was widely considered that the condition of the roads in Highland was deteriorating;
- Highland was ranked 28th in Scotland for people aged 65+ with long term care needs receiving care at home and information was sought and provided on what was being done to address this issue;
- the excellent work being undertaken with NHS Highland in relation to adult social care was acknowledged and it was hoped that the recommendations from the Feeley report would be adopted and that Highland could aim to be a leader in this area. In terms of the importance of improving upon the current ranking of 28th for Highland, as well as the need for a better system nationally, it was highlighted that the working relationship between the Highland Council and NHS Highland was much improved;
- the Care Academy was to put carers at the forefront of people's minds and in this regard all Members were urged to do all that they could within their communities to promote care work as a career;
- the importance of improved infrastructure to reduce the number of looked after children in Out of Authority Care was emphasised and the positive news about recent permanent placements of children, as well as the increased number of prospective foster and adoptive parents, was welcomed;
- assurance was sought and received that the redesign of amenity services would be continued at an improved pace;
- it was suggested that High Life Highland should be referenced in future reports, particularly for their work across Culture and Leisure services;
- attention was drawn to the importance of improving Highland town centres and high streets for local residents and visitors;
- it was hoped that Housing Service home visits would be able to restart again soon;
- the ranking of 23rd for the reported 41% of household waste being recycled

was disappointing. In response to a query as to why this was significantly different to the levels advertised at some Recycling Centres, it was explained that the levels advertised at Recycling Centres related directly to activity at that location;

- it was suggested that it would be helpful if more waste could be processed in Highland. In this respect, reference was made to work currently being undertaken to develop transfer stations;
- the rank of 23rd for the average time taken to process planning applications was of concern, especially for businesses;
- it was hoped that the average case duration for homelessness of 43 weeks could be improved;
- the positive rate of collection for Council Tax was welcomed and the staff involved were thanked;
- the improved report format was welcomed as being much easier to read;
- the Council spent significantly more supporting capital investment than other Councils in Scotland, partly due to the relatively large size of the asset base, such as roads and buildings. While this demonstrated focus and determination to address the challenges faced, it also suggested that Highland was not adequately resourced by the Scottish Government;
- positive news within the report included the asset management (condition) score of 82.4% for 2019-20;
- it was pointed out that the funding to some services had been reduced but public expectation had remained the same;
- the Redesign Board had focused on workforce planning and was now looking at property and, in this regard, attention was drawn to the workshop for Members on 29 April 2021 which would focus on asset suitability and the Council's overall estate;
- the planned meeting to discuss roads issues was welcomed as it was important to make informed decisions and to take into account the Council's large network of roads and bridges; and
- it was noted that further debate on the statistics within the report would take place at the relevant Committee meetings and this would facilitate the development of appropriate action plans.

## **Decision**

### **Members NOTED:-**

- (i) the performance of the Council's SPIs for 2019/20 against the targets set as outlined in Appendix 2 of the report;
- (ii) the initial analysis of areas for improvement in Appendix 4 of the report and the commentary and planned improvement actions;
- (iii) that Service Plans would be presented to Strategic Committees early in the new financial year and that Members should expect the opportunity to scrutinise plans in response to the information contained in the report at that time; and
- (iv) the External Audit opinion on the Council's delivery of Best Value in relation to the Council's Best Value Assurance Report (BVAR) and associated BVAR Improvement Plan as outlined at Section 8 of the report.

## 16. **Prototype Fusion Reactor opportunity for Caithness and North Sutherland** **Ginealach Ùr de Readhactaran Niùclasach**

### **Declarations of Interest**

**Mr D Rixson declared a non-financial interest in this item as the Council representative on the Lochaber Environmental Group and Mr S Mackie declared a financial interest as Chair of the Dounreay Stakeholder Group but, having applied the test outlined in Paragraphs 5.2 and 5.3 of the Councillors' Code of Conduct, concluded that this did not preclude them from taking part in the discussion.**

There had been circulated Report No. HC/4/21 dated 12 March 2021 by the Executive Chief Officer, Infrastructure and Environment.

During discussion, Members raised the following issues: -

- this was a potentially world leading opportunity for Caithness and North Sutherland to be at the forefront of new technology and, along with significant interest from around the world, there was widespread community and stakeholder support in the area for this proposal;
- it had to be highlighted that the opportunity to inject hundreds of millions of pounds into the area throughout the lifetime of the site would create hundreds of jobs and could be truly transformational;
- Caithness had the skills, experience and award leading supply chain as well as a generation of young people who wanted to remain in the area and as such this proposal had to be supported and recognised as a potentially transformative opportunity;
- depopulation had been a major concern in the area for many years and this proposal represented a 'once in a lifetime' opportunity for young people in particular;
- along with the very positive impact on the area, including through the creation of approximately 700 new jobs, the stability which this would bring had to be highlighted, not just for the Caithness area but ultimately for the whole of the Highlands;
- this opportunity also brought hope for the area and as such it was imperative that it was fully supported across the Chamber;
- this was one of the most important reports to come before the full Council and it had to be stressed that Caithness was very well placed to take advantage of the opportunity, including the fact that 89% of people in the area had already expressed support for the proposal;
- the Caithness Area priorities document had previously included reference to Caithness as the 'Energy County' and this took account of the collective energy of the local population which had been demonstrated fully over the past year in the determination to recover from the effects of the pandemic;
- the proposal was a natural successor to Dounreay and it was felt that this report (and the following report) created a very exciting vision for the future of Caithness and the whole of the Highlands;
- apprenticeships and training were key to retaining young people in the area and this proposal would provide that and more if successful;
- it had to be noted that there was a minority view in the area which did not support this proposal, mainly in light of the current 'unknowns'. As such it was highlighted that there had been no environmental assessment to date, no clarity over what the initial £220m investment would be spent on and where, no regulatory processes agreed by any Government and no details on future

transportation arrangements. It was therefore suggested that there was a need for caution, not least in terms of managing the expectations of the local community at this stage;

- it was felt that there also needed to be a discussion with more of a focus on tackling climate change and harnessing the enormous renewable potential which remained untapped in the area on the basis that technology was already available in that regard;
- it would be helpful if a detailed breakdown could be provided on where new jobs would be located if the proposal was successful, what type of jobs would be available in the local area and the funding to be provided by the UK Government;
- further information was also sought on whether the Scottish Government was in favour of the proposal and whether there would be a long-term cost impact on the Council in terms of any future investment required; and
- it was stressed that, although the terminology was often used, this really was a 'once in a lifetime' opportunity for the Highland area and as such should be fully supported.

### **Decision**

The Council **AGREED** to the submission of the Dounreay site as a potential site for the STEP prototype Fusion power plant as detailed in the report.

### **17. Highland's Hydrogen Economy & Update on Opportunity Cromarty Firth's Greenport Bid Eaconamaidh Haidridean na Gàidhealtachd & Fios às Ùr mu Thagradh Port - uaine Cothrom Linne Chrombaidh**

#### **Declaration of Interest**

**Mr D Rixson declared a non-financial interest in this item as the Council representative on the Lochaber Environmental Group but, having applied the test outlined in Paragraphs 5.2 and 5.3 of the Councillors' Code of Conduct, concluded that his interest did not preclude him from taking part in the discussion.**

There had been circulated Report No. HC/5/21 dated 8 March 2021 by the Executive Chief Office, Infrastructure and Environment.

During discussion, Members raised the following issues: -

- this was another 'good news' item, not least for the Port of Nigg and the Port of the Cromarty Firth who had both been working very hard in order to bring this programme forward and as such it had to be fully supported;
- it should be highlighted that hydrogen was one route towards a 'zero carbon' Scotland and also tackling fuel poverty and represented significant opportunities for the Highlands;
- thanks should be conveyed to the Officers concerned for the considerable work which had been undertaken and the collaboration with partners on this visionary project which had the capacity to be truly transformational;
- the Invergordon/Cromarty area was the best location for a hydrogen plant and it was imperative that the proposal was given every support necessary, not least to make optimum use of the energy in the Highlands;
- it was very clear that the future of energy was hydrogen and nuclear based and this (and the previous) report were very exciting in terms of future

- possibilities for the area;
- consideration should be given to the possibility of establishing a hydrogen refuelling station in the Highlands (similar to what was already in place in Aberdeen);
  - there were many linkages between this and the previous report, including the opportunities in relation to transport links and apprenticeships;
  - clarification would be needed on whether additional planning staff would be needed in future, particularly in relation to the Masterplan Consent Area; and
  - this was an excellent opportunity for diversification and collaboration with partners after the previous year's challenges and had to be supported enthusiastically by all Members of the Council.

### **Decision**

The Council **AGREED**:-

- (i) to support development of a vision for hydrogen in Highland to be presented to a future Member Workshop which would outline in more detail the significant role for hydrogen in Highland's green energy proposition/commitment;
- (ii) in-principle support for the Opportunity Cromarty Firth project and Green Port bid, noting its potential contribution to the hydrogen economy in Highland and to national and local outcomes; and
- (iii) the actions being undertaken in collaboration with Aberdeen City Council in respect of hydrogen fuelled fleet.

### **18. Annual Review of Standing Orders Relating to the Conduct of Meetings Ath-sgrùdadh Òrdughan Seasmhach**

There had been circulated Report No. HC/6/21 dated 8 March 2021 by the Executive Chief Officer, Performance and Governance.

In this regard, and during a summary of the report, a correction to the report was highlighted as follows – Standing Order 11a – Question Time (Public) – confirmation that it was now being proposed that questions should be received no later than 12 noon on the Wednesday in the week preceding the Council meeting (and not the Wednesday preceding the Council meeting as had been stated).

During discussion, it was suggested that it could be of benefit to the Council if the role of Convener was designated in future as having to be 'politically neutral'/not part of the Administration and that consideration in this regard should be undertaken for the next term of the Council.

Thereafter, Mr A Henderson, seconded by Mr R Bremner, **MOVED** the recommendations as detailed in the report.

As an **AMENDMENT**, Mr A Baxter, seconded by Mr P Saggars, moved - in relation to Standing Order 8 – to delete "and such special circumstances must be specified in the Minutes" and to add "At the commencement of the meeting, the Convener or Chair will read any requests for urgent business, state their decision as to whether the business shall be taken and state the reasons for the decision which must be specified in the minutes."

On a vote being taken, the **MOTION** received 46 votes and the **AMENDMENT** received 13 votes and the **MOTION** was therefore **CARRIED**, the votes having been cast as follows:-

**For the Motion**

Mr G Adam, Mr B Allan, Mrs J Barclay, Mr B Boyd, Mr R Bremner, Mr I Brown, Ms I Campbell, Miss J Campbell, Mrs H Carmichael, Mr A Christie, Mrs M Cockburn, Dr I Cockburn, Ms K Currie, Mrs M Davidson, Mr J Finlayson, Mr M Finlayson, Mr C Fraser, Mr L Fraser, Mr R Gale, Mr J Gordon, Mr K Gowans, Mr A Graham, Mr J Gray, Mr T Heggie, Mr A Henderson, Ms E Knox, Mr D Louden, Mr A MacInnes, Mr G Mackenzie, Mr A Mackinnon, Mrs A MacLean, Mr R MacWilliam, Mrs B McAllister, Mr H Morrison, Ms L Munro, Mr C Munro, Mrs M Paterson, Mr M Reiss, Mr D Rixson, Mrs F Robertson, Mrs T Robertson, Mr K Rosie, Mr G Ross, Ms N Sinclair, Mr B Thompson and Mrs C Wilson.

**For the Amendment**

Mr A Baxter, Mr A Jarvie, Ms L MacDonald, Mr D Mackay, Mr S Mackie, Mr D MacLeod, Mr C MacLeod, Mr D Macpherson, Mr J McGillivray, Mrs P Munro, Mr P Saggars, Mr C Smith and Mrs M Smith.

In a second vote, Mr A Henderson, seconded by Mr R Bremner, **MOVED** the recommendations as detailed in the report.

As an **AMENDMENT**, Mr A Baxter, seconded by Mr P Saggars, moved – in relation to Standing Order 11 – to add after the word ‘Committee’ the following - “or Chief Executive of the Council”, to read “A Member may submit to the Leader of the Council, Depute Leader of the Council, Chair of a Committee or Chief Executive of the Council, for consideration at an ordinary meeting of the Council, a written, relevant and competent question (in addition to individual written questions, individual emails from Members will also be accepted) relating to the business of the Council, to be answered in writing by the recipient in advance of the meeting.”

On a vote being taken, the **MOTION** received 46 votes and the **AMENDMENT** received 13 votes and the **MOTION** was therefore **CARRIED**, the votes having been cast as follows:-

**For the Motion**

Mr G Adam, Mr B Allan, Mrs J Barclay, Mr B Boyd, Mr R Bremner, Mr I Brown, Ms I Campbell, Miss J Campbell, Mrs H Carmichael, Mr A Christie, Dr I Cockburn, Mrs M Cockburn, Ms K Currie, Mrs M Davidson, Mr J Finlayson, Mr M Finlayson, Mr C Fraser, Mr L Fraser, Mr R Gale, Mr J Gordon, Mr K Gowans, Mr A Graham, Mr J Gray, Mr T Heggie, Mr A Henderson, Ms E Knox, Mr D Louden, Mr A MacInnes, Mr G Mackenzie, Mr A Mackinnon, Mrs A MacLean, Mr R MacWilliam, Mrs B McAllister, Mr H Morrison, Mrs L Munro, Mr C Munro, Mrs M Paterson, Mr M Reiss, Mr D Rixson, Mrs F Robertson, Mrs T Robertson, Mr K Rosie, Mr G Ross, Ms N Sinclair, Mr B Thompson and Mrs C Wilson.

**For the Amendment**

Mr A Baxter, Mr A Jarvie, Mrs L MacDonald, Mr D Mackay, Mr S Mackie, Mr D MacLeod, Mr C MacLeod, Mr D Macpherson, Mr J McGillivray, Mrs P Munro, Mr P Saggars, Mr C Smith and Mrs M Smith.

In a third vote, Mr A Henderson, seconded by Mr R Bremner, **MOVED** the recommendations as detailed in the report.

As an **AMENDMENT**, Mr A Baxter, seconded by Mr P Saggars, moved – in relation to Standing Order 32 - to delete Paragraph 4 and insert the following - “A Member may without prior notice put a question to the Leader of the Council, relevant Chair of a Committee or Chair of any Panel, Board or Working Group as appropriate, regarding any business included in the Volume of Minutes for that meeting and any Minutes on the Council agenda for approval. Any questions will be answered verbally by the person to whom the question is put. Questions and answers will be minuted. The Council will allocate 30 minutes for this QuestionTime”.

On a vote being taken, the **MOTION** received 46 votes and the **AMENDMENT** received 13 votes and the **MOTION** was therefore **CARRIED**, the votes having been cast as follows:-

### **For the Motion**

Mr G Adam, Mr B Allan, Mrs J Barclay, Mr B Boyd, Mr R Bremner, Mr I Brown, Ms I Campbell, Miss J Campbell, Mrs H Carmichael, Mr A Christie, Mrs M Cockburn, Dr I Cockburn, Ms K Currie, Mrs M Davidson, Mr J Finlayson, Mr M Finlayson, Mr C Fraser, Mr L Fraser, Mr R Gale, Mr J Gordon, Mr K Gowans, Mr A Graham, Mr J Gray, Mr T Heggie, Mr Allan Henderson, Ms E Knox, Mr D Louden, Mr A MacInnes, Mr G Mackenzie, Mr A Mackinnon, Mrs A MacLean, Mr R MacWilliam, Mrs B McAllister, Mr H Morrison, Ms L Munro, Mr C Munro, Mrs M Paterson, Mr M Reiss, Mr D Rixson, Mrs F Robertson, Mrs T Robertson, Mr K Rosie, Mr G Ross, Ms N Sinclair, Mr B Thompson and Mrs C Wilson.

### **For the Amendment**

Mr A Baxter, Mr A Jarvie, Mrs L MacDonald, Mr D Mackay, Mr S Mackie, Mr C MacLeod, Mr D MacLeod, Mr D Macpherson, Mr J McGillivray, Mrs P Munro, Mr P Saggars, Mr C Smith and Mrs M Smith.

In a fourth vote, Mr A Henderson, seconded by Mr R Bremner, **MOVED** the recommendations as detailed in the report.

As an **AMENDMENT**, Mr A Baxter, seconded by Mr P Saggars, moved the terms of a new Standing Order to read as follows - “Questions to the Leader of the Council at Area Committee - Members of the appropriate Area Committee may submit questions to the Leader of the Council to be answered at the Committee. The answer will be circulated to the other Members of the Committee. Any such question must be sent to the Head of Corporate Governance and received not later than 14 days prior to the meeting of the Area Committee concerned and no later than 5pm on the final day. In calculating the 14 days notice, the day of the meeting will be excluded. At the meeting, the Member who submitted the written question, having received a written answer, may ask orally one brief supplementary question, directly bearing on the subject matter of the original question, which shall be answered by the Leader of the Council. No discussion shall be allowed on any question, principal or supplementary. Where Members are informed that a reply to a supplementary question will follow, then this will be circulated to all Members and published with the minutes of the meeting”.

On a vote being taken, the **MOTION** received 46 votes and the **AMENDMENT** received 13 votes and the **MOTION** was therefore **CARRIED**, the votes having been cast as follows:-



**For the Motion**

Mr G Adam, Mr B Allan, Mrs J Barclay, Mr B Boyd, Mr R Bremner, Mr I Brown, Ms I Campbell, Miss J Campbell, Mrs H Carmichael, Mr A Christie, Dr I Cockburn, Mrs M Cockburn, Ms K Currie, Mrs M Davidson, Mr J Finlayson, Mr M Finlayson, Mr C Fraser, Mr L Fraser, Mr R Gale, Mr J Gordon, Mr K Gowans, Mr A Graham, Mr J Gray, Mr T Heggie, Mr A Henderson, Ms E Knox, Mr D Louden, Mr A MacInnes, Mr G Mackenzie, Mr A Mackinnon, Mrs A MacLean, Mr R MacWilliam, Mrs B McAllister, Mr H Morrison, Mr C Munro, Ms L Munro, Mrs M Paterson, Mr M Reiss, Mr D Rixson, Mrs F Robertson, Mrs T Robertson, Mr K Rosie, Mr G Ross, Ms N Sinclair, Mr B Thompson and Mrs C Wilson.

