

Minutes of Meetings

To be submitted to the Council

on

24 June 2021

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The Highland Council
No. 1 2021/2022

Minutes of Meeting of the Highland Council held REMOTELY on Thursday, 13 May 2021 at 10.35am.

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

Present:

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

In Attendance:

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

Mr B Lobban in the Chair

Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of Dr I Cockburn, Mrs M Cockburn, Mr J Gordon, Mrs L MacDonald, Mrs P Munro, Ms E Roddick, Mr G Ross and Mrs C Wilson.

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

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

Item 5 – Ms L Munro (Non-Financial)

Item 7 – Mr A Jarvie and Mr B Thompson (both Non-Financial)

Item 8 – Mr N McLean (Financial)

Item 9 – Mr D Rixson and Ms N Sinclair (both Non-Financial)

General – Mr J McGillivray (on the basis of a family member being employed by the Council and would withdraw if considered appropriate at any time)

3. **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 25 & 26 March 2021 as contained in the Volume which had been circulated separately – which were **APPROVED**.

4. **Minutes of Meetings of Committees** **Geàrr-chunntasan Choinneamhan Chomataidhean**

There had been submitted for confirmation as correct records, for information as regards delegated business and for approval as appropriate, the Minutes of Meetings of Committees contained in Volume circulated separately.

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

Caithness Committee – Starred Item 12 – Wick Common Good Asset Register

AGREED the publication of the Common Good Asset Register for Wick, re-classification of the property included in the Register and creation of a Wick Common Good Fund.

Correction to the Caithness Committee Minutes – to amend wording as follows – Page 273 – ‘generate revenue from the Fund’s assets for the benefit of the community, for example opportunities to charge for the use of the Wick Town Hall and note the implications for the public consultation around car parking charging’.

Economy & Infrastructure Committee – Starred Item 8 - Coastal Communities Fund

AGREED Option 1 from the report as a suitable mechanism to deliver the functions required from the two options proposed, namely that the Chair and Vice Chair of the E&I Committee, along with the Chair of each Area Committee, should form a Sub-Committee to determine project funding.

Correction to the Economy & Infrastructure Committee Minutes – Item 22 – to clarify that Mr D Rixson had declared a non-financial interest but also that he had left the meeting during discussion of the item.

The Council also **AGREED** revised dated for meetings of the Recovery, Improvement and Transformation in the current year as follows:-

Monday, 4 October at 10.30am (was 25 Oct)

Monday, 29 November at 2pm (was 13 Dec)

5. **Question Time** **Àm Ceiste**

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

(i) **Mr C Fraser**

To the Chair of the Housing & Property Committee

“How many ground-floor, wheelchair-accessible properties are in the Council estate?”

The response had been circulated.

In terms of a supplementary question, it was queried as to whether information on the location of these properties by Ward could be provided for the next meeting of the Housing & Property Committee.

In response, it was confirmed that this would be done.

(ii) **Mr C Fraser**

To the Chair of the Housing & Property Committee

“What is the waiting list for Highland residents who want ground-floor, wheelchair-accessible properties i.e. how many people are on the housing list and have high accessibility need points allocated to them?”

The response had been circulated.

In terms of a supplementary question, it was queried as to whether information on the age profile of applications could be provided for the next meeting of the Housing & Property Committee.

In response, it was confirmed that this would be done.

6. **Notices of Motion** **Brathan Glusaid**

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

(i) We, the Members of Dingwall and Seaforth Ward 8 have, after due consideration, unanimously agree that, in the best interests of our constituents, we need to be a standalone Area Committee. We are strongly of the view that for effective governance and local accountability, decision making has to be closest to the people for whom our decisions are so important. As we move towards recovery, we will require to work even more closely with our communities and businesses and to have the ability to quickly take decisions working in partnership that will improve the outcomes for the people we represent.

We ask Highland Council to agree to give Dingwall and Seaforth Ward the right to establish an Area Committee to enable local decisions to be in local hands.