**For the Amendment**

Mr A Baxter, Mr A Jarvie, Mrs L MacDonald, Mr D Mackay, Mr S Mackie, Mr D MacLeod, Mr C MacLeod, Mr D Macpherson, Mr J McGillivray, Mrs P Munro, Mr P Saggars, Mrs M Smith and Mr C Smith.

In a fifth vote, Mr A Henderson, seconded by Mr R Bremner, **MOVED** the recommendations as detailed in the report.

As an **AMENDMENT**, Mr A Jarvie, seconded by Mr S Mackie, moved – in relation to Standing Order 7 – the following additional wording – “For the avoidance of doubt, a declaration should be made even if a Member does not participate in the particular item the declaration of interest pertains to.”

On a vote being taken, the **MOTION** received 47 votes and the **AMENDMENT** received 10 votes, with 1 abstention, and the **MOTION** was therefore **CARRIED**, the votes having been cast as follows:-

**For the Motion**

Mr B Boyd, Mrs M Cockburn, Mr R Gale, Mr C Fraser, Ms E Knox, Mrs A MacLean, Mr H Morrison, Mr K Gowans, Mr G Ross, Mr A Graham, Mr M Reiss, Mr D Rixson, Mrs F Robertson, Mr J Gordon, Ms N Sinclair, Mr J Gray, Mr G Adam, Mr G Mackenzie, Dr I Cockburn, Mr A Christie, Mrs T Robertson, Mr I Brown, Mr T Heggie, Mr R Bremner, Mr L Fraser, Mr K Rosie, Mrs H Carmichael, Mr J McGillivray, Mr A Mackinnon, Mr M Finlayson, Mr A Henderson, Ms I Campbell, Mr D Louden, Mr C Munro, Mr B Allan, Mrs B McAllister, Miss J Campbell, Mr J Finlayson, Mr B Thompson, Mr A MacInnes, Mrs M Davidson, Ms L Munro, Mrs J Barclay, Mrs L MacDonald, Mrs M Paterson, Mr R MacWilliam and Mrs C Wilson.

**For the Amendment**

Mr A Jarvie, Mr D MacLeod, Mr P Saggars, Mr C Smith, Mr C MacLeod, Mrs M Smith, Mr D Mackay, Mr D Macpherson, Mr A Baxter and Mr S Mackie.

**Abstention**

Mrs P Munro

In a sixth vote, Mr A Henderson, seconded by Mr R Bremner, **MOVED** the recommendations as detailed in the report.

As an **AMENDMENT**, Mr A Jarvie, seconded by Mr S Mackie, moved – in relation to Standing Order 12 – the following alternative wording to what was being proposed -

“The signatories on the Notice of Motion will be entitled to speak for up to 5 minutes, all other Members wishing to speak on the Motion will be limited to a maximum of 3 minutes”.

On a vote being taken, the **MOTION** received 47 votes and the **AMENDMENT** received 10 votes and the **MOTION** was therefore **CARRIED**, the votes having been cast as follows:-

### **For the Motion**

Mr G Adam, Mr B Allan, Mrs J Barclay, Mr B Boyd, Mr R Bremner, Mr I Brown, Ms I Campbell, Miss J Campbell, Mrs H Carmichael, Mr A Christie, Mrs M Cockburn, Dr I Cockburn, Mrs M Davidson, Mr J Finlayson, Mr M Finlayson, Mr C Fraser, Mr L Fraser, Mr R Gale, Mr J Gordon, Mr K Gowans, Mr A Graham, Mr J Gray, Mr T Heggie, Mr A Henderson, Ms E Knox, Mr D Louden, Mrs L MacDonald, Mr A MacInnes, Mr G Mackenzie, Mr A Mackinnon, Mrs A MacLean, Mr R MacWilliam, Mrs B McAllister, Mr J McGillivray, Mr H Morrison, Mr C Munro, Ms L Munro, Mrs P Munro, Mrs M Paterson, Mr M Reiss, Mr D Rixson, Mrs F Robertson, Mrs T Robertson, Mr K Rosie, Mr G Ross, Ms N Sinclair and Mr B Thompson.

### **For the Amendment**

Mr A Baxter, Mr A Jarvie, Mr D Mackay, Mr S Mackie, Mr D MacLeod, Mr C MacLeod, Mr D Macpherson, Mr P Saggars, Mrs M Smith and Mr C Smith.

In a seventh vote, Mr A Henderson, seconded by Mr R Bremner, **MOVED** the recommendations as detailed in the report.

As an **AMENDMENT**, Mr A Jarvie, seconded by Mr S Mackie, moved – in relation to Standing Order 20 – the following alternative wording to what was being proposed – “During discussion, a Member may raise a point of order or, with the sanction of the Convener/Chair, provide an explanation. A Member who is addressing the meeting when a point of order is raised will resume their seat until the question of order has been decided by the Convener/Chair.”

On a vote being taken, the **MOTION** received 47 votes and the **AMENDMENT** received 10 votes and the **MOTION** was therefore **CARRIED**, the votes having been cast as follows:-

### **For the Motion**

Mr G Adam, Mr B Allan, Mrs J Barclay, Mr B Boyd, Mr R Bremner, Mr I Brown, Ms I Campbell, Mrs J Campbell, Mrs H Carmichael, Mr A Christie, Mrs M Cockburn, Dr I Cockburn, Ms K Currie, Mrs M Davidson, Mr M Finlayson, Mr J Finlayson, Mr L Fraser, Mr R Gale, Mr J Gordon, Mr K Gowans, Mr A Graham, Mr J Gray, Mr T Heggie, Mr A Henderson, Ms E Knox, Mr D Louden, Mrs L MacDonald, Mr A MacInnes, Mr G Mackenzie, Mr A Mackinnon, Mrs A MacLean, Mrs B McAllister, Mr J McGillivray, Mr H Morrison, Mrs P Munro, Mr C Munro, Ms L Munro, Mrs M Paterson, Mr M Reiss, Mr D Rixson, Mrs F Robertson, Mrs T Robertson, Mr K Rosie, Mr G Ross, Ms N Sinclair, Mr B Thompson and Mrs C Wilson.

### **For the Amendment**

Mr A Baxter, Mr A Jarvie, Mr D Mackay, Mr S Mackie, Mr D MacLeod, Mr C MacLeod, Mr D Macpherson, Mr P Saggars, Mrs M Smith and Mr C Smith.

In an eighth vote, Mr A Henderson, seconded by Mr R Bremner, **MOVED** the recommendations as detailed in the report.

As an **AMENDMENT**, Mr A Jarvie, seconded by Mr S Mackie, moved the terms of a proposed new Standing Order as follows – “Communications at the Request of Council/Committee - during debate of an item held in public, where an agreed motion or amendment has the effect of a Member of Officer of the Council to communicate to someone or body on the Council’s behalf, said communication will be circulated to Members within 3 working days of sending and a copy recorded in the subsequent minute of that meeting”.

On a vote being taken, the **MOTION** received 49 votes and the **AMENDMENT** received 9 votes, with 1 abstention, and the **MOTION** was therefore **CARRIED**, the votes having been cast as follows:-

### **For the Motion**

Mr G Adam, Mr B Allan, Mrs J Barclay, Mr B Boyd, Mr R Bremner, Mr I Brown, Ms I Campbell, Miss J Campbell, Mrs H Carmichael, Mr A Christie, Mrs M Cockburn, Dr I Cockburn, Ms K Currie, Mrs M Davidson, Mr J Finlayson, Mr M Finlayson, Mr C Fraser, Mr L Fraser, Mr R Gale, Mr J Gordon, Mr K Gowans, Mr A Graham, Mr J Gray, Mr T Heggie, Mr A Henderson, Ms E Knox, Mr D Louden, Ms L MacDonald, Mr A MacInnes, Mr G Mackenzie, Mr A Mackinnon, Mrs A MacLean, Mr R MacWilliam, Mrs B McAllister, Mr J McGillivray, Mr H Morrison, Mr C Munro, Mrs P Munro, Ms L Munro, Mrs M Paterson, Mr Denis Rixson, Ms F Robertson, Mrs T Robertson, Mr K Rosie, Mr G Ross, Ms N Sinclair, Mrs M Smith, Mr B Thompson and Mrs C Wilson.

### **For the Amendment**

Mr A Baxter, Mr A Jarvie, Mr D Mackay, Mr S Mackie, Mr D MacLeod, Mr C MacLeod, Mr D Macpherson, Mr P Sagers and Mr C Smith.

### **Abstention**

Mr M Reiss

### **Decision**

The Council **NOTED** the points about the general conduct of meetings as set out in Section 4 and **AGREED** the proposals around procedures and protocols, including the introduction of regular breaks and the role of Chairs, Vice Chairs and Committee Clerks in managing meetings.

The Council also **AGREED** the proposed revisions as set out in Section 5 of the report, including a correction to the wording in the report/recommendation for Standing Order 11a (Question Time – Public) whereby Questions were now to be received no later than 12 noon on the Wednesday in the week preceding the meeting.

## **19. Annual Review of the Scheme of Delegation Ath-sgrùdadh dhen Sgeama Riochdachaidh**

### **Declarations of Interest**

**Mr T Heggie declared a non-financial interest in this item as a Director of High Life Highland and Mr K Gowans declared a non-financial interest 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 their interests did not preclude them from taking part in the discussion.**

There had been circulated Report No. HC/7/21 dated 3 December 2020 by the Executive Chief Officer, Performance and Governance.

During discussion, Members raised the following issues: -

- in respect of planning issues, thanks were conveyed to the Leader of the Council, Members and Officers for the arrangement of and attendance at the Seminar which had been held in November 2020 at which a number of contributions/suggestions had been put forward which had informed the current report;
- in regard to the Seminar, and specifically the recommendations which had subsequently come forward from Officers, it was suggested that there was a need to change the recommendation for no change to the size of developments and instead reduce current development sizes from 50 to 30 houses;
- it had been agreed previously that there were be a series of small events to allow a Member led review of the Scheme of Delegation and although it was acknowledged that this had been delayed due to the pandemic, there was a need for dates to now be identified to allow this to happen over the next six months;
- in regard to the Communities & Place Committee, and specifically Paragraph 2.3.8, there was a need to correct the typographical error which referred to 'Ward Memorials' on the basis that this should read as 'War Memorials';
- in relation to the Communities & Place Committee, and specifically Paragraph 2.10 (the setting of charges for relevant services), it was queried as to whether this would include the setting of car parking charges;
- clarification was needed in respect of the detail around Council Asset Transfers and particularly the level of delegation to Officers in this regard;
- the new powers for Local Committees in respect of the Crown Estate and Common Good Funds were welcomed, as well as the proposals for working with local communities;
- it was suggested that consideration should be given to more flexibility within report formats in future where possible;
- further clarity was needed in relation to Paragraph 2.9 – Finance Services – and specifically the overseeing of the management of any Common Good Fund assets for localities;
- in terms of the suggestion which had been made for a change to the size of developments from 50 to 30, it was not felt that this was particularly necessary as it was currently the case that Local Members could call in applications (if they had an issue with those applications) and there was also a need to be aware of the current length and timings of Planning Application Committee meetings which could be significant;
- there was a need to remove reference to 'European Community Law and legislation' within the Corporate Resources section of the report;
- there was also a need to correct references which had been made in respect of the criteria for Highland Opportunity Investments Limited in order to reflect current arrangements;
- the Gaelic Committee reporting to the full Council was welcomed, not least because it would give all Members the opportunity to assess, scrutinise and influence the many aspects of Gaelic culture which affected the lives of those living and working across the Highlands;

- consideration should be given to creating smaller Planning Application Committees which were similar in size to Local Committees so that all Members could have involvement in planning issues;
- in relation to implementing the power of 2 Ward Members to call in any planning application validated from 1 January 2021 onwards, it was suggested that this should be limited to applications in their own Ward and to 14 working days after the publication of the Weekly List;
- it would be important to take account of all issues connected with any proposed changes to the current planning arrangements and this would perhaps be best dealt with through a further Seminar in the first instance;
- there was a need to thank Mr K Gowans for instigating and arranging the Seminar which had been held in November;
- it had to be acknowledged that there was sometimes a perception of a 'disconnect' in the planning process whereby local decisions were taken at a remote level and for that reason the suggestion of creating smaller Planning Application Committees was supported;
- it was proposed that Strategic Committee Chairs should work with the appropriate Executive Chief Officers to review issues which could be devolved to Local Committees;
- the assurance which had been given that a review would be undertaken to consider the possibilities for devolving planning issues was welcomed. In this regard, it was suggested that if necessary a small pilot exercise should perhaps be implemented in the first instance;
- it was felt that the implementation of localism across the Highland should include planning decisions being taken at a local level;
- if the proposal to allow 2 Ward Members to call in any planning application was approved, there would have to be clarification as to this would operate in a situation where a major development affected more than 1 Ward; and
- the proposal to change the development size from 50 to 30 houses would have the effect of raising the profile of future proposed developments which would be beneficial for local communities across the Highlands.

## **Decision**

### **Members AGREED:-**

- (i) the changes to the Scheme of Delegation as detailed in Appendix 1 and 2 to the report;
- (ii) that the Gaelic Committee report to the Council instead of the Economy and Infrastructure Committee;
- (iii) that amendments to post titles could be made without recourse to Council as long as the level of delegation remained unchanged;
- (iv) that a further report would come back to the Council once there was clarity around the changes required to the Scheme of Delegation as a consequence of leaving the European Union and any other changes required as a consequence of possible further changes in the Council's management structure;
- (v) amendments to the Scheme of Delegation in relation to planning matters as follows - change to development size from 50 to 30 houses, reduction of number for objections from 8 to 5 across Highland, implement power of 2 Ward Members to call in any application validated from 1 Jan 2021 onwards and limit the call-in to applications in their own Ward and to 14 working days after the publication of the Weekly List; and
- (vi) to review the impact of changes after 6 months.

It was also **AGREED** that Executive Chief Officers should work with Strategic Committee Chairs to review and report back on issues which could be devolved to Local Committees from their own areas of responsibility.

It was further **AGREED** to consider the possibilities around devolving planning issues to smaller Committees as part of the 6 monthly review of the changes to the planning arrangements as agreed under recommendation (vi) above.

## **20. High Life Highland – Appointment of Independent Directors High Life na Gaidhealtachd – Comataidh Ainmeachaidh**

### **Declarations of Interest**

**Mr B Thompson, Ms L Munro and Mr A Jarvie declared non-financial interests in this item as Directors of High Life Highland but, having applied the test outlined in Paragraphs 5.2 and 5.3 of the Councillors' Code of Conduct, concluded that their interests did not preclude them from taking part in the discussion.**

The Council was advised that recommendations had been received from the High Life Highland Nominations Committee in relation to the appointment of Independent Directors as follows –

Mr D Finlayson  
Mr D Finnigan

In this regard, short biographies for each candidate were also circulated.

### **Decision**

The Council **AGREED** the recommendations as detailed.

## **21. Clerk to the Highland Licensing Board Clèireach do Bhòrd Cheadachd na Gàidhealtachd**

The Council **AGREED** the appointment of Mr Iain Meredith as Clerk to the Licensing Board on a temporary basis until Mrs Claire MacArthur returned from maternity leave.

## **22. Timetable of Meetings Clàr-ama Choinneamhan**

The Council **AGREED** the following changes to the current Timetable of Meetings:-

Highland Council – to move from 16 to 9 December  
Housing & Property Committee – to move from 8 December to 15 December  
Gaelic Committee – to move from 9 December to 16 December

## **23. NHS Partnership Review Ath-sgrùdadh Com-pàirteachas NHS**

### **Declarations of Interest**

**Mr A Christie (as a Non-Executive Director of NHS Highland) and Ms L Munro (as an employee of Carr Gomm Self Directed Support) declared financial interests in this item but, having applied the test outlined in Paragraphs 5.2 and 5.3 of the Councillors' Code of Conduct, concluded that their interests did not preclude them from taking part in the discussion.**

**Mrs D MacKay declared a financial interest in this item as a member of the NHS Highland Board but, having applied the test outlined in Paragraphs 5.2 and 5.3 of the Councillors' Code of Conduct, and in terms of her dispensation, confirmed that she would take part in the discussion.**

There had been circulated Report No. HC/8/21 dated 25 March 2021 by the Executive Chief Officer, Health and Social Care.

During discussion, Members raised the following issues: -

- there was a need to convey thanks to the Officers concerned, and particularly Mrs F Malcolm, for the extensive work which had been undertaken to date;
- it was noted that for the financial year 2021/22 only, it was being proposed that any overspend at the end of the year was to be shared between the partners on a 50/50 basis;
- further and more detailed information was sought and received on the situation which could arise where an action plan had been unsuccessful and an overspend was evident at the end of a financial year. In this regard, it was noted that it was being proposed that the following arrangements would apply to address that overspend – use of any underspend on another arm of the integrated budget. Where an overspend remained in respect of integrated children's services, there would be use of uncommitted earmarked reserves held by the Council for those services. Where an overspend remained in respect of integrated adult services, there would be use of any uncommitted earmarked reserves that the Council might have agreed to hold on behalf of NHS Highland for these services;
- it was noted that in the event of a dispute/unresolved matters, it was being proposed that this would be referred to mediation;
- clarification was sought and provided as to whether the budget for 2021/22 had now been agreed;
- it had to be highlighted that there had been a significant delay in this report coming forward due to the restrictions arising from Covid-19 over the past year but it was considered that this document now represented a huge improvement in the governance and financial reporting around this issue and as such was very much welcomed;
- there was a need to thank the Members who had been directly involved for the contributions which they had made as part of the process;
- it was acknowledged that the Council had been ranked as 31st in Scotland in terms of enabling people to remain in their own homes wherever possible and this had to be and would be improved;
- it was noted that regular reports would be provided to Members through the Health, Social Care and Wellbeing Committee in the coming months;
- there was concern that within the integrated budget there was still a large degree of very specific ring-fencing around each service;
- further clarification around the VAT arrangements would be helpful, along with information on how it was proposed to deal with any NHS Officer time which was seconded;
- in relation to governance, it was noted that the role/functions of the Joint Monitoring Committee were being deleted and as such it was queried as to how Members (who were not directly involved in the process) could seek and be provided with information as and when required;
- in terms of financial governance, it was being proposed that the Chief Executive of NHS Highland would be accountable to the Chief Executive of Highland Council (and vice versa) but it was suggested that perhaps such

oversight should also have some Committee input also;

- in relation to adult social care, more detail was needed on the type of information which could be requested from NHS Highland by Members of the Council;
- further detail was also requested on the Joint Controller Agreement which was to be put in place;
- it was felt that it would be more appropriate for consultation responses to be submitted to the Council in the first instance for determination prior to agreement of any further amendments to the Scheme;
- as well as reference being made to savings and efficiencies, it was important that improvement was also included within the terminology of the document;
- it would be appreciated if an update for Members could be provided before the Summer Recess if possible; and
- it was imperative that the monitoring and scrutiny of proposed efficiency savings was undertaken and highlighted within future reports, not least to take account of any potential effect on or implications for local communities across the Highlands.

Thereafter, Mr A Henderson, seconded by Mr J Gray, **MOVED** the recommendations as detailed in the report.

As an **AMENDMENT**, Mr A Jarvie, seconded by Mr D MacKay, moved deletion of recommendation (ii) within the report and that instead the consultation responses should come back to the full Council for final determination prior to agreement of any further amendments to the Scheme.

On a vote being taken, the **MOTION** received 41 votes and the **AMENDMENT** received 6 votes and the **MOTION** was therefore **CARRIED**, the votes having been cast as follows:-

### **For the Motion**

Mr G Adam, Mr B Allan, Mrs J Barclay, Mr B Boyd, Mr R Bremner, Mr I Brown, Miss J Campbell, Ms I Campbell, Mr A Christie, Mrs M Cockburn, Dr I Cockburn, Ms K Currie, Mrs M Davidson, Mr M Finlayson, Mr J Finlayson, Mr L Fraser, Mr C Fraser, Mr J Gordon, Mr K Gowans, Mr A Graham, Mr J Gray, Mr T Heggie, Mr A Henderson, Ms E Knox, Mr D Louden, Mr A MacInnes, Mr G Mackenzie, Mrs A MacLean, Mr C MacLeod, Mrs B McAllister, Mr H Morrison, Mr C Munro, Ms L Munro, Mr M Reiss, Mr D Rixson, Ms F Robertson, Mrs T Robertson, Mr K Rosie, Mr G Ross, Ms N Sinclair and Mr B Thompson.

### **For the Amendment**

Mr A Jarvie, Mr D Mackay, Mr D MacLeod, Mr D MacPherson, Mr P Saggars and Mr C Smith.

### **Decision**

The Council **AGREED**:-

- (i) in principle, the terms of the revised Integration Scheme at Appendices 1 and 2 of the report;
- (ii) to delegate responsibility for further amendments in relation to the Integration Scheme, after the conclusion of the period of consultation in the event that such amendments were not considered to be material, to the Chief Executives of both the Council and NHS Highland in consultation with the Council Convener



and Leader of the Administration, the Chair of the Health, Social Care & Wellbeing Committee, the Leader of the Opposition and the NHS Highland Chair and Vice Chair; and

- (iii) in principle, for consultation on the revised Integration Scheme.

## 24. Park Primary School Fire

There had been circulated Joint Report No. HC/9/21 dated 13 March 2021 by the Executive Chief Officer, Education & Learning and the Executive Chief Officer, Property & Housing.

### Decision

Members **NOTED**:-

- (i) the events of and damage to the school building arising from the most recent fire at Park Primary, Invergordon;
- (ii) the actions taken by the Council to support the local community through the two fire events including the prioritisation of educational provision for all children and young people including ELC, those at Park Primary and the young people currently within Invergordon Academy;
- (iii) the timeline and next steps in relation to securing a long-term solution for Park Primary and that a report with recommendations would come back to the Council in June 2021; and
- (iv) the briefing paper sent to the Deputy First Minister which outlined the options following the second fire at Park Primary School and the request from the Leader of the Council for support in such challenging circumstances.

## 25. 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 7 January 2021 was available on the Council's Website.

## 26. Exclusion of the Public Às-dùnadh a' Phobail

The Council **RESOLVED** that, under Section 50A(4) of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973, the public should be excluded from the meeting during discussion of the following 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.

## 27. School Transport Contracts Cùmhnantan Còmhdhail Sgoile

### Declaration of Interest

**Mr R Gale declared a non-financial interest in this item as a Trustee of the Go Golspie Development Trust but, having applied the test outlined in Paragraphs 5.2 and 5.3 of the Councillors' Code of Conduct, confirmed that he would leave the meeting during discussion of the item.**

There had been circulated to Members only Report No. HC/10/21 dated 25 February 2021 by the Executive Chief Officer, Infrastructure and Environment.

**Decision**

Following discussion, the Council **AGREED** the recommendations as detailed in the report.

The meeting (having adjourned at 5.35pm on 25 March to resume at 9.00am on 26 March) ended at 12.30pm.

## The Highland Council

Minutes of Meeting of the **Lochaber Committee** held **REMOTELY** on **Tuesday, 23 March, 2021 at 10.00 a.m.**

### Present:

Mr B Allan	Mr I Ramon
Mr A Baxter	Mr D Rixson
Mr A Henderson	Mr B Thompson
Mr N McLean	

### In attendance:

Mrs D Ferguson, Senior Ward Manager (Ross, Skye and Lochaber), Communities and Place  
 Ms E Taylor, Assistant Ward Manager, Communities and Place  
 Mr M Culbertson, LEADER Development Officer, Infrastructure & Environment Service  
 Ms F Cameron, Programme Manager, Infrastructure & Environment Service  
 Mrs A Clark, Head of Policy, Communities and Place  
 Mr A MacInnes, Administrative Assistant, Performance & Governance Service

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

### Mr A Baxter in the Chair

#### Business

#### 1. Apologies for Absence Leisgeulan

There were no apologies for absence.

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

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

Item 3- Mr A Baxter, Mr A Henderson, Mr B Thompson (all non financial)

#### 3. Highland Coastal Communities Fund – Assessment of Applications Maoin Coimhearsnachdan Cladaich na Gàidhealtachd

##### Declaration of Interests: –

**Mr A Henderson declared a non-financial interest in the Thomas Telford Corpach Marina application as a Council appointee to Caol Regeneration Company 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.**

**Mr B Thompson declared a non financial interest as a Council appointed Director on the Isle of Eigg Heritage Trust (parent company of Eigg Trading one of the applicants) and would not take part in consideration of this application.**

**Mr A Baxter declared a non financial interest as a Council appointed Trustee to the Ardnamurchan Lighthouse Trust and would not take part in consideration of this application.**

**Mr A Baxter declared a non-financial interest in the Fort William Marina and Shoreline Community Interest Company, Dredging of Foreshore application as a Tourist Guide who did guide from this pier but was not employed by the Company. 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 of this application.**

**Mr D Rixson mentioned that he was a council appointed Adviser to the Lochaber Environmental Group. They were developing a Hydro Scheme in the Ballachulish area and there was reference to community benefit in one of the applications in the report, but it was so remote that it did not involve him directly and therefore he would not be declaring an interest.**

There was circulated Report No. LA/2/21 by the Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure and Environment.

Prior to discussion of the applications the Chairman on behalf of the Committee gave thanks to Officers for all their hard work in preparing the report before the Committee today.

An overview of the report was provided and it was highlighted that there were 11 applications for funding from the Highland Coastal Communities Fund. The total grant request was for £675,585. The available budget was £432,032 and therefore the grants requested was oversubscribed by £243,552. All 11 projects were technically eligible for approval. A RAG assessment for the projects had been completed by Officers to assist Members consideration of the applications. Late amendments to two projects and match funding updates were highlighted.

The Committee were invited to consider all applications presented for funding and agree whether to approve, defer or reject the application; and agree which applications should receive a funding award from Highland Coastal Communities Fund up to the value of the available area allocation.

It was confirmed that in the event that the full amount of funding was not spent, balances could be carried forward into subsequent bidding rounds.

It was noted that the budget and timescale for any subsequent round of Highland Coastal Communities Funding was not confirmed, although it was expected that there would be subsequent rounds of the Fund.

It was recommended that the Committee consider first, the 3 applications that Officers had highlighted as having no technical or other barriers towards being achieved at this stage, namely, Ardnamurchan Lighthouse Trust, Eigg Trading and Glencoe Village Car Park applications. This was accepted by the Committee. As Mr A Baxter and Mr B Thompson had declared interests in two of these applications they withdrew at this stage to allow their consideration and they re-joined the meeting thereafter and took part in the rest of the meeting.

Nominations were then invited for an Interim Chair. Mr A Henderson was unanimously appointed as Interim Chair for the 3 applications as referred to above.

Thereafter, the Committee dealt with the applications which had been presented as follows:-

**Ardnamurchan Lighthouse Trust - Increasing Infrastructure Resilience and Capacity at the Ardnamurchan Lighthouse Complex**

**APPROVED** £73,650

**Eigg Trading - An Laimhrig- Eigg Community Hub Redevelopment (phase 2)**

**APPROVED** £100,000

**Glencoe and Glen Etive Community Council - Glencoe Village Car Park Phase 1 Feasibility Study**

**APPROVED** £12,000

At this point, Mr A Baxter, resumed the Chair for the remainder of the meeting.

**Caol Regeneration Company,  
Thomas Telford Corpach Marina**

**DEFERRED**

**Arisaig Community Trust – The Arisaig Aire**

**DEFERRED**

**Ardgour Community Council - Ardgour Area Path Network**

**APPROVED** £10,935

**National Trust for Scotland - Sustainable Visitor Infrastructure in Glencoe and Glen Etive**

**APPROVED** £50,000.

The Committee also **AGREED** that, subject to technical advice, a condition be attached to the award of funding so that revenue raised through car parking charges at the Three Sisters Car Park be also used for funding of the new Ranger post. The scope and remit of the Ranger post would also be defined with the applicant with the Committee's preference that it also covers the Glencoe Village area.

**Road to The Isles Facilities Group - Silver Sands (Tougal) Car Park Improvements**

**APPROVED** £100,000

**NOTED** that Landowner consent to the development would be a condition in the award of funding.

**Fort William Marina and Shoreline Community Interest Company - Dredging of Foreshore**

Mr B Allan, seconded by Mr A Baxter, **MOVED** that this application should be approved.

As an AMENDMENT, Mr D Rixson, seconded by Mr B Thompson, moved that this application should be deferred on the basis of the previous decision of this Committee in relation to Town Centre Funding for this project, that this funding be available to a reserve project should the Marine Scotland Licence for the project not be in place.

On a vote being taken, the MOTION received 4 votes and the AMENDMENT received 2 votes and the MOTION was therefore CARRIED, the votes having been cast as follows:-

For the Motion – Mr B Allan, Mr A Baxter, Mr A Henderson, Mr I Ramon

For the Amendment – Mr D Rixson, Mr B Thompson

Therefore, the application was **APPROVED**.

It was queried if this decision was competent given the previous Committee decision on this project for Town Centre funding. There was a short adjournment of the meeting to seek advice. Thereafter, it was confirmed that both issues could be considered separately. The decision made at a previous Committee meeting to award Town Centre Funding for this project was a separate decision. Therefore, the Committee could make this award of HCCF at this meeting. In terms of the applicant meeting the conditions made at a previous Committee to grant Town Centre Funding, including provision of a Marine Licence, this was a separate issue.

Following agreement at the end of the meeting, the funding **APPROVED** for this application was £70,447.02

It was also **AGREED** that:-

i that assurance of final costs of Infill works would be a condition of the award of funding; and

ii that the funding is available until the next round of Highland Coastal Communities Funding is confirmed. In the event that HCCF does not continue, the award for this project if not used, be reallocated by the Local Committee.

### **Bruce Boyd - Muck Community Store**

#### **DEFERRED**

**NOTED** that the applicant be advised to contact Business Gateway for advice on business and project planning. Also, the Committee expressed a preference for any future application for this project to be on the basis of a constituted not for profit organisation.

### **Isle of Canna Community Development Trust - Corroghan Barn Redevelopment Feasibility Study**

**APPROVED** £15,000

The Committee requested that Applicants whose request for funding had been deferred, be advised that it is still open to them to submit updated applications to the next round of HCCF.

The meeting ended at 1.15 p.m.

## The Highland Council

Minutes of Meeting of the **Isle of Skye and Raasay Committee (Comataidh an Eilein Sgitheanaich agus Ratharsair)** held remotely on **Monday, 29 March, 2021 at 10.30 am.**

### Present:

Mr John Finlayson  
Mr John Gordon

Mr Calum MacLeod  
Mr Calum Munro

### Participating Officials:

Mr Willie MacKinnon, Ward Manager, Communities and Place  
Ms Fiona Cameron, Programme Manager, Infrastructure and Environment Service  
Ms Wendy Anderson, Programme Administrator, Infrastructure & Environment Service  
Ms Jennifer Bruce, Principal Housing Officer, Property & Housing Service  
Mr Iain Moncrieff, Road Operations Manager, Infrastructure and Environment Service  
Mr Andrew Hunter, Technician, Infrastructure and Environment Service  
Mr Alasdair MacInnes, Administrative Assistant, Performance & Governance Service

### Also in Attendance:

Inspector L Allan, Police Scotland

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

### Mr J Gordon – Cathraiche (Chair)

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

There were no apologies for absence.

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

Item 5 – Mr John Finlayson, Mr John Gordon, Mr Calum Munro (All Non financial)

#### 3. **Minutes** **Geàrr-chunntas**

There were circulated for information, Minutes of Meeting of the Isle of Skye and Raasay Committee (Comataidh an Eilein Sgitheanaich agus Ratharsair) held on 30 November, 2020 and 25 January, 2021, the terms of which were **NOTED**.

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

There was circulated Report No SR/2/21 by the Area Inspector for Police.



During discussion, the following main points were raised:-

- A significant amount of Police time was spent in responding to reports of lockdown breaches, such as irresponsible camping or checking on reports of holiday homes being used during lockdown.
- It was queried what the staffing numbers were in the area given that it was likely to be a very busy tourist season. It was advised that there was currently a full staffing complement of Officers in the area. However, there would be some changes in staff in the next few months, but contingency plans were in place to fill any vacancies.
- It was requested that a list of local Police Officer representatives for each Community Council in the area be forwarded to Members as this would be helpful in resolving issues locally;
- There was good joint working with Partners in the area. Two Highland Council Countryside Rangers were to be appointed in this area and Police Scotland would be working with them during the busy tourist season that was expected.
- There was good adherence to the Covid-19 guidelines in the area;
- It was advised that stop and searches were based on intelligence and upon certain circumstances where Officers felt it appropriate to use their stop and search powers. Stop and searches were reviewed to ensure that there was good reason to use these powers.
- Some Officers had received their Covid vaccinations early as there had been spare vaccinations available that had to be used by a specific date. Officers had appropriate Personal Protection Equipment when social distancing may not be possible.
- Officers did target speeding hotspots identified by Community Councils;
- Officers were in liaison with Partner agencies and the Public regarding wildfires, some of which had been started deliberately. If there was criminal liability from deliberate fire raising this would be reported and dealt with accordingly.
- In terms of what the community could do to help prevent the supply and misuse of drugs, it was advised that if the public had information then they should forward it to Police Scotland who would target those involved. Information could be supplied anonymously via Crimestoppers.

The Committee **NOTED**:-

i progress made against the objectives set within the Highland Local Policing Plan 2020-2023 Year 1, attached as Annex A to the report, for the period covering 01 April 2020 - 31 December 2020; and

ii that a list of Police Officer representatives for each Community Council in the area would be sent to all Members.

**5. Highland Coastal Communities Fund – Assessment of Applications  
Maoin Choimhearsnachdan Cladaich na Gàidhealtachd – Measadh  
Iarrtasan**

**Declaration of Interests:-**

**Mr John Finlayson declared a non financial interest in the Castle Moil Access Path application as his partner was a member of Kyleakin and Kylerhea Community Council and he took no part in the discussion of this application.**

**Mr John Gordon declared a non financial interest in the Climavore Builds application as a member of the Steering Group for Climavore and he took no part in the discussion for this application.**

**Mr Calum Munro declared a non financial interest in (1) Kilmuir Community Hub application as Chair of Kilmuir Community Trust and (2) the Voices of the Land application as a Director of Ionad Thronairnis, and he took no part in the discussion of these applications.**

There was circulated Report No. SR/3/21 by the Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure and Environment.

The available Highland Coastal Communities Funding (HCCF) for the Isle of Skye & Raasay was £505,492.06. There were 19 applications all of which were eligible for funding. The total value of grant requested was £689,469.27.

Members expressed their thanks to Officers for their work on HCCF. It had been a transparent, rigorous process and engagement with applicants. This funding was very welcomed and would make a positive change to communities across the Isle of Skye and Raasay. The funding would meet the ambitions of supporting economic recovery, community resilience and mitigating the impact of climate change and address the challenges of rural depopulation.