Signed: Mr A MacKinnon Mr G MacKenzie Mrs M Paterson Mrs A MacLean

During discussion, Members raised the following issues:-

- it was felt that the terms of this Notice of Motion were self-explanatory in that they represented a move towards 'true localism'. As such, it had to be highlighted that the Local Members concerned were dissatisfied with maintaining the status quo as they wished to bring about positive change which was beneficial for local constituents;
- bringing local decisions closer to local residents through a smaller Local Committee represented community empowerment and would enable action to be discussed and taken on a level which would be appreciated by all;
- disbursement of funds on a Ward basis would be a further advantage and would be welcomed;
- the local community spirit and resilience during the Covid-19 pandemic and the action taken in this respect had been hugely impressive and had to be recognised and taken forward whenever and wherever possible;
- it was felt that in future there could be significant advantages in joining the Dingwall and Seaforth area with the Strathpeffer area;
- in terms of the previous report from the Commission on Highland Democracy, there had been a clear recommendation for local decisions to be placed in local hands and as such the proposals around participatory budgeting were awaited with interest;
- it had to be accepted that many local residents felt remote from decisions taken by the full Council;
- since the publication of the report from the Commission on Highland Democracy, a number of Wards had taken the decision that they wanted to move in a similar direction to what was now being proposed. As such, this had to be recognised as part of an early review into Local Committee arrangements in order that alternative arrangements/decisions could be implemented/taken wherever necessary in order to enable real devolution for local areas across the Highlands where necessary;
- further clarification was needed as to car parking arrangements/charges across the Highlands, both in this new area and other local areas;
- the Covid-19 pandemic had underlined some significant differences across areas and particularly the strong individual 'sense of identity' in some cases;
- it would be of paramount importance that the level of engagement and volunteering in local areas was continued and supported, not least in terms of allowing local input in the distribution of local funding;
- clarification was sought as to whether there would be a financial saving as a result of this proposal; and
- whilst supporting the proposal, reference was made as to whether this could be considered to be 'true democracy' in terms of the number of Members on the Committee and their control over local budgets/agenda items for future meetings and in this respect comparisons were drawn with the previous District Council arrangements.

Decision

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

(ii) Highland Council calls for a fairer share of the income derived for the development of the Highlands natural resources. At a time when massive profits are being made by private energy companies who use the abundant natural resources of wind and water in the Highlands, the basic road infrastructure that the communities of the Highlands rely upon is failing due to the lack of invest over a number of years.

Roads are just one example where the people and the overall environment of the Highlands would benefit from a reasonable share of the income being re-invested in the wider community. There are many other areas where the quality of life of Highland people would be enhanced from the re-investment of a share of the profits made from the development of the Highlands natural resources.

Asking for a share to invest back in the community for the overall benefit of the people of the Highlands is reasonable beyond challenge and the norm in many other countries across Europe. This initiative would be a major driver in improving infrastructure and communications the length and breadth of the largest local authority in the UK and a third of the land mass of Scotland.

Signed: Mrs M Davidson Mr J Gray

In this regard, there had also been tabled additional wording to suggest that an expert group should be set up consisting of Finance, Planning, Legal and Energy to look at the options around this proposal, reflecting on whether an updated Highland Renewable Energy Strategy was needed and considering how the Highland Council area as whole could benefit in a sustainable manner from its substantial natural resources.

During discussion, Members raised the following issues:-

- it had to be highlighted that the Highland area had been the centre for energy research, development and production for nearly 100 years but in terms of onshore and offshore renewables, the area had not seen anything near the benefits (in either employment or financial terms) that it would have been reasonable to expect;
- recent reports had confirmed that the North of Scotland held the greatest renewable resource in the United Kingdom and therefore provided the greatest opportunity to meet targets. However, unless a fundamental change was made in relation to how developments were taken forward in the Highlands, the area would continue to lose out on what could reasonably be expected from those developments. As such, it was feared that the Highlands could be meeting zero carbon targets with zero benefit for the region if changes were not made in this respect;
- it was noted that the Shetland area had fared considerably better than the Highlands over a number of years in this regard and it was suggested that lessons should perhaps be learned from their example;
- it was imperative that the future of renewables was seen as a potential income source for the area;
- it was regrettable that despite being a net exporter of energy to the rest of the country, the Highland area currently paid 5% more than the average on business electricity rates for small businesses (which was the highest business rate bracket in the United Kingdom);
- it was essential that future changes ensured that wealth generated in the Highlands stayed in the area;
- as a result of the pandemic, a new economic model had to be implemented to ensure social, economic and environmental justice (including a redesign of

the local economy and adapting to environmental challenges/opportunities) with net zero carbon targets at the core;