The Committee was invited to consider all applications presented for funding and agree whether to approve, defer or reject the application; and agree which applications should receive a funding award from HCCF up to the value of the available area allocation.

The Committee considered applications for Highland Coastal Communities Funding as follows:-

**Radio Skye (Cuillin FM Ltd) – Radio Skye Signal Expansion Project**

**APPROVED £18,400**

**Kyleakin & Kylerhea Community Council – Castle Access Paths**

**APPROVED £6,278**

**Geary Common Grazings Committee – Geary Crofting Township Regeneration**

**APPROVED £15,125**

**Broadford & Strath Community Company – Elgol Toilets & Visitor Facilities**

**APPROVED** £34,500

**Portree & Braes Community Trust – Camanachd Square Feasibility Study**

**APPROVED** £31,500

**Edinbane Community Company Ltd – Lyndale Multi User Path**

**APPROVED** £25,000

**Skye Sailing Club – Safety Boat Renewal**

**APPROVED** - £22,556

**Sleat Community Trust – Toremore Forest**

**APPROVED** £13,560

**Minginish Community Hall Association – Path and Habitat Improvement**

**APPROVED** £5,000

**Broadford and Strath Community Company – Corry Capers**

**APPROVED** £11,612.50

Mr Gordon had declared a non financial interest in the following application, and would not be taking part in the discussion. Nominations were then invited for an Interim Chair for the Climavore application. Mr J Finlayson was unanimously appointed as Interim Chair.

**Climavore CIC – Climavore Builds**

**APPROVED** £7,000

At this point, Mr J Gordon resumed the Chair for the remainder of the meeting.

**Raasay Development Trust – Raasay Community Pontoon & Offshore Facilities**

**APPROVED** £74,003

**Broadford & Strath Community Company – Community Co-ordinator**

**APPROVED** £34,200

**Kilmuir Community Trust – Kilmuir Community Hub (Phase 1)**

**APPROVED** £50,000

### **The Highland Council – Kilt Rock Car Park Extension**

**APPROVED** £57,100

### **Kyleakin Connections – KC Plus**

**APPROVED** £64,578.27

### **Ionad Thronndaimis – Guthan na Tire/Voices of the Land**

The application while supported in principle was **DEFERRED** for consideration at the next round of Highland Coastal Community Funding.

### **Hebridean Diving Services - Coastal Defence Adjacent to Stein Jetty**

**APPROVED** £25,000

### **Staffin Community Trust – The Staffin Slipway Redevelopment**

The application while supported in principle was **DEFERRED** until the project was progressed further.

#### **6. Housing Revenue Account: Garage Rents 2021/22 Cunntas Teachd-a-steach Taigheadais: Màil Gharaidsean 2021/22**

There was circulated Report No. SR/4/21 by the Executive Chief Officer Property and Housing which provided information on garage rents for Skye & Raasay and invited the Committee to set rent levels for garage and garage sites held on the Housing Revenue Account for 2021/2022.

Following consideration, the Committee **AGREED** a 2% rent increase to apply to Skye & Raasay Garages and Garage Sites.

#### **7. Roads Maintenance Programme 2021/22 Prògram Càradh Rathaidean 2021/22**

There was circulated Report No. SR/5/21 by the Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure and Environment.

During discussion, the following main points were raised:-

- In terms of the frustration felt by many regarding the state of the roads in the area and across Highland, it was reassuring to see the proposed roads maintenance programme included a lot of the work on roads that required to be carried out;
- Increased investment in roads was very welcomed. In terms of extra funding, there would be £88k revenue and £500k extra capital funding to be allocated to the Skye/Raasay area.
- In relation to the works that did not go ahead last year, the amount of carry forward funding was unknown at this stage. An assurance was sought as soon as possible that the carry forward funding for this area would not be lost.
- This was an ambitious roads maintenance programme and the need to ensure the work was done was emphasised. With the extra funding, it was important to

make an early start on the works and maintain that momentum. Programming of works was key to ensure the maximisation of labour, plant and equipment.

- Progress on works on the Torrin road was requested;
- It was advised that surface dressing was weather dependant;
- It was advised that all areas were currently reviewing what their fleet plant requirements were as there was additional money available.
- It was requested that a progress report on the Road Maintenance Programme be submitted to the Committee meeting in August, 2021;
- Making progress on drainage, pot holes and white lining was emphasised.
- Members recognised the dedication and hard work of the road maintenance team in Skye/Raasay. It was a very challenging job and their efforts were much appreciated.

Thereafter, the Committee **AGREED**:-

i the proposed prioritised 2021/22 Roads Programme for the Isle of Skye and Raasay Area; and

ii that a progress report on the Roads Maintenance Programme would be submitted to the Committee meeting in August, 2021.

#### **8. Ward 10 Discretionary Grant Awards 2020/21- Presentation Duaisean Tabhartas fo Ughdarras Uàrd 10 2020/21 – Taisbeanadh**

The Ward Manager gave a verbal presentation on the Ward 10 Discretionary Grant Awards 2020/21

It was advised that there had been 56 community resilience applications awarded funding from the Covid-19 fund and 10 applications awarded funding from the Ward discretionary grant fund. A total of £52,000 had been awarded. The awards mainly supported community groups that supported a wide range of services during the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic.

Members acknowledged the resilience shown by communities over the last year and also that the Council had been able to support these communities in the tremendous work that they had carried out. It was intended to support communities going forward.

A point was made that localism needed to be backed up with sufficient funding. Local Members could make a big difference to local communities if more funding was available.

The contribution of the Ward Manager on his work in managing the Covid-19 and Ward Discretionary grants was recognised.

The Committee **NOTED** the Ward 10 Discretionary Grant Awards 2020/21.

The meeting ended at 12.30 p.m.

## The Highland Council

Minutes of Meeting of the **Audit and Scrutiny Committee** held REMOTELY on Wednesday, 31 March, 2021 at 10.30am.

### Present:

Mr G Adam	Mr S Mackie
Mr R Balfour	Mrs A MacLean
Mrs J Barclay	Mr D Macpherson
Mr B Boyd	Mrs M Paterson
Mr R Bremner	Mr P Saggars
Mrs M Davidson	Mr B Thompson
Mr G MacKenzie	

### Non-Members also present:

Mr A Henderson	Mrs T Robertson
Mrs G Sinclair	

### Officials in Attendance:

Ms D Manson, Chief Executive  
 Ms L Denovan, Executive Chief Officer, Resources & Finance  
 Ms K Lackie, Executive Chief Officer, Performance & Governance  
 Mr M MacLeod, Executive Chief Officer, Infrastructure and Environment  
 Ms E Johnston, Corporate Audit & Performance Manager  
 Miss D Sutherland, Corporate Audit Manager  
 Mr S Carr, Corporate Performance Manager  
 Ms R Cleland, Corporate Communications Manager  
 Mr A McCann, Economy and Regeneration Manager  
 Ms A MacPherson, Workforce Planning and Staffing Manager  
 Mr P Hankinson, Senior Auditor  
 Miss J MacLennan, Principal Administrator, Performance & Governance  
 Mr A MacInnes, Administrative Assistant, Performance & Governance

### Also in attendance:

Ms J Brown, Engagement Lead, Grant Thornton  
 Ms C Connor, Audit Manager, Grant Thornton

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

### Mr G MacKenzie in the Chair

#### 1. Apologies for Absence Leisgeulan

An apology for absence was intimated on behalf of Dr I Cockburn.

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

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

Item 4 – Mr G Adam, Mr R Bremner, Mr S Mackie, Mrs M Paterson and Mr P Saggars (all non financial), Mr B Thompson (financial and non-financial) and Mrs M Davidson (financial).

### **3. External Audit Reports Aithisgean Sgrùdaidh bhon Taobh A-muigh**

There had been circulated the External Audit Reports prepared by the Council's External Auditors (Grant Thornton) and issued since the last Audit and Scrutiny Committee meeting – Draft External Audit Plan for 2020/21.

A summary of the report was provided during which it was explained that the Plan was a “roadmap” of how Grant Thornton intended to deliver the audit in 20/21 and where they saw the key risks and challenges facing the Highland Council.

During discussion, Members raised the following issues:-

- the Chair thanked John Boyd, the previous External Auditor, recognising the work he had undertaken with the Council over the last number of years;
- the Plan stated that Grant Thornton had rebutted the presumed risk of fraud in revenue recognition but recognised the accounting treatment of Covid19 grant income as an area of audit focus and the monitoring of this rebuttal was well placed. The Plan reflected the changed circumstances which the Council now found itself in as a result of Covid 19;
- the challenges of auditing when many staff were working remotely were recognised,
- the Financial Statement Audit Risks had changed this year with, amongst others, the valuation of property, plant and equipment and the widening of the scope of the defined pension scheme and the rationality behind this was queried; and
- the auditing of Planning Enforcement was queried. In response it was confirmed that this was an area which could be examined by Internal Audit but it had to be recognised that enforcement powers were limited;

The Committee **NOTED** the terms of the Draft External Audit Plan 2020/21 and **AGREED** that once the Plan was finalised it would be shared with the Committee.

### **4. Internal Audit Reviews and Progress Report Ath-bhreithneachaidhean In-sgrùdaidh agus Aithisg Adhartais**

#### **Declarations of Interest:**

The undernoted Members declared non-financial interests as related organisations had received Covid-related support grants 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:-

**Mr G Adam - as a non-remunerative director of Black Isle Yurts Limited**  
**Mr R Bremner – as Chair of Thrumster Community Development Association**

**Mr S Mackie - as a shareholder and Director of MacDonald Mackie Consulting, Mackie Caledonian Ltd and North Coast Distillers Limited but who had not applied for support grant in 2020**

**Mrs M Paterson – as a Board Member of the Puffin Pool and Chair of the Highland Football Academy**

**Mr P Saggars – as Treasurer of Nairn Golf Club, Director of Nairn CAB, Director of Nairn BID and Director of Nairn Community and Arts Centre**

**Mr B Thompson declared financial and non-financial interests in this item as a shareholder in Nevis Cycles, Sunart Renewables and the Isle of Eigg Brewery and Council appointee on Isle of Eigg Heritage Trust and a Trustee of the Clan Cameron Museum respectively but, having applied the test, concluded that his interest did not preclude him from taking part in the discussion.**

**Mrs M C Davidson declared a financial interest in this item as a family business had received a relief grant and left the meeting (by turning off cameras and microphones) during discussion.**

There was circulated Report No. AS/3/21 dated 19 March 2021 by the Corporate Audit Manager which summarised the final reports issued since the date of the last meeting, together with details of work in progress and other information relevant to the operation of the Internal Audit Section.

Prior to turning to the Audit Reports, the Corporate Audit Manager drew Members attention to the Corporate Fraud investigations which had taken place and, in particular, to investigating suspected fraudulent Covid 19 grant applications. Following a request from management, the Team had been assisting in fraud prevention checks for business top-up grant applications for the hospitality, retail and leisure sectors focussing on larger grant sums. To date 146 applications had been referred by the grants team and, following additional checks, 133 had been assessed as fraudulent. The sums of money involved was estimated to total £0.5m and demonstrated that proper mechanisms were in place to identify such criminal activity. It was also pointed out that as Covid 19 has impacted upon internal audit activity and, as a result, insufficient work had taken place during the year to provide the annual opinion. As a result suggested wording provided by CIPFA would be used within the annual report and for the annual governance statement.

During discussion, Members raised the following issues:-

- the Chair praised the work of the team in identifying the fraudulent grant applications. He also referred to the remarkable relief effort the team had made during lockdown whilst also still carrying out their day-to-day duties. This was echoed by fellow Members and the identification of fraudsters gave not only Elected Members confidence, but the public too;
- in response to a question it was confirmed that the fraudulent claims were not confined solely to Highland with similar applications being made to other Scottish and English Local Authorities. The applications were thought to relate to organised criminal activity and were not cases of applicant error. This fraudulent activity had been reported to Police Scotland and Members emphasised the need for a robust approach to actively pursue perpetrators to deter other attempts to misuse public money;
- it was queried if it was also possible to monitor fraudulent activity on applications for funding for smaller grant schemes;



- the delay in the production of the new audit plan and the limitation of scope during the year was understandable given the Covid 19 pandemic; and
- targets for client feedback were generally well met but there was a significant drop in Quarter 3. It was thought this was as a result of pressure of work but this would be highlighted at the Senior Leadership Team to encourage Services to provide feedback on audits.

The final reports were then presented as follows:-

- (i) Education & Learning - Payment of Relief Staff (Reasonable Assurance) – no issues raised at the meeting.
- (ii) Infrastructure & Environment – Review of Covid-19 Grants (Reasonable Assurance).

During discussion, Members raised the following issues:-

- on behalf of the Committee, the Chair thanked the Economy and Regeneration Manager and his team for their hard work in putting in place a grant management scheme at short notice and being able to turn around grants so quickly. The Reasonable Assurance finding was testament to its success. The challenges faced had been unprecedented and it had to be borne in mind that Highland Council was the third largest Covid 19 grant scheme in Scotland. The Economy and Regeneration Manager also took the opportunity to thank his team;
- the team had gone from 4 members of staff to 50 in a short period of time with many staff being seconded from other services, some with no previous experience of the grant system;
- the complexities of the rateable value system had become apparent in April/May 2020 and these had caused difficulties for several small businesses when applying for grants. However, the team had handled these cases well and appropriately;
- the scheme totalled £75m and there had been 7,500 applications. However, the sample applications taken by Internal Audit was 20 and it was queried how representative this was. In response, the Sample Strategy adopted was explained;
- confirmation was sought, and provided, that a future audit of later schemes would take place and increasing the sample would be considered;
- businesses had received appropriate grant funding timeously and this was to be welcomed. This had no doubt sustained and retained jobs in Highland;
- should there be further regional lockdowns confirmation was sought, and provided, that the system could be adapted; and
- details of the appeal system were sought, and provided.

The Committee **NOTED**:-

- i. the Final Reports referred to in Section 4.1 of the report;
- ii. the current work of the Internal Audit Section outlined at section 5 of the report, details of progress against the 2020/21 audit plan at Appendix 1 and that work in progress or not started will be carried forward into the next year;

- iii. a limitation of scope will be provided within the 2020/21 annual audit opinion with regard to the aspect of internal control. The suggested wording provided by CIPFA (see Appendix 2) will be used within the annual report and for the annual governance statement;
- iv. note that the normal audit planning process would commence later than usual with the aim of producing the 2021/22 audit plan for approval by the Audit & Scrutiny Committee on 17 June 2021;
- v. assurance was given that there would be a robust pursuance of fraudulent Covid 19 grant claims.

## **5. Review of Corporate Risks Ath-Sgrùdaidh air Cunnartan Corporra**

There had been circulated Report No AS/4/21 dated 10 March, 2021 by the Corporate Audit and Performance Manager.

During discussion, Members raised the following points:-

- the reporting of the Corporate Risk Register to every Audit and Scrutiny Committee meeting was welcomed as there was considerable benefit to be gained;
- the ongoing review of the Council's budget had been complemented in the Register, a positive move forward resulting in greater financial sustainability;
- it also gave the opportunity for each of the Strategic Committees to incorporate this as a reference point. It also brought forward issues that might otherwise be omitted at these Committees and Strategic Chairs were encouraged to contribute to the report when it came forward to future Audit and Scrutiny Committees;
- the Chair of Communities and Place referred to recent criticism of the maintenance of playparks. However, the budget of £170k was spread over 10 Area Committees and consequently there were difficulties and complexities in getting this work completed;
- three additions had been made to the Risk Register but it was argued that the risk associated with possibility of Scotland leaving the UK should also be included. However, it was pointed out that the Corporate Risk Register was an operational document but Members' concerns would be reported back to the Executive Leadership Team;
- whilst acknowledging that the document was an operational document, as a public organisation it was also important to include a degree of strategy;
- it was also suggested that the timely implementation of the Visitor Management Plan should also be included. It was important to Members and the public that the necessary preparations were made for what was expected to be a very busy tourist season. The Visitor Management Plan involved cross-departmental working and, while working well to date, it should be assessed by Audit and Scrutiny. In this regard, the Chair explained that the Visitor Management Plan was monitored by the Recovery Board and any concerns or delays could be brought to their attention;
- the importance of cyber security was acknowledged given the impact breaches had had on some of the Council's partners;
- there was a degree of urgency around the Shared Prosperity Fund, the successor fund for EU structural and social funds, and how it impacted on Highland. Representations needed to be made to the UK Government but to also examine how neighbouring Local Authorities had met the Fund's criteria

when Highland Council had missed out. Communities and Third Sector organisations were seeking more information;

- on Page 72 of the papers the responsibility should read “Ensure there are clear connections made in reports to Council or Strategic Committees where policy changes or actions will mitigate a Corporate or Service *risk*”;
- it was incumbent on Elected Members to complete training and it was suggested that, after next year’s Council Elections, a training session should also be provided on the importance of the Risk Register;
- the Executive Leadership Team were tasked with ensuring Elected Members were aware of the risks when taking decisions, through providing quality information but, while report writing had improved, a more concise format would assist to enable Members to ask the appropriate questions of officers;
- the format of the Plan was commended but it was suggested that introducing a heat map to corporate risk reports would provide an 'at a glance' view for Members;
- information on the controls over Council social media was sought, and assurance provided; and
- following recent successful Equal Pay Awards Appeals, this might be something to consider for inclusion on the register.

The Committee:-

- i. **APPROVED** the revised Corporate Risk Management Strategy at Appendix 1 of the report;
- ii. **NOTED** the Corporate Risk Register provided at Appendix 2 and the risk profile at Appendix 3 of the report;
- iii. **AGREED** that Members’ concerns regarding the possibility of Scotland leaving the UK would be reported back to the Executive Leadership Team; and
- iv. **NOTED** that, following the review of the Corporate Risk Strategy, reviews of the Corporate Risk Register will be reported to every Audit and Scrutiny Committee.

The meeting ended at 12.20 pm.

**The Highland Council  
Sutherland County Committee**

Minutes of Meeting of the Sutherland County Committee held remotely on Thursday 1 April 2021 at 10.30am.

**Present:**

Mr R Gale

Mr H Morrison

Mrs D Mackay

Ms L Munro

Mr J McGillivray

**Officials in attendance:**

Mr P Tomalin, Ward Manager, Communities and Place

Ms P Betts, Leader and Development Officer, Infrastructure and Environment Service

Ms F Cameron, Programme Manager, Infrastructure and Environment Service

Ms A Macrae, Committee Administrator, Performance & Governance

**Mr R Gale in the Chair**

**1. Apologies for Absence  
Leisgeulan**

An apology for absence was intimated on behalf of Ms K Currie.

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

Item 3: Mr R Gale, Mrs D Mackay and Mr J McGillivray (non-financial)

**3. Highland Coastal Communities Fund (HCCF) - Assessment of Applications  
Maoin Choimhearsnachdan Cladaich na Gàidhealtachd Measadh Iarrtasan**

**Declarations of Interest:-**

**Mr R Gale, declared a non-financial interest in the Go Golspie applications as a Director of Go Golspie Development Trust and he left the meeting for the determination of these applications.**

**Mrs D Mackay declared a non-financial interest in the East and Central Sutherland Citizen's Advice Bureau application as a Director of East Sutherland CAB and she left the meeting for the determination of this application.**

**Mr J McGillivray declared non-financial interests in the applications by the Dornoch Area Community Interest Company (DACIC) and Dornoch Free Church as a Director of DACIC and a member of Dornoch Free Church and he left the meeting for the determination of these applications.**

There had been circulated Report No SCC/05/21 by the Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure and Environment.

The Committee was invited to consider all the applications presented for funding, taking into account the technical and RAG assessments set out in the report, and agree whether to approve, defer or reject the application, and agree which applications should receive a funding award from HCCF up to the value of the available area allocation.

The Chair advised this was a good news story for Sutherland, and he welcomed the opportunity to award funding of £700,407 to projects across the area and the thanked the officers for their work in bringing forward the report. He advised that the applications received reflected the level of work being undertaken in communities across the County and he commended all the volunteers involved. Unfortunately, Members were not in a position to approve all of the funding requests given the total value of the applications was well in excess of the funding allocation for Sutherland.

Following discussion, the Committee **AGREED** the maximum grant award be capped at £80,000.

Thereafter, the Committee considered the applications for Highland Coastal Communities Funding and **AGREED** as follows:-

**Assynt Leisure - Cludgie project phase 2**

**APPROVED:** £68,230.00

**Helmsdale & District Development Trust - Multi Use Games Area**

**APPROVED:** £19,298.00

**Scourie Community Development Company - Scourie Rocks**

**APPROVED:** £80,000

**East and Central Sutherland CAB – Rural Recovery**

**APPROVED:** £11,068.58

Members commented that while the level of funding applied for had been reduced, the CAB was encouraged to seek other sources of funding available to the organisation.

**Clyne Heritage Society - Old Clyne School Redevelopment to Museum & Community Heritage Centre**

**APPROVED:** £52,000

Members commented that while the level of funding applied for had been reduced at this stage, it was recognised the start date for the project was in the future and funding for the project was already in place. .

**Brora Primary Parent Council – Community Play Park****APPROVED:** £25,000

Members commented that while the level of funding applied for had been reduced, this award would enable the project to proceed and the Parent Council was encouraged to seek other sources of available funding.

**Dornoch Area Community Interest Company - Dornoch South Car, Coach and Motorhome Park****APPROVED:** £80,000**Kinlochbervie Community Company - Slow tourism for KLB (promotion)****APPROVED:** £6,220.00**Kyle of Sutherland Development Trust – Tourism Infrastructure****APPROVED:** £71,678**Kinlochbervie Playing Field Association – Community Playing Field****APPROVED:** £37,724**Skerry Harbour Association – Harbour Renovation**

**APPROVED:** £10,000 for a time limited period of six months following which the application would be reviewed at a ward business meeting.

**Skerry Village Hall – Refurbishment Project****APPROVED:** £15,000**Assynt Foundation - Upgrading and Resurfacing of Single Track Road to Improve Public Access**

**APPROVED:** £26,988.58 subject to a condition that the funding be used for passing places and signage.

**Brora & District Action Group - Vision for Brora - Phase 2 (Fascally Park element)****APPROVED:** £52,000

Members commented the level of funding applied for had been reduced in recognition that no match funding was in place at this stage and this award would allow the project to proceed.

**Helmsdale & District Development Trust - Helmsdale Kitchen Garden/E-bikes****APPROVED:** £4,200

Members commented that this award would cover the cost of the e-cargo bike and Members looked forward to a report in relation to the success of the four e-bikes on order.

**Dornoch Free Church of Scotland - Dornoch Free Church Renovation - Phase 3**

**NO AWARD**

**Golspie Golf Club – Clubhouse Refurbishment**

**NO AWARD**

**Helmsdale & District Development Trust - Old Bank Building Renovation**

**NO AWARD**

**Plastic@bay – Tracking Plastic Pollution with Circular Economy**

**NO AWARD**

**Note:-** Having declared an interest, the Chair left the meeting for consideration and determination of the following applications submitted by Go Golspie. The Vice Chair, Mr H Morrison, took the Chair for the determination of both applications.

**Go Golspie – Golspie Youth Centre Restoration**

**APPROVED:** £61,000

**Go Golspie – Breakwater Restoration**

**APPROVED:** £80,000

Thereafter, the Committee requested that in respect of those applications that had not been approved or the amount applied for reduced, the applicants be encouraged to apply to the next round of HCCF.

The meeting closed at 12.45pm.

## The Highland Council

Minutes of Meeting of the special **Easter Ross Area Committee** held **remotely** on Wednesday, 7 April 2021 at 10.00am.

**Present:**

Mr M Finlayson  
Mr D Louden  
Ms P Munro  
Mr A Rhind

Ms F Robertson (**in the Chair**)  
Ms M Smith  
Mrs C Wilson

**Officials in Attendance:**

Helen Ross Senior Ward Manager, CSER  
Mark Rodger, ECO - Property & Housing  
Fiona Cameron, LEADER Programme Manager  
Martin Culbertson, LEADER Development Officer  
Fiona MacBain, Committee Administrator

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

**1. Apologies for Absence  
Leisgeulan**

There were none.

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

Item 3 (Tain Picture House Lift Works) – Mr D Louden (financial)

**3. Highland Coastal Communities Fund (HCCF) – Assessment of Applications  
Maoin Coimhearsnachdan Cladaich na Gàidhealtachd – Measadh Iartasan**

**Declaration of Interest - Mr D Louden declared a financial interest in this item, as a Director of the Tain Picture House, and left the meeting during discussion of this item.**

There had been circulated Report No ERA/10/21 dated 7 January 2021 by the Executive Chief Officer: Infrastructure and Environment.

Prior to consideration of each application, the LEADER Programme Manager and Development Officer gave a brief summary of each project. They explained that although some applications had amber or red-ragged criteria, which indicated a concern or requirement for a condition, all applications presented were eligible for the funds.

The Committee agreed the total amount of £108,107.84 should be split equally between Wards 6 and 7.



Applications were considered as follows:

**Ward 6 - Saltburn & Westwood CC- Coastal Defences**

This application had been withdrawn by the applicant as they wished to undertake further development work. Members were supportive of the project in principle and suggested that any remaining amount for Ward 6 be ring-fenced for this project pending the resubmission of their application with updated information to a future meeting of the Easter Ross Area Committee. Clarification was sought and received that there were no time constraints on allocating the funds.

**Ward 6 - Clubhouse Development Project: Phase 2 Viewing Balcony**

Members voiced support for this project and proposed allocating the original requested sum of £33,058.24. They considered the revised request for £48,909 to be excessive given the total amount of funds available for Ward 6, and suggested the Rugby Club be advised in writing to apply to the central strategic fund for the remainder, noting that the detail of strategic fund allocation was to be considered by the Council's Economy and Infrastructure Committee in May 2021. It was explained the applicant was also seeking funds elsewhere and was investigating cost reduction measures for the project.

**Ward 6 - Evanton Station Reopening Feasibility**

Members voiced support for this project and approved £5,000.

**Ward 7 - Conveniences For All**

Members voiced support for this project and approved £23,980.

**Ward 7 - Tain Picture House Lift Works**

Members voiced support for this project and approved £26,073.

**Ward 7 - Inver Bay Seating**

Members voiced support for this project despite it being for less than the recommended minimum of £5,000 and they approved £4,000.

Members voiced concern that the system used by the Council to allocate HCCF funds to the Areas had been unfair and had not adequately taken into account industry impact criteria, with reference made to the considerable sea-based and coastal industry in Easter Ross. The Chair would write to the Council Leader on behalf of the Area Committee detailing the Committee's concerns and asking that the allocation method be revisited, with one option being the use of the strategic HCCF to redress the imbalance in Area allocation.

The Committee **AGREED**:

- i. the area allocation of £108,107.84 be split equally by ward, with each receiving £54,053.92;
- ii. the following funding awards from HCCF:
  - a. Evanton Station Reopening Feasibility: £5,000 approved;
  - b. Clubhouse Development Project: Phase 2 Viewing Balcony: £33,058.24 approved;
  - c. Saltburn & Westwood CC- Coastal Defences: deferred and the remaining £15,995.68 for Ward 6 be ring-fenced for them pending the

- resubmission of their application with updated information to a future meeting of the Easter Ross Area Committee;
- d. Inver Bay Seating: £4,000 approved;
  - e. Conveniences For All: £23,980 approved; and
  - f. Tain Picture House Lift Works: £26,073 approved.

The meeting ended at 10.40am.

## The Highland Council

Minutes of Meeting of the **Lochaber Committee** held **REMOTELY** on **Monday, 19 April, 2021 at 10.30 a.m.**

### Present:

Mr B Allan	Mr I Ramon
Mr A Baxter	Mr D Rixson
Mr A Henderson	Mr B Thompson

### In attendance:

Mrs C McDiarmid, Executive Chief Officer, Communities and Place  
 Mr M MacLeod, Executive Chief Officer, Infrastructure and Environment  
 Mrs D Ferguson, Senior Ward Manager (Ross, Skye and Lochaber), Communities and Place  
 Mr D Esson, Interim Area Education & Learning Manager (West), Education & Learning Service  
 Mr R Porteous, Roads Operations Manager, Infrastructure and Environment Service  
 Mr A MacInnes, Administrative Assistant, Performance and Governance Service

### Also in attendance:-

Mr M Colliar, Group Commander, Scottish Fire and Rescue Service (Item 3)

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

## Business

### 1. Apologies for Absence Leisgeulan

An apology for absence was intimated on behalf of Mr N McLean.

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

There were no declarations of interest.

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

There was circulated Report No LA/12/21 by the Group Commander, Scottish Fire and Rescue Service.

It was highlighted that there had been a number of road traffic accidents in the October period which was concerning, but since then the number had decreased, which reflected the lack of tourist activity in the area due to Covid restrictions. Further, accidental dwelling fires were very low as were accidental fires which was welcomed. However, there would be a move to increased activity as Covid restrictions eased with an increase in tourism and traffic.

There had not been much increase in recruitment, and therefore advertising of vacancies in the Service would continue using social media to encourage people to join the Service. In this respect, a District Support Officer had been appointed to the Ardnamurchan peninsula which would support the remote rural stations and seek to increase stations availability. Nationally, the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service were considering a strategy for recruitment of Retained Volunteers.

In particular, the appointment of a District Support Officer for the Ardnamurchan peninsula was welcomed which would assist the Stations on the peninsula. Staff recruitment to stations on the peninsula was a long standing concern and Ward Members would continue to do everything they could to support and publicise the opportunity for residents to join the Retained Volunteer Service.

The Chairman on behalf of the Committee extended Members appreciation to all staff within the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service for all the work they did in communities. The summer period was a particular challenging time for the Service in dealing with wildfires after a dry winter and spring and the public warning about the risks of wildfires was emphasised.

Having scrutinised the report, the Committee **NOTED** the Area Performance Report.

*In accordance with Standing Order 9, with the consent of the meeting, item 5 on the agenda was taken at this point.*

## **5. Lochaber Area Roads Maintenance Programme 2021-2022 Prògram Càradh Rathaidean 2021-2022**

There was circulated Report No. LA/13/21 by the Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure and Environment.

The current Revenue budget allocation for Lochaber for 2021/22 was £1,110,564 which was required to cover Labour, Plant and Materials (including Salt) for Roads Cyclical and Winter Maintenance activities, it was requested that Members be provided with information on how this money was split between the various categories and what potential was there for Members influencing how that budget was directed.

A point was made that Lochaber, Skye and Badenoch & Strathspey had some of the worst road condition reports in the Council area, but it was understood these areas did not get an allocation of funding based on road condition, but that it was done on the basis of road length. Therefore, the view was expressed that the Jetpatcher should be sent to areas where it was needed most in terms of road condition. It was advised that the Jetpatcher was hired and part of the roads capital programme was used to pay for it. The vehicle was usually hired for one month and the cost was approximately between £40k to £50k. A programme for its use was well planned to gain maximum use of the Jetpatcher. There was a Council owned Jetpatcher based in Inverness that served the Inner Moray Firth area as there was a high concentration of roads and population to maximise its use.

Continuing, a comment was made that there had been a substantial deterioration in local roads and the repair of potholes using the Jetpatcher was concentrated into a one month period in Lochaber. Therefore, there was a substantial amount of the year when it was not available. If another Jetpatcher was purchased for a wider area of the Highlands this would be an efficient use of the equipment. In response, it was advised that if the Council purchased another Jetpatcher, it would have to meet the costs of maintenance, staffing and its use would require to be maximised all year round. In this respect, it was

not possible to Jetpatch in winter time. Overall it was felt that hiring the Jetpatcher was a more efficient and cost effective way of maintaining roads as the vehicle was hired when needed.

It was advised that there was a mixture of objective data and subjective opinion as to what was most urgent in terms of pothole repairs. The Jetpatcher was an efficient way of filling potholes, but there were various other methods of repairing potholes some of which were explained. In particular, reference was made to a new machine that could be used and further details on the cost of this and whether purchasing one for the Lochaber area would be an efficient use of resources, rather than hiring it, would be supplied to Members. Also, it was highlighted that surface dressing a road could extend the life of a road for a significant period of time.

In relation to a comment that there was too much tar put into potholes which meant a rough drive for motorists, it was advised that road teams did try to leave a smooth finish on pothole repairs. This point was noted and would be fed back to roads teams.

That had been good work done by local road teams in conjunction with BEAR Scotland in terms of bell-mouths and more of this was encouraged. There were clear definitions of who was responsible for what in terms of the interface between local authority and trunk roads.

Reference was made to representations made at Council to the use of recycled material on roads and Members when keen to experiment with recycled material within the Council area. It was suggested that extra money may be available to Lochaber if it offered to do a pilot scheme to introduce recycled material into road surface dressing. It was advised that the roads team in Lochaber were using recycled traditional materials on a stretch of the Glen Etive road at approximately half the cost on new materials.

It was requested that information be sent to Members on which areas of the A884 Sunart Side road was to be repaired.

Members requested that consideration be given to the following suggested changes to the Lochaber Area Roads Maintenance Programme 2021-2022:-

- Surface dressing or overlay at Grange Terrace, Fort William;
- Kinloch Hourn Road – possibly divert £40k set aside in the budget for drainage works on this road to remedial works following conclusion of construction activity, if no reparation funding is received.
- Morar Village Centre road
- Glenkingie Terrace, Caol
- Caol Shops car park
- A884 at Lochaline village
- B8043 Kingairloch Road did not have the same level of use as the A884 Lochaline road and if the programme was to be altered to allow capital to be spent elsewhere, deferring the works on the B8043 may be a possibility.

It was suggested that the Roads Operations Manager consider the above requests for alterations to the Roads Maintenance Programme and how they could be accommodated in the Programme. It was advised that the Programme contained contingencies which allowed for some flexibility and it was confirmed in particular that there would be capacity to undertake the Grange Terrace, Fort William road maintenance in the 2021/22 programme. There was extra capital money being received this year and

next year and it was not always possible to carry out maintenance on all roads in a particular year and the work required to be spread out.

Thereafter, the Committee:-

i **APPROVED** the proposed prioritised 2021/22 Roads Maintenance Programme for Lochaber Area; and

ii **AGREED** to authorise the Roads Operations Manager to consider the suggested amendments to the Programme highlighted at the meeting, and to make changes within the overall budget allocation. Changes to the Programme would be reported to the next Ward Business Meeting and reported to a future Local Committee for homologation.

#### 4. Education Update Fios às Ùr mu Fhoghlam

There was a verbal Education update by the Interim Area Education & Learning Manager (West).

It was highlighted that due to Covid-19 restrictions over the last 12 months there had been no Education Scotland Inspections or Inspection reports. Information was provided on local Education staff appointments, key worker and vulnerable children support, remote learning and phased return to schools.

In terms of Area working, details were provided of the support Area Teams were providing Schools. Officers continued to support Schools and parents with remote learning guidance and in key areas such as health and wellbeing and mental health and well being.

Area Operational meetings had been linking with education, health and safety, catering, cleaning and transport. The meetings had been ongoing over the last 12 months and reference was made to the strong partnership working to support Schools in these challenging times. The strong partnership working with NHS Highland in supporting young people was also highlighted.

There had been regular communications to staff, parents and pupils over the Covid period and all primary and secondary Schools had now returned on a full time basis. The support of all area strategic teams in supporting children and young people was acknowledged.