- it was noted that the land ownership pattern in the Highlands had not changed much in recent years and it was now time to look closely at community wealth building in the area in order to retain more of the money made from local natural resources through the creation of a Highland Renewable Fund;
- in terms of the lack of investment in Highland roads over recent years, and despite the fact that they had now been prioritised for investment, it had to be highlighted that this situation was now being made considerably worse as a result of these roads having to bear the weight of heavy vehicles involved in work associated with natural resources. As such, the setting up of a Highland Renewable Fund was strongly supported, not least in order to retain a share of the income derived from such projects for reinvestment in local infrastructure which would greatly benefit local communities;
- it was felt that the Highlands had often been exploited by profit driven companies who had harvested the Highland environment and this had been considerably assisted by a complex and baffling planning system. In this regard, it was hoped that the Scottish Government would re-examine the currently planning arrangements in the near future to create a fairer system for all;
- whilst supporting the aims of the Notice of Motion, reference was made to the situation which had existed in the Lochaber area from the 1930s to the 1980s whereby power generated in that location had been used locally. As such, it was suggested that this should be the focus for the future (as opposed to concentrating on trying to retain/gain a share of profits) which would have the added benefit of creating/retaining local jobs as part of a 'levelling up' agenda;
- there was a need for further detail on action to be taken, including any lobbying activities, and as such it was suggested that a full and detailed report with a list of implications (including information on the resourcing of the proposed new Group) would have been preferable and would have benefitted discussion on the issue;
- capital (as well as revenue) issues needed to be highlighted as at least £10bn in capital gain had been realised over the previous cycle and if the Council had received even 10% of that there would now be no Council debt;
- the Highland area had gone from having the cheapest electricity in the United Kingdom to the most expensive as a result of changes made in the 1980s (with fuel poverty increasing markedly over that period at the same time as companies profited hugely) and as such there was a need for urgent discussions to be held with Ofgem and both the UK and Scottish Governments on this issue; and
- it had to be acknowledged that very few local jobs had been created and very little financial benefit gained by local communities as a result of recent developments in the Highlands. It was therefore suggested that it would be imperative for urgent consultation to be undertaken in the first instance with both the UK and Scottish Governments, relevant MSPs in particular and civil servants at the highest government level to seek a political commitment at a national level to address the issues which had been raised during the meeting in order to increase the expectation of success.

Decision

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

It was also **AGREED** that an expert group be set up consisting of Finance, Planning, Legal and Energy to look at the options around this proposal, reflecting on whether an updated Highland Renewable Energy Strategy was needed and considering how the Highland Council area as a whole could benefit in a sustainable manner from its substantial natural resources.

(iii)The Climate Change Bill was introduced to the Scottish Parliament as a direct response to the Paris Agreement which requires parties to increase action to reduce greenhouse gas emissions while taking into account “the imperatives of a just transition of the workforce and the creation of decent work and quality jobs.

In this regard, the Scottish Government formed a Just Transition Commission and they reported back last year with their findings - Advice for a Green Recovery.

Some of the findings of note are as follows:-

- We have an opportunity to reset our progress towards a net-zero economy in a way that also actively tackles inequality and promotes regional cohesion;
- Young people are especially at risk;
- Patterns of transport use have changed but there is great uncertainty about the permanence of these changes;
- There is an accelerated transition unfolding in the Oil and Gas sectors; and
- Some rural sectors and regions are especially hard hit.

We propose that Officers involved with climate change and our poverty strategies bring forward a paper on how we can bring together our thinking on these issues and how our current policies may need to change.

Signed: Mrs M Davidson Mrs T Robertson

During discussion, Members raised the following issues:-

- it had to be acknowledged that climate change was going to impact on the poor and those on the lowest incomes as they were most likely to struggle to adapt their lifestyles to it so it was imperative that consideration of climate change issues was combined with consideration of poverty issues;
- it was noted that a full and detailed report would be submitted to the Climate Change Working Group initially as part of a cross-Service initiative;
- it would be important to highlight the risks to Highland communities in terms of achieving climate change targets and in this respect the pandemic had accentuated the specific risks for remote and rural areas, including reduced public transport, fuel poverty and food insecurity;
- in moving towards recovery from the pandemic, it would be important to ensure that actions taken on meeting climate change targets did not detract from action on poverty;
- it was felt that it would have been more appropriate for a report on this issue to be submitted in the first instance as opposed to a Notice of Motion as this would have allowed more informed debate;
- in dealing with this issue, alongside matters related to Brexit and Covid-19, it would be important to focus on recovery and future opportunities and in this respect reference was made to retaining energy locally (when it was produced locally) which would also have the added advantage of retaining jobs in the area;
- in focusing on transition issues, there was a need to include action in relation to the Council's housing stock/home energy usage as it was a fact that

tenants were often in the worst position in terms of being able to address climate change issues. In this regard, it was imperative that dialogue was undertaken with the Scottish Government on the current funding available to Local Authorities for the building of houses;

- whilst solving fuel poverty was paramount, there was also a need to focus strongly on improving economic development for the whole area as part of discussion with the Scottish Government, perhaps by learning lessons from the 'Norway example'; and
- focusing on and encouraging input from young people across the Highlands would be highly advantageous for all concerned.