In discussion, it was queried when the acting up Management posts in the Education Service were likely to become permanent and the recruitment timetable. It was advised that recruitment would be on a phased approach basis with Strategic and Area Manager posts being appointed by end June, 2021 and thereafter Area posts to be appointed by end of 2021.

The Chairman on behalf of the Committee requested that their thanks and best wishes be intimated to all School staff in Lochaber for their commitment and effort during the Covid-19 period. They had worked in very challenging circumstances and their hard work was acknowledged and much appreciated.

The Committee **NOTED** the Education update.

**6. Minutes**  
**Geàrr-chunntas**

There were circulated:-

i for information Minutes of Meeting of the Lochaber Committee held on 18 January, 2021, the terms of which were **NOTED**; and

ii for approval, Minutes of Meeting of the Special Lochaber Committee held on 23 March, 2021, the terms of which were **APPROVED**.

The meeting ended at 12 Noon.

## The Highland Council

Minutes of Special Meeting of the **Nairnshire Committee** held remotely Tuesday 20 April 2021 at 10.40 am.

### **Present:**

Mr L Fraser  
Mr T Heggie

Mrs L MacDonald  
Mr P Saggars

### **In attendance:**

Mr W Munro, Interim Ward Manager, Performance & Governance  
Ms F Cameron, Programme Manager, Infrastructure & Environment  
Ms P Betts, Leader and Development Officer, Infrastructure & Environment  
Mr S Manning, Principal Traffic Officer, Infrastructure & Environment  
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 T Heggie in the Chair**

## **BUSINESS**

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

There were no apologies for absence.

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

Item 3: Mr P Saggars (non-financial)

### **3. Highland Coastal Communities Fund (HCCF) - Assessment of Applications Maoin Choimhearsnachdan Cladaich na Gàidhealtachd Measadh Iarrtasan**

**Declaration of Interest: Mr P Saggars declared a non-financial interest in this item as a director of Nairn Bid 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 NC/08/21 by the Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure and Environment.

The available funding for the Nairnshire Area was £12,090 and the Committee was invited to consider the two eligible applications presented for funding, taking into account the technical and RAG assessments set out in the report, and agree whether to approve, defer or reject the applications.

The funding, which would help local projects and infrastructure investments, was welcomed and appreciation was expressed to officers for the work that had been undertaken in assessing the applications.



Following consideration of the applications, the Committee **AGREED** that Highland Coastal Communities Funding be allocated as follows:-

- i. Nairn Goals - £3,500; and
- ii. Making Nairn More Welcoming for the Community and Visitors - £8,590.

#### **4. Nairn Visitor Management Car Parking Parcadh Chàraichean Stiùireadh Luchd-tadhail Inbhir Narann**

In October 2019, the Council agreed a new approach to considering the introduction of car parking across the area. The approach was paused at the start of the pandemic and it had not yet been possible to re-start.

However, over the summer season 2020, many communities including Nairn experienced significant traffic management challenges as a result of an influx of visitors. It was predicted that the increase in car parking pressures in Nairn with the lifting of lockdown measures and increase in staycations would continue for the 2021 season.

To support traffic management during the 2021 season, it was proposed to install charging machines at three sites in Nairn on a voluntary basis. Charges would not be enforced, and signs would be erected to confirm payment was being sought on a voluntary basis to support local infrastructure. The three sites proposed were:

- The Harbour
- Cumming Street
- The Maggot

Officers would implement a tariff structure consistent with the rest of the Local Authority area (£1 up to 2 hours; £2 up to 4 hours; and £3 up to 12 hours). It was proposed that this approach was adopted for the summer season 2021 and a consultation would take place later in 2021 to determine the approach going forward. This could consider whether a voluntary scheme of charging was introduced, charging with enforcement was introduced or whether no charging should be introduced. Learning from the 2021 season could inform this consultation.

It was explained that The Harbour was Council land but Cumming Street and The Maggot were Common Good land.\* It was proposed that the income generated would be split on a 50/50 basis between the Council and the Common Good Fund and this would mirror the arrangements already in place elsewhere in Highland. It was further explained that there were already traffic regulation orders in place for enforcement and management purposes but feedback was sought from Members in regard to motorhome parking and on managing parking on the grassed area of The Links (which was not covered by the traffic regulation order).

Members were asked to agree to the installation of parking charge machines at Cumming Street, the Harbour and The Maggot in Nairn for voluntary payment only for the 2021 season to support more effective traffic management in the area.

During discussion, the following main points were raised:-

- It was indicated that the Council could not legally profit from the Common Good Fund and further information was requested on the legality of the Council and the Nairn Common Good Fund equally sharing the income generated from car parking;
- Confirmation was provided that the purchase and installation costs for the charging machines would be paid for by the Council and an indication was provided of the type of investment costs involved. It was requested that more detailed information be provided on the costs that would be incurred by the Council;
- With regard to the tariff structure, it was explained that signage would indicate that this was an invite to pay to support local investment. It was indicated that similar systems were operated in other local authority areas and the guide on the suggested level of donation/tariff was helpful to visitors;
- It was suggested that a proactive approach should be adopted to inform community councils of the rationale for implementing the voluntary payment system and the benefits that could be achieved for the local area, i.e. higher income levels for the Common Good Fund and investment in local infrastructure such as increased CCTV;
- Confirmation was provided that the machines were adaptable in terms of amending tariffs and key data on usage and compliance could be extracted;
- Confirmation was also provided that rates were payable on the car parks and these costs were currently paid for by the Council;
- In terms of the grassed area of the Links, mixed views were expressed. There was a view that parking on the grassed area was better as it stopped visitors from parking on residential streets. However, if the voluntary charging progressed to a compulsory system, there was a need to ensure that the traffic order was either extended to include the grassed area or access to this area was blocked;
- With regard to motorhomes, it was reported that early investigations were being undertaken on installing campervan facilities at The Maggot but it was very unlikely that these would be completed in time for the current season. In regard to Cumming Street, although it was recognised that no specific problems had been encountered, Members welcomed continuation of the Council's policy of prohibiting overnight parking for motorhomes and their proactive approach to visitor management. It was highlighted that Nairn was supported by a number of campsites and motorhomes should be directed to these dedicated areas. It was also highlighted that income could be reduced if car parking bays were being used for long periods by motorhomes; and
- It was important that Members received regular updates on the ongoing monitoring of the effectiveness of the traffic management measures and, if necessary, the arrangements could be reconsidered. It was indicated that this should comprise of factual data/evidence on usage which could then be used to inform future policy.

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

- i. charging machines be installed at The Harbour, Cumming Street and The Maggot at Nairn and signs be erected to confirm payment was being sought on a voluntary basis to support local infrastructure;
- ii. a tariff structure consistent with the rest of the Local Authority area be implemented;
- iii. this approach be adopted for the summer season 2021 and a consultation take place later in 2021 to determine the approach going forward;
- iv. further information be provided to Members on the:-
  - a. legality of the Council and the Nairn Common Good Fund equally sharing the income generated from car parking;
  - b. ongoing monitoring of the effectiveness of these traffic management measures and that this information also comprise of factual data/evidence which could be used to inform future policy; and
  - c. associated car parking costs both in respect of the initial investment costs to install charging machines and also in terms of ongoing maintenance.

The meeting was concluded at 11.28am.

**\* POSTSCRIPT NOTE**

Subsequent to the meeting, it was clarified that the majority of the Harbour car park was also Common Good land.

**The Highland Council  
Tourism Committee**

Minutes of Meeting of the Tourism Committee held remotely on Wednesday, 21 April 2021 at 2.00pm.

**Present:**

Mr G Adam	Mr A MacInnes
Mr R Bremner	Mr D Macpherson
Mr J Bruce	Mr H Morrison
Dr I Cockburn	Mrs M Paterson
Mr C Fraser	Mr D Rixson
Mr J Gordon	Ms M Smith
Mr A Henderson	

**Non-Members also Present:**

Mrs J Barclay	Mr W Mackay
Mrs M Davidson	Mr G Mackenzie
Mr J Finlayson	Mr J McGillivray
Mr D Fraser	Mr K Rosie
Mr B Lobban	Mr P Saggars
Mr D Mackay	

**Officials in attendance:**

Mrs D Manson, Chief Executive  
 Mr M MacLeod, Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure and Environment  
 Mr C Simpson, Principal Officer – Europe, Tourism & Film, Infrastructure & Environment  
 Mr P Waite, Countryside Team Leader, Infrastructure & Environment  
 Mrs L Dunn, Principal Administrator, Performance and Governance  
 Ms F MacBain, Committee Administrator, Performance and Governance

**Also in attendance:**

Mr C Taylor, Regional Leadership Director, VisitScotland

**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 Gordon Adam in the Chair**

**1. Apologies for Absence  
Leisgeulan**

There was an apology for absence from Mr S Mackie.

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

**The undernoted Members declared interests relating to all items on the agenda for the reasons provided but, having applied the test outlined in Paragraphs 5.2 and 5.3 of the Councillors' Code of Conduct, concluded that their interests did not preclude their involvement in the discussion:**

### **Financial interests applicable to all items:**

Mr G Adam - part owner of two self-catering units

Mr A Henderson – B&B provider

Mr H Morrison – Hotel owner

Mr R Bremner - provider of AirBnB but has been closed since summer last year and is still closed due to current restriction

### **Non-financial interests applicable to all items:**

Mr G Adam – Director of a glamping business

Mr D Rixson - Council's representative on the Isle of Rum Community Trust and as the Secretary of the Mallaig Heritage Centre

## 3. **Presentation: VisitScotland** **Taisbeanadh: VisitScotland**

A presentation was given by Chris Taylor, Regional Director, VisitScotland, on the work being undertaken in respect of reopening tourism. This included changed behaviour on modes of travel, length of stay, value for money and flexibility, safety and reassurance, a shift towards outdoors, and last minute bookings. Plans for managing visitors included new infrastructure, additional rangers, tourist information, a responsible tourism campaign and preparation for businesses reopening. A summary was also provided on marketing and digital issues, and recovery proposals led by VisitScotland.

During discussion, the following issues were considered:-

- information was sought and provided on anticipated numbers of visitors to Highland in summer 2021, which was expected to be relatively high, especially for self-catering and at more rural attractions such as walks and beaches. Areas and sectors were advised to inform VisitScotland of any capacity issues or concerns;
- concern was expressed for organisations ancillary to the cruise industry, with particular mention of bus and coach companies. It was hoped that by 2022 activity would have normalised. Discussions were ongoing but still at an early stage with the cruise and other trade associations to identify recovery opportunities;
- work was being undertaken with a wide variety of trade associations and groups to develop safe procedures and guidance to ensure sustainable tourism, and to consider funding and other support that could be offered to businesses. Reference was made to the importance of the responsible tourism campaign that was being developed, with particular reference to motorhome etiquette;

- changes made to the VisitScotland website were welcomed, as was the Scottish Government encouraging visitors to take voluntary Lateral Flow Covid-19 tests before visiting parts of the Highlands and Islands. It was hoped this would be promoted via the VisitScotland website;
- Covid-19 had increased visitor appreciation of flexible booking policies, but this could be challenging for many businesses. The importance of having effective websites was emphasised, and the prospect of an extended tourist season was a possible aim;
- the need for improved infrastructure across Highland as early as possible was emphasised;
- it was important to gather visitor data to help with future planning;
- tourism should be promoted as a positive career choice for young people and that schools and other educational establishments should be encouraged to provide appropriate skills and qualifications. Skills Development Scotland was key to this issue;
- information was sought and provided on assurance being given to local people with concerns about the anticipated rise in visitor numbers and possible anti-social behaviour. Reference was made to the guidance and protocols being developed, the training being provided by businesses to their staff, and lessons learned from 2020; and
- concerns about the poor state of repair of the road network in many parts of Highland should be addressed to the Economy and Infrastructure Committee.

The Committee **NOTED** the presentation and **AGREED** the presentation be circulated to the Committee after the meeting.

#### **4. Visitor Management Stiùiridh Luchd-tadhail**

There had been circulated Report No. TC/04/21 dated 16 April 2021 by the Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure and Environment.

Updates were provided on the current situation on key topics in the Visitor Management Plan (VMP) including seasonal rangers, public toilets, waste management, motor home stopover sites and public transport. During discussion the following issues were considered:-

- it was welcomed that there might be 17 rather than 10 additional seasonal rangers, with a decision on this anticipated on 26 April 2021. Initial interviews had taken place and it was hoped the rangers would be in post by 3 May 2021. A summary was provided of the likely duties the rangers would undertake and while welcoming the news, Members also pointed out that in some areas, one ranger would have a large geographical area to cover. Consideration was given to how the rangers would interact with local volunteers, perhaps as back up or support, and with landowners and communities. Information was sought and provided on training that would be given to the rangers, such as on the outdoor access code and dealing with challenging behaviour. The cost effectiveness of the additional rangers would be analysed when data on their activities and community feedback was available;
- attention was drawn to the importance of maintaining paths;

- information was sought and provided on the funding of the various NC500 signs, with many on the trunk roads being the responsibility of Transport Scotland;
- in relation to proposals to incentivise private campsite business owners to allow passing visitors who were not resident to use their motorhome waste disposal points, or other facilities, it was important the charge was not prohibitively expensive, with £10 maximum suggested as a reasonable fee. A grant scheme for this was being considered;
- various local concerns including waste collection, public toilet provision and motor home facilities were raised by Members and they were advised to bring these up via their Ward Managers or Ward Business Meetings, as agreed at the previous Tourism Committee;
- it was suggested the implementation of the VMP should be faster, however it was pointed out that the funding had only been agreed in March 2021 and much work had already been undertaken, with some issues not able to be resolved quickly. Officer time constraints were highlighted;
- it was confirmed that work was being undertaken on the comfort scheme and the provision of motorhome waste disposal points, with the latter to be discussed with SEPA and to include the disposal of chemical waste;
- assurance was sought and provided that adequate provision had been made in the budget to cover the large amount of waste that was likely to be generated in 2021;
- ongoing consultation with communities, including community councils, was vital, and information was sought by Mr A MacInnes on the possibility of community installation of portaloos;
- locally produced 'footprint' posters encouraging sustainable tourism should be shared and promoted, and consideration should be given to the production of etiquette flyers to encourage responsible tourism;
- reference was made to the multi-agency Visitor Management Operational Group, including Police, Fire & Rescue, NHS Highland, and the Council, which was collecting data and monitoring the impact of visitors to the Highlands;
- an email would be circulated to Members to gather data on the local issues that required resolution;
- it was important the Council followed through on promises to the public, and more should be done to control litter and dog waste;
- following discussion, and consultation with the Gaelic Committee, two Scottish names for informal motorhome stopover sites had been shortlisted, Àirigh and Stadan, and a final decision on this was required; and
- given the anticipated further easing of Covid-19 restrictions in May and then possibly to level zero in June 2021, it was suggested that a further briefing, or if necessary, an additional Committee meeting, should be held in May 2021 to update Members on progress with the reopening of tourism and easing of Covid-19 restrictions.

Thereafter, the Committee:-

- i. **APPROVED** the final draft of the Highland Council Visitor Management Plan for 2021;
- ii. **NOTED** the information outlined by each Service in the appendices that gave additional detail on the initial range of activities to be undertaken for the 2021 season;

- iii. **APPROVED** the final draft of the Highland Council Visitor Management Plan for 2021
- iv. **NOTED** the information outlined by each Service in the appendices that gave additional detail on the initial range of activities to be undertaken for the 2021 season; and
- v. **AGREED** where further activities were required that need an immediate solution as follows:-
  - a. to raise the provision of motorhome waste disposal with SEPA;
  - b. to discuss the provision of portaloos with Mr A MacInnes outwith the meeting;
  - c. that locally produced posters encouraging sustainable tourism be shared and promoted;
  - d. an email be circulated to Members to gather data on the local waste issues that require to be resolved;
  - e. the need for a final decision to be made between the two options shortlisted, Àirigh and Stadan, as the Scottish reference to informal motorhome stopover sites; and
  - f. to hold, in May 2021, a briefing, or if necessary, an additional Committee meeting, to update Members on progress with the reopening of tourism and easing of Covid-19 restrictions.

The meeting ended at 4.25pm



**The Highland Council  
Caithness Committee**

Minutes of Meeting of the Caithness Committee held REMOTELY on Thursday, 22 April 2021 at 10.00am.

**Present:**

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

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

**Officials in attendance:**

Ms N Grant, Executive Chief Officer, Education and Learning  
Mr A Macmanus, Ward Manager, Communities and Place  
Ms A Donald, North Area Manager, Education and Learning  
Ms H Flavell, Head Teacher, Thurso High School, Education and Learning  
Ms J Sutherland, Roads Operation Manager, Infrastructure and Environment  
Mrs M Ross, Principal Housing Officer, Housing and Property  
Ms S Murdoch, Common Good Fund Officer, Communities and Place  
Ms F Cameron, Programme Manager, Infrastructure and Environment  
Ms S Lamb, EFF Regional Development Officer, Infrastructure and Environment  
Ms A Macrae, Committee Administrator, Performance and Governance

**Also in Attendance:**

Mr J Donaldson, Scottish Fire & Rescue Service

<b>1.</b>	<p><b>Apologies for Absence</b> <b>Leisgeulan</b></p> <p>There were no apologies for absence.</p>
<b>2.</b>	<p><b>Declarations of Interest</b> <b>Foillseachaidhean Com-pàirt</b></p> <p>Item 12: Ms N Sinclair (non-financial)</p> <p>Item 13: Mr S Mackie (financial and non-financial), Mr K Rosie (non-financial), Mr M Reiss (non-financial)</p>
<p><b>The Items are recorded in the order that they were taken at the meeting in accordance with Standing Order 9.</b></p>	
<b>3.</b>	<p><b>Minutes</b> <b>Geàrr-chunntas</b></p> <p>There were circulated for noting Minutes of the Caithness Committee held on 21 January 2021 and 19 February 2021, which were approved by the Council on 25 March 2021, the terms of which were <b>NOTED</b>.</p>

<b>4.</b>	<p><b>Matters Arising – Action Tracker</b> <b>Gnothaichean Ag Èirigh – Tracair Ghnìomhan</b></p> <p>There had been circulated an Action Tracker which detailed the actions arising from previous meetings.</p> <p>It was confirmed that Ward 2 Members would be writing directly to the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service in relation to the action to support the refurbishment of Thurso Fire Station.</p> <p>The Committee <b>AGREED</b> the update to the action tracker.</p>
<b>5.</b>	<p><b>Caithness Citizen’s Advice Bureau – Board</b> <b>Biùro Comhairleachaidh Pobail Ghallaibh – Bòrd</b></p> <p>The Committee was asked to appoint 1 Member to serve as a Director of Caithness Citizens’ Advice Bureau as a replacement for Mr D Mackay who had stepped down from this position.</p> <p>The Committee <b>AGREED</b> to appoint Mr S Mackie to the Board.</p>
<b>6.</b>	<p><b>Scottish Fire and Rescue Local Performance Report</b> <b>Aithisg Dèanadais Sgìreil Seirbheis Smàlaidh is Teasairginn na h-Alba</b></p> <p>There had been circulated Report No CC/08/21 by the Local Senior Officer for Highland.</p> <p>In discussion, Members noted that Mr J Donaldson, Station Commander was leaving his post at the end of the month, and expressed appreciation for his unstinting service to the area.</p> <p>The Committee following scrutiny, <b>NOTED</b> the Area Performance Report.</p>
<b>7.</b>	<p><b>Joint use of Thurso and North West Caithness (Ward 2) and Wick and East Caithness (Ward 3) Covid Response Funds</b> <b>Co-chleachdadh Mhaointean Freagairt Covid Inbhir Theòrsa is Ghallaibh an Iar-Thuath (Uàrd 2) agus Inbhir Ùige is Ghallaibh an Ear (Uàrd 3)</b></p> <p>There had been circulated Report No CC/09/21 by the Executive Chief Officer Communities and Place.</p> <p>The Committee <b>AGREED</b> to allocate the sum of:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. £6,000 (£3,000 from each Ward) to assist the 12 local Community Councils (now including Wick and Thurso) who are part of the Village Officer Scheme to apply for up to £500 to assist with their village officers’ duties for 2021/2022; and</li> <li>ii. £6,000 (£3,000 from each Ward) to assist local Christmas Lights Groups with repairs to lights damaged due to prolonged exposure to the elements.</li> </ul>

	A maximum of £1,500 for Wick and Thurso and £300 for other identified groups. Closing date for applications to be 30 June 2021.
<b>11.</b>	<p><b>Housing Performance Report – 1 April 2020 to 31 March 2021</b>  <b>Aithisg Coileanaidh Taigheadais – 1 Giblean 2020 gu 31 Màrt 2021</b></p> <p>There had been circulated Report No CC/13/21 by the Executive Chief Officer Housing and Property.</p> <p>In discussion, a slight increase in homelessness was highlighted and Members were advised that it wasn't anticipated the changes to national homeless legislation and guidance would create a significant challenge in Caithness as accommodation was available.</p> <p>In relation to the reduction of rent arrears observed at the end of Q3, it was confirmed that while there had been an increase in Q4, the anticipated impact of Covid-19 had not been realised, although changes had been observed in the west of the County due to an increase in the number of tenants on benefits and the impact of furlough.</p> <p>Thereafter, an update was provided on the focused work of the Service on rent arrears, and it was hoped home visits would commence next week and full-service delivery would follow within 4 to 6 weeks. Members expressed appreciation for the work of the Team as demonstrated by the performance report, and the support provided to tenants during the pandemic.</p> <p>The Committee following scrutiny, <b>NOTED</b> the information provided on housing performance in the period 1 April 2020 to 31 March 2021.</p>
<b>12.</b>	<p><b>Wick Common Good Asset Register</b>  <b>Clàr So-mhaoin Math Coitcheann Inbhir Ùige</b></p> <p><b>Declarations of Interest:- Ms N Sinclair declared a non-financial interest in this item as a Director of Wick's Heart Development Trust but, having applied the test outlined in Paragraphs 5.2 and 5.3 of the Councillors' Code of Conduct, concluded that her interest did not preclude her from taking part in the discussion.</b></p> <p>There had been circulated Report No CC/14/21 by the Executive Chief Officer Community &amp; Places and Executive Chief Officer Finance &amp; Resources.</p> <p>In discussion, Members thanked the Common Good Officer for all her work in relation to the Fund and raised the following issues:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• an explanation was sought and provided on the level of contribution Wick Common Good would be expected to contribute towards the central costs of all Highland Common Good Funds once its assets generated income;</li> <li>• the potential going forward to take a more commercial approach and generate revenue from the Fund's assets for the benefit of the community, for example opportunities to charge for car parking subject to consultation with the public, and for the use of Wick Town Hall. and for further discussions with officers to be progressed on this issue;</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• confirmation was sought and provided that work had commenced in relation to Thurso Common Good Fund; and</li> <li>• the publication of the register represented the work which had been undertaken to date and this was a fluid process going forward, including the opportunity to add to the register in future.</li> </ul> <p>* The Committee:-</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. <b>NOTED</b> the contents of the Asset Register in the format for publication (<b>Appendix 1</b>);</li> <li>ii. <b>NOTED</b> the content of the document titled “Wick Common Good property consultation representations and responses” (<b>Appendix 2</b>);</li> <li>iii. <b>AGREED</b> to the publication of the Common Good Asset register for Wick;</li> <li>iv. <b>AGREED</b> to the reclassification of the property included in the Register and to the creation of a Common Good Fund for Wick;</li> <li>v. <b>NOTED</b> that Wick Common Good property will continue to be maintained by Highland Council until such time as an income source is identified to sustain Wick Common Good assets; and</li> <li>vi. <b>NOTED</b> that the creation of a Wick Common Good Fund, and its financial position, will be reported to the next meeting of Highland Council under the minutes of this meeting given that all Highland Councillors are custodians of Common Good Funds across Highland.</li> </ol>
8.	<p><b>Thurso Associated School Group Overview</b>  <b>Sealladh Coitcheann air Buidheann Sgoiltean Co-cheangailte Inbhir Theòrsa</b></p> <p>There had been circulated Report No CC/10/21 by the Executive Chief Officer Education and Learning.</p> <p>The Head Teacher, Thurso High School, advised that the figure shown for positive destinations for pupils at the School in 2019/20 was incorrect due to a data input error and should read 94.2%. She provided an overview of the main focus of the School with the aim of raising attainment, these being nurture and pupils health and wellbeing, creating a School and classroom culture that allowed pupils to learn the behaviours they required to succeed, and on more effective teaching and learning within the classrooms with staff becoming more research informed teachers. She also provided a detailed overview of the work undertaken to deliver remote learning during the Covid-19 pandemic, and in relation to supporting the most vulnerable pupils. There had been a high level of engagement during the lockdown period, details of which she provided. The sense of the school being part of a wider community had grown, and communication with parents had improved. Currently the focus was on SQA responsibilities for senior pupils, working towards their assessments and finalising their provisional grades.</p> <p>In discussion, Members raised the following issues:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the Head Teacher and staff be commended on the excellent work being undertaken at Thurso High School and on the high level of engagement by pupils during the lockdown period;</li> <li>• the School’s staff and pupils also be commended on the improvements undertaken to the School’s estate;</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• confirmation was sought and provided that no issues had been experienced with recruitment to permanent posts for probationary teachers, reference being made to the importance of probationary staff being retained in the area; and</li> <li>• issues around the national timeline associated with the allocation of probationers each year and the challenges this created for schools, and noting this matter was being raised by the Service at a national level.</li> </ul> <p>Discussion then focused on the opportunities to improve Thurso High School's estate in consultation and collaboration with other organisations, with specific reference to the bus park and road safety issues, the provision of all-weather sports facilities and equity issues in relation to disabled access. It was confirmed further discussions involving Members and officers would be held offline in regard to the full School estate, priorities and the opportunities for collaboration to move this forward on delivering improvements. This would include progressing discussions with Sportscotland on the provision of an all-weather facility.</p> <p>The Committee:-</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. <b>NOTED</b> following scrutiny, the content of the report; and</li> <li>ii. <b>AGREED</b> that further discussions be held with Members on the opportunities to improve Thurso High School's estate in collaboration with other organisations, with specific reference to the bus park and road safety issues, provision of all-weather sports facilities and disabled access.</li> </ol>
9.	<p><b>Additional Support Needs Provision in Caithness</b>  <b>Solar Feumalachdan Taice a Bharrachd ann an Gallaibh</b></p> <p>There had been circulated Report No CC/11/21 by the Executive Chief Officer Education and Learning.</p> <p>The North Area Manager gave a presentation on this item which highlighted the main points from the report in relation on the Additional Support for Learning review, the Scottish and Highland context, Highland Additional Support for Learning allocation procedures and processes, and levels of need, staffing, procedures and processes in Caithness. She advised that Additional Support for Learning (ASL) had replaced Additional Support Needs (ASN).</p> <p>In discussion, Members raised the following issues:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• concern at any proposal to move additional support staff from Mount Pleasant Primary School, reference being made to parents concerns on this matter. It was explained the review sought to maximise the additional learning resource within the Thurso ASG and achieve the best outcomes for the children and deliver best practice in the area;</li> <li>• in relation to the proposal that staff be attached to the ASG rather than individual schools and the reluctance of some staff to travel, clarification was sought and provided on the approach to be taken to overcome these challenges, reference being made to the importance of supporting and communicating with staff in this regard;</li> <li>• an explanation on the differences in the reduction in Levels 3 and 4 between the Thurso and Wick ASGs including the ongoing work with</li> </ul>

	<p>schools to ensure the levels were correctly moderated to ensure the appropriate level of support was being provided to pupils; and</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• concern that the new ASL model relied heavily on the data, and the need to ensure that data was correct. This was a difficult and challenging issue and it had to be rolled out carefully and with sensitivity in each local area.</li> </ul> <p>The Committee <b>NOTED</b>, following scrutiny the content of the report.</p>
10.	<p><b>Road Structural Maintenance 2021/22</b> <b>Càradh Structar Rathaidean 2021/22</b></p> <p>There had been circulated Report No CC/12/21 by the Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure and Environment.</p> <p>In discussion, Members raised a range of issues including the following points:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• concern at potholes on the road near Dunbar Hospital, Thurso. It was confirmed this matter would be addressed as soon as possible;</li> <li>• additional funding for roads was to be allocated by the Environment and Infrastructure Committee in May 2021, and it was understood schemes in Caithness would benefit from those additional monies;</li> <li>• the lifting of the overtime ban in relation to capital works was welcomed on the basis this would help increase productivity and deliver an enhanced programme;</li> <li>• an explanation was sought and provided in relation to how the priorities in the Programme were determined including the inspection regime and the roads hierarchy guidance which was factored into the process;</li> <li>• a point of concern in relation to progress with repairing potholes in towns and villages in the area;</li> <li>• an explanation was sought and provided in relation to revenue and capital works and the different bodies of work carried out under each budget, with specific reference to temporary and permanent pothole repairs;</li> <li>• in regard to the above, Members had supported the investment in a hotbox and other kit to allow more permanent pothole repairs to be carried out first time round;</li> <li>• the condition of the road network was a major issue in Caithness, and across the Highlands and reflected the legacy of roads maintenance funding being reduced over a number years in favour of other priorities. Therefore, the Council's significant additional investment in roads be welcomed as good news;</li> <li>• even with the additional investment, works could only be carried out to 4% of the road network in Caithness. Government assistance was therefore required, most particularly on road safety grounds. This should include a legal change so that windfarm and timber operators paid the Council a fair contribution to maintaining the road network;</li> <li>• Members' appreciation of and thanks for the hard work of the Roads Team in the area be conveyed to all the staff, concern being expressed at negative comments on social media over which staff had no right of reply;</li> <li>• the Redesign Board has been asked to undertake a holistic review around roads, including the potential to build a long- term sustainable strategy that</li> </ul>

	<p>served rural, urban and suburban communities equally and appropriately and the more effective resourcing of the Council's roads repairs strategy;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• highlighting the significant amount of work being undertaken by Members and officials at a local level to maximise the available funding, and specifically the progress being made through the joint monthly roads meetings held in the area;</li> <li>• the need to reinforce the message in relation to the importance of driving according to the road conditions all year round;</li> <li>• the potential for the Ward 2 allocation to be invested in projects at Braal Terrace, Halkirk; Bridge Street Halkirk; and Ormlie road from Castlegreen Road to college;</li> <li>• the inclusion of the Ward Allocation of £100k per Ward in the Capital Budget allocation be supported, bearing in mind this was a flexible list and the need to factor in the ability to respond to unforeseen issues with the road network as they arose;</li> <li>• the allocation of the Ward Allocation be considered and agreed at ward business meetings;</li> </ul> <p>Further discussion highlighted that only 10% of the roads requiring works could be included in the Programme and one third of the projects on the priority list progressed within the available funding. Difficult decisions had to be made which inevitably meant prioritising the roads most heavily used on the grounds of road safety. It was important to communicate to the public the nature of those challenges and the rationale for agreeing the prioritised Programme within the available funding.</p> <p>The Chair advised that she had prepared visuals in relation to the proposed schemes to be undertaken, the available budget and a summary of the main challenges facing the Council in the area, for issuing in the public domain.</p> <p>Thereafter, the Committee <b>APPROVED</b> the proposed prioritised 2021/22 Roads Maintenance Programme for Caithness Area.</p>
13.	<p><b>Highland Coastal Communities Fund – Assessment of Applications</b>  <b>Maoin Choimhearsnachdan Cladaich na Gàidhealtachd – Measadh Iarrtasan</b></p> <p><b>Declarations of Interest:-</b></p> <p><b>Mr S Mackie, declared a non-financial interest in this item on the grounds a close family member was part of a business that represented one of the applicants and a financial interest as Managing Director of a business that was in competition with one of the applicants and he left the meeting for the entirety of this item.</b></p> <p><b>Mr K Rosie declared a non-financial interest in the Thurso Community Development Trust's application as a Director of Thurso Community Development Trust and he left the meeting for the determination of this application.</b></p> <p><b>Mr M Reiss declared a non-financial interest in the Befriending Highland application on the grounds the Manager of Befriending Caithness was a friend and he left the meeting for the determination of this application.</b></p>

There had been circulated Report No CC/15/21 by the Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure and Environment.

The Chair advised thanked the officers for their work in bringing forward the report and providing the information by which Members could make an informed decision. She welcomed the fact the HCCF was controlled entirely at an area level and also the level of flexibility that existed within the Fund. This was important for localism and communities in Caithness and she commended the range of exciting projects which had been put forward to the Fund.

The Committee considered the applications and **APPROVED** funding as follows:-

**Caithness Voluntary Group**

**APPROVED** £9,082.80

**St John's Episcopal Church**

**APPROVED** £15,000

**Dunnet Forestry Trust**

**APPROVED** £22,436

**Keiss Primary School Parent Council**

**APPROVED** £23,000

**Thurso Youth Club SCIO**

**APPROVED** £40,923

**John O'Groats Mill Trust**

**APPROVED** £30,080

**Befrienders Highland**

**APPROVED** £7,360

**Caithness Voluntary Group**

**APPROVED** £39,700

**Thurso Community Development Trust**

**APPROVED** £67,791.75

Members commented that the full amount applied for had not been awarded on the basis of the risk presented by the fact the premises identified for the zero-waste shop in the town centre was on the market for sale. The approval therefore related to the 'Thurso Grows' and employment of an Enterprise officer elements



of the Project. This would not preclude the Trust from applying to the Fund in future if they met the criteria once the situation with the premises had been settled.

**Brough Bay Association**

**APPROVED** £27,000 subject to planning permission and match funding being in place.

**Bridgenorth Ironmongers Ltd**

**APPROVED** £9,775 subject to a business plan being provided.

**Scrabster Harbour Trust**

**APPROVED** £18,700

**Dunnet Bay Distillers Ltd**

**NO AWARD**

Members expressed concern this project may result in commercial displacement in the local area. The project was eligible for Historic Environment Scotland funding for the preservation of the historic Mill and the state aid implications had to be clarified. Members were concerned around public monies being invested in a private business to fund the stills element of the project.

**Crowvus**

**NO AWARD**

Members commented that there was no clear evidence the purchase of the building was necessary to improve literacy in Caithness. In addition, there were concerns about the suitability of the structure of the organisation.

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During further discussion, the Programme Manager confirmed that taking the above awards into account the balance remaining from the available funding of £409,652.26 was £98,803.45

Thereafter, the Committee **AGREED** to ring-fence the balance of £98,803.45 for member-led strategic investments to benefit the Caithness economy and secure match funding with local stakeholders. Further details of this investment to be brought back to the Committee.

In conclusion of this item, Members advised that for those applications which had received a reduced or no award, this did not preclude them from re-shaping their applications and making an application to the Fund at a future date. The applicants and those who did not meet this stage of the process were thanked for their efforts in relation to the Fund.

The meeting ended at 3.05pm.



## The Highland Council

Minutes of **Special Meeting** of the **City of Inverness Area Committee** held remotely on **Thursday, 22 April 2021** at 10.00am.

### Present:

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

### Officials in Attendance:

Mr A Gunn, Executive Chief Officer Transformation and Economy  
 Ms L Denovan, Executive Chief Officer Resources and Finance  
 Mr S Fraser, Head of Corporate Governance  
 Ms A Clark, Head of Policy  
 Mr D Haas, Inverness City Area Manager  
 Mr K Forbes, Property Manager (Estates Management)  
 Mr P Nevin, Legal Manager  
 Miss J MacLennan, Democratic Services Manager  
 Ms M Zavarella, Committee Officer

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

**Mrs H Carmichael in the Chair**

### Business

#### 1. Apologies for Absence Leisgeulan

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

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

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

Item 5: Mr A Jarvie (Non-Financial)

### 3. **Membership of the Committee** **Ballarachd Chomataidhean**

It was **NOTED** that, following the By-Election held on 11 March 2021, Mr David Fraser (Independent) had been elected as a Member of Ward 12 (Aird and Loch Ness).

In this regard, Mr Fraser was welcomed accordingly.

### 4. **Exclusion of the Public** **As-dunadh a' Phobail**

Mrs H Carmichael, seconded by Mr J Gray, **MOVED** that, under Section 50A(4) of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973, and following legal advice which had been received, 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 Paragraph 9 of Part 1 of Schedule 7A of the Act.

As an **AMENDMENT**, Mr A Jarvie, seconded by Mr C Smith, moved that discussion should be undertaken on the general principles of the report and that the meeting should only move into private as and when necessary thereafter.

On a vote being taken, the **MOTION** received 13 votes and the **AMENDMENT** received 2 votes, with 4 abstentions, and the **MOTION** was therefore **CARRIED**, the votes having been cast as follows:-

#### **For the Motion:**

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

#### **For the Amendment:**

Mr A Jarvie and Mr C Smith.

#### **Abstentions:**

Ms E Knox, Mrs I MacKenzie, Mr D Macpherson and Ms E Roddick.

### 5. **Inverness Common Good Fund – Tenancies (Covid-19 Implications) – Models for Financial Support** **Maoin Math Coitcheann Inbhir Nis – Ath-sgrudadh air Taic do Luchd- gabhail**

**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 as 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 Joint Report No. CIA/8/2021 dated 8 April 2021 by the Executive Chief Officer (Resources and Finance), Executive Chief Officer (Infrastructure and Environment), Executive Chief Officer

(Communities and Place) and the (Executive Chief Officer) Performance and Governance.

Following discussion, and following a vote, the Committee **AGREED** the recommendations as detailed in the report.

The meeting ended at 11.10am.

## The Highland Council

Minutes of Meeting of the **Black Isle, Dingwall and Seaforth Committee** held remotely via Microsoft Teams on 26 April 2021 at 2.00 pm.

### **Present:**

Mr G Adam  
Mrs J Barclay  
Mr A MacKinnon

Mrs A MacLean  
Mrs M Paterson

### **In attendance:**

Mr M Rodgers, Executive Chief Officer - Housing and Property  
Mrs D Ferguson, Senior Ward Manager, Chief Executive's Office  
Ms D Agnew, Ward Manager (Black Isle, Dingwall and Seaforth), Chief Executive's Office  
Mr D Martin, Area Education and Learning Manager  
Ms H Cameron, Early Level Commissioner  
Mr R Campbell, Estate Strategy Manager, Development and Infrastructure  
Mr I Moncrieff, Roads Operations Manager  
Mr J Holden, Area Housing Manager  
Ms F Cameron, Programme Manager, Development and Regeneration  
Ms N Wallace  
Miss S Tarrant, Corporate Communications and Engagement Officer  
Mrs A MacArthur, Administrative Assistant, Chief Executive's Office

### **Also in attendance:**

Chief Inspector Wilson, Police Scotland  
Inspector R Ross, Police Scotland

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

### **Business**

#### **1. Apologies for Absence Leisgeulans**

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Mr C Fraser and Mr G MacKenzie.

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

Item 8 – Mr A MacKinnon (financial)

### 3. Police – Area Performance Summary Poilis – Geàrr-chunntas Dèanadais Sgìreil

There had been circulated Report No BIDS/009/21 dated 31 March 2021 by the North Area Commander. Chief Inspector Jamie Wilson advised that Inspector Richard Ross had replaced Inspector Kevin MacLeod who was on secondment for a period of 7 months.

In discussion, the following main points were raised:-

- on a query as to whether Police Scotland had received complaints on the new 20 mph speed limit restrictions in Dingwall, Chief Inspector J Wilson advised that there had not been many complaints for the new 20 mph speed restrictions, however people do not appear to be complying;
- further information was sought and provided on drug seizures and how this would be managed. Police Scotland would ask that people continue to report the misuse of drugs or drug dealing in the area. Members were pleased to see that officers had now had training in detecting drivers driving under the influence of drugs;
- the Chief Executive, through the Tourism Committee and the Visitor Management Group was looking to provide extra resources to assist with tourism and the related NC500 route. Members suggested the following resource requirements: help with congestion in areas which were unable to take a high volume of vehicles; human waste disposal and other waste management issues. In relation to social distancing the figures had not changed. A significant number of calls were received in relation to people not complying. There had been ten new Rangers appointed and dedicated to the NC500, these were to be increased to 17. Although there had been no additional police officers, demand on the police would increase;
- CHAMPS – Dingwall Academy supports a social group for care experienced young people in the Dingwall ASG. This group is fully embedded into the wider work of Who Cares Scotland in Highland and beyond;
- following a query on fraud it was suggested that a member of the Prevention and Intervention Team be involved in each of the Community Councils and give a short briefing on the different types of fraud. The Community Councils once informed of frauds in the area could broadcast the message within their forums;
- in relation to anti-social behaviour, instances are coded to specific properties and they are easily retrieved to ascertain the amount and type that have occurred;
- if a vulnerable adult was encountered during a property visit we would share with the concern hub who would share with the relevant department or service; and
- a meeting had been held with the Divisional Commander, members of the community and elected Members regarding safety issues at the Munloch junction where the intention of the community was to extend the 50 mph

speed limit from beyond the Munloch junction to North Kessock. Following that meeting the Divisional Commander had had a meeting with Transport Scotland which had gone very well. Another meeting was expected very soon.

The Committee **NOTED**:

- i. progress made against the objectives set within the Highland Local Policing Plan 2020-23 Year 1, attached as Annex A to this report, for the period covering 01 April 2020 – 31 January 2021.
- ii. that Police Scotland would give a short presentation to Community Councils on the different types of frauds and arrange for Community Councils to broadcast the information through their forums; and
- iii. that Police Scotland would give a short presentation to the Committee on the different types of fraud.

#### **4. Early Years provision in BIDS – Delivery and Expansion Solar Thràth-bhliadhnaichean ann an BIDS – Lìbhrigeadh agus Togail**

There was a verbal report on Early Years provision in BIDS by Hayley Cameron.

In discussion, the following main points were raised:-

- Avoch were currently building an extension to the current nursery building. Completion had been hoped for during the summer but there had been a delay so a precise date could not be given.

The Committee:

- i. **NOTED** the report.

#### **5. St Clement's School, Dingwall Sgoil Naomh Chliamhainn, Inbhir Pheofharain**

There was a verbal report by the Area Education and Learning Manager and the Estate Strategy Manager.

In discussion, the following main points were raised:-

- site investigations had been undertaken and an interim report was expected at the end of April with a full report in June;
- pre-planning application advice had been sought from the Planning Department and several constraints had been highlighted which led to a lengthy exercise and investigation into the feasibility of the site;
- local Members and parents, the Chief Officer and Executive Chief Officer had had significant engagement with meetings and visits to the site; and
- Members queried the ownership of the railway bridge and whether there was likely to be objections to the site from the owners of the bridge.

The Committee **NOTED** the report.



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

There had been circulated Report No BIDS/010/21 dated 31 March 2021 by the Executive Chief Officer – Housing and Property which provided Members with information on how the Housing Section performed in relation to the Scottish Social Housing Charter and other performance indicators during the period up to 31 December 2020.

Members expressed thanks for the helpful and dedicated work of housing staff and wished Jim Holden well on his retirement.

In discussion, the following main points were raised:-

- concern was expressed at the Council garages many of which were in a poor condition. There was currently a pilot project for refurbishing garages in Dingwall and once costings were available, Members would be briefed;
- the increase in housing stock from the Housing development programme has not had an impact on housing repair capability, as the requirement for repairs in new houses was significantly less than older housing stock;
- analysis to date showed no direct correlation between the pandemic and an increase in rent arrears but the Housing team was closely monitoring this;
- a breakdown of garage sites in relation to how many were occupied and unoccupied, how many on a waiting list for garages and what the condition of the garages were; and
- it would be worth looking at the garage pilot project above to see if it did produce an income or whether there was an irretrievable cost to refurbishing the garages.

The Committee

- i. **NOTED** the report; and
- ii. **AGREED** the garage rent increase at 2%.

## 7. Common Good Funds Maoin Maith Choitchinn

There had been circulated Report Nos BIDS/011/21 – BIDS/013/21 dated 1 April 2021 by the Executive Chief Officer Communities and Place and Executive Chief Officer Resources and Finance which provide information on the following Common Good Funds:-

- a. Dingwall Common Good Fund BIDS/011/21
- b. Cromarty Common Good Fund BIDS/012/21
- c. Fortrose and Rosemarkie Common Good Fund BIDS/013/21

The Committee **NOTED** the updated information provided in relation to each Fund and **AGREED** to approve the proposed budgets for 2021/2022.

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

- i. **AGREED** to set Project Expenditure budget of £55,000 towards Town Centre Funded - Roof and Rainwater Project in Dingwall Town Hall as described fully in paragraph 8.3.

## 8. **Highland Coastal Communities Fund** **Maoin Coimhearsnachdan Cladaich na Gàidhealtachd**

There had been circulated Report No BIDS/014/21 dated 26 March 2021 by the Executive Chief Officer – Infrastructure and Environment which outlined the Highland Coastal Communities Fund.

The Committee:

- i. **AGREED** the overall allocation should be split by ward;
- ii. **AGREED** to approve:
  - Maryburgh Men’s Shed funding of £5,000 from ward 8; and
  - Culbokie Community Trust funding of £4,450 from ward 9.

## 9. **Area Capital Programme 2021-2022** **Prògram Calpa Sgìre 2021-2022**

There had been circulated Report No BIDS/015/21 dated 25 March 2021 by the Interim Chief Officer – Infrastructure and Environment which details the proposed 2021/2022 Roads Maintenance Programme for Black Isle, Dingwall and Seaforth Area.

In discussion, the following main points were raised:-

- resurface dressing and surface dressing on Station Road, Riverford Crescent and Riverford Drive had been on the last programme and that had been accepted;
- the detailed works were what could be afforded at the moment. There was still the Roads Ward Discretionary Budget of £100k to be decided. A discussion was also taking place about spending some of the unspent Council reserves on roads but these had not been included as they had yet to be confirmed;
- Station Road was likely to be undertaken at the end of June beginning of July 2021, the exact dates had still to be confirmed;
- the Distillery bends at Muir of Ord required to be undertaken. These works would be undertaken this year should additional funding be made available and this homologated at the next meeting of the Committee;
- Members requested that when undertaking Station Road the red marking for the cycle route be undertaken at the same time.
- that a special Area Committee meeting be arranged to consider the spend for the Roads Ward Discretionary Budget for Ward 8; and
- for the Roads Ward Discretionary Budget Ward 9 – Avoch - High Street, Fortrose – High Street, Ness Road, Cromarty - Braehead, top of the Denny should be agreed.

The Committee:

- i. **APPROVED** the proposed 2021/22 Roads Maintenance Programme for Black Isle, Dingwall and Seaforth Area;
- ii. **AGREED** that works on Distillery Road, Muir of Ord be approved subject to additional funding becoming available;
- iii. **AGREED** that a special Area Committee meeting be arranged to consider the spend for the Area Roads Discretionary Budget for Ward 8; and
- iv. **AGREED** the Roads Ward Discretionary Budget spend for the following in Ward 9: Avoch – High Street, Fortrose – High Street, Ness Road, Cromarty - Braehead, and the top of the Denny.

### 3. Minutes Geàrr-chunntas

There was circulated and **NOTED** Minutes of Meeting of the Black Isle, Dingwall and Seaforth Committee held on 13 January 2021 which were approved by the Council on 25 March 2021.

The meeting closed at 4.00 pm.

## The Highland Council

Minutes of Meeting of the **Wester Ross, Strathpeffer and Lochalsh Committee** held remotely via Microsoft Teams on 26 April 2021 at 10.30 am.

### Present:

Mrs I Campbell  
Dr I Cockburn

Mr A MacInnes  
Mr D MacLeod

### In attendance:

Mrs D Ferguson, Senior Ward Manager, Communities and Place  
Mr D Martin, Area Care and Learning Manager  
Ms H Cameron, Early Learning Commissioner  
Mr D Esson, Area Care and Learning Manager – West Area  
Mr J Holden, Housing Manager (North), Property and Housing  
Ms F Cameron, LEADER and Development Programme  
Ms W Anderson, LEADER and Development Manager  
Miss S Tarrant, Corporate Communications and Engagement Officer, Chief Executive's Office  
Mrs A MacArthur, Administrative Assistant, Performance and Governance

### Also in attendance:

Chief Inspector Wilson, Police Scotland  
Inspector R Ross, Police Scotland

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

## Business

### 1. Apologies for Absence Leisgeulan

There were no apologies for absence.

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

There were no declarations of interest.

### 3. Minutes Geàrr-chunntas

The Committee **NOTED** the Minutes of Meeting of the Wester Ross, Strathpeffer and Lochalsh Committee held on 14 January 2021 which were approved by the Council on 25 March 2021

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

There had been circulated Report No WRSL/007/21 dated 1 April 2021 by the North Area Commander. Chief Inspection Jamie Wilson advised that Inspector Richard Ross had replaced Inspector Kevin MacLeod who was on secondment for 7 months.

During discussion, the following responses had been given:-

Policing of on-line and email fraud was difficult. Fraud was rife across the country with an increase during the Covid 19 restrictions. Police Scotland had a Prevention and Intervention department that monitor, detect and maximise the warning messages to the public. Police Scotland asked that each and every case is reported so each case can be identified and preventative measures taken. The Prevention and Intervention Department within Police Scotland could maximise messaging by informing Community Councils within the area of ongoing email fraud to enable them to add warnings to their websites to better inform the general public.

The Committee **NOTED**:

- i. Progress made against the objectives set within the Highland Local Policing Plan 2020-2023 Year 1, attached as Annex A to this report, for the period covering 01 April 2020 - 31 January 2021
- ii. Police Scotland to inform Community Councils of ongoing email fraud to enable them to add warnings to their websites to better inform the general public.

### 4. **Early Years provision in WRSL – Delivery and Construction** **Solar Thràth-bhliadhnaichean ann an WRSL – Libhrigeadh agus Togail**

There were verbal reports by the Area Care and Learning Managers. Mr D Martin commended Hayley Cameron's work in relation to expansion of hours in Early Years provision. There was an agreement with the community in Strathpeffer where significant funding would go to the community centre for early years expansion.

During discussion, the following responses had been given:

- discussions regarding the future use of the Lochcarron demountable building had been ongoing but the future use had yet to be decided;
- in relation to Shieldaig a meeting would be arranged once findings on bat activity at the school had been delivered. There had been communications with the parents and confirmation on the bat activity was awaited. There was specific advice relating to the bats and there would be a delay to the works if the bats were active; and
- the anticipated date for completion of the Gairloch nursery was December this year.

The Committee **NOTED** the report.

## 5. Education Overview Foir-shealladh Foghlaim

There was a verbal report by Don Esson.

During discussion, the following responses had been given:-

- The last inspection report for Badcaul Primary had been in December 2017. As Badcaul Primary had had no youngsters in the nursery, the nursery was not in operation and therefore there had been no reports; and
- Ullapool High School was working at 35% roll capacity. Pupils going on to higher education stood at 32% when the average in Scotland was 40%. In rural schools, particularly in the West, the employment figures which were linked to tourism, tended to be very high in comparison to others, although this did fluctuate from year to year.

The Committee **NOTED** the report.

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

There had been circulated Report No WRSL/008/21 dated 22 March 2021 by the Executive Chief Officer - Education and Learning which provides an update of key information in relation to the schools within the Ullapool Associated School Group (ASG).

The Committee **NOTED** the report.

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

There had been circulated Report No WRSL/009/21 dated 31 March 2021 by the Executive Chief Officer – Housing and Property which provides Members with information on how the Housing Section performed in relation to the Scottish Social Housing Charter and other performance indicators during the period up to 31 December 2020.

During discussion, the following responses had been given:-

- in relation to the house at Plockton, there had been a follow up call with Lochalsh and Skye Housing Association who were managing the project and the tender had gone out. Only one bid had come back which was significantly higher than anticipated. Discussions were ongoing and Members would be advised of the outcome; and
- there was only a small number of properties denying access for repairs. If staff had to travel a long distance and the person does not allow entry it has a significant impact on the delivery of services. This had a greater impact in rural areas but it was not a very significant problem at the moment.

The Committee **NOTED** the report and **AGREED** to approve the garage rent increase at 2%.

**8. Highland Coastal Communities Fund**  
**Maoin Coimhearsnachdan Cladaich na Gàidhealtachd**

There had been circulated Report No WRSL/010/21 dated 26 March 2020 by the Executive Chief Officer – Infrastructure and Environment which outlined the new Highland Coastal Communities Fund.

During discussion, the following responses had been given:-

- Gairloch Area Development Company automatically received a score of 1 as match funding had not been confirmed. The match funding from the Rural Tourism and Infrastructure Fund would be decided in May.

The Committee **AGREED**:

- i. to ringfence £40,000 to support young entrepreneurs. The detail of this should be brought back to a future Area Committee for a formal decision; and
- ii. to **APPROVE**:
  - Ullapool Unpacked funding in the sum of £22,806.02;
  - Gairloch Area Development Ltd funding in the sum of £52,605;
  - Gairloch EcoCentre funding in the sum of £5,500.

The meeting closed at 11.30 pm.