Decision

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

7. Proposal and Update on Senior Leadership Redesign Ath-dhealbhadh Structaran/Àrd-Cheannardais

Declarations of Interest

Ms L Munro, Mr A Jarvie and Mr B Thompson 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/11/21 dated 4 May 2021 by the Chief Executive.

During discussion, Members raised the following issues:-

- the Convener reminded Members that it would be preferable not to discuss individual staff members during the debate to avoid having to exclude the public from the discussion;
- the Depute Leader of the Council spoke in favour of Option 2, as detailed in the report, and considered that this option would provide the best structure for the Council to support its staff, to deliver services to communities, to build on partnership working and to maintain financial stability. He also emphasised the importance of not delaying a decision on the redesign;
- some Members expressed disappointment that although the new structure had originally been approved in May 2019, much of it had not yet been implemented, despite the Covid-19 crisis not having started until March 2020. It was also felt that the report lacked important detail and therefore a postponement would be proposed to allow improved scrutiny. Key issues were missing from the job description / person specification for the proposed Depute Chief Executive, such as the need to engage with Members, although it was explained that this aspect of the role was referred to in the job description and was also considered to be implicit in a senior management role;
- information was sought and provided on why 15 Heads of Service were being proposed when the Council had agreed, in May 2019, to reduce Head of Service posts from 17 to 10. In response, it was highlighted that the rationale for this was provided in the wider context of the overall structure redesign and the savings target;

- clarification was provided as to why an Executive Chief Officer post had been advertised without prior Member review and why the Education Service now required two Heads of Service. In this respect, the Chair of the Education Committee summarised feedback from Head Teachers which had indicated the support they required from having specialist Heads of Service for primary and secondary levels;
- it was noted that discussion had taken place on the redesign proposals between Members and senior management prior to the report being presented to the Council and as such it was suggested Members had been given sufficient opportunity to seek further information if required;
- the Council's current position of financial stability was welcomed and Members thanked all staff and management for their dedication in achieving this in addition to coping with the Covid-19 crisis. In this regard, it was felt that it was important to trust Officials to fulfil their roles, given the high levels of competence which had already been demonstrated;
- the importance of a strong and appropriate leadership team was emphasised, as was the need for a Depute Chief Executive post, especially given the size of the organisation;
- in response to a query as to how the £500k savings target would be achieved, it was explained that this would be worked on once the overall management structure had been agreed/implemented;
- information was sought and provided on other options that had been considered prior to the two options in the report being short-listed and assurance provided that this had included a model that required a Managing Director;
- it was suggested that the proposed salary for the Depute Chief Executive post was high and that money could instead be directed towards tackling the backlog of road maintenance, with particular reference to the poor state of repair of the roads in Caithness. In response, other Members supported the need for a senior post at this level and referred to the £20m of capital which was being allocated to road maintenance;
- it was stressed that the achievements and financial savings realised by the Council to date should be better publicised;
- concern was expressed that 'experience in a public sector organisation' was primarily being sought from applicants for the post of the Depute Chief Executive and this appeared to not give equal prominence to the benefits of private sector experience;
- it was felt that reference should be made in the job description/person specification for the Depute Chief Executive post to localism or 'place-based planning', given the importance of this to Council policy going forward;
- additional managerial support was required at Area / Ward level to help facilitate meaningful community empowerment and a future debate on how this could be achieved would be welcomed;
- in response to a query, it was explained that staff members undertaking a role on an interim basis were not required to specify whether they were permanent or interim while attending meetings;
- it was noted that the Trade Unions were supportive of the proposals in the report and considered the proposed leadership redesign to be necessary for the Council; and
- the effect of the Covid-19 crisis on the management restructure which had been agreed in May 2019 was summarised and noted.

Thereafter, Mr A Christie, seconded by Mr J Gray, **MOVED** Option 2 as detailed in the report.

As an **AMENDMENT**, Mr A Jarvie, seconded by Mr A Sinclair, moved that agreement should be given to bringing forward recommendations on the Senior Management first to a Member Seminar and subsequently to undertake a piece of work before coming back to the next Council meeting for consideration, thus allowing the final decision to be open and transparent while responding with agility and ensuring future sustainability.

On a vote being taken, the **MOTION** received 48 votes and the **AMENDMENT** received 10 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 R Bremner, Mr I Brown, Mr B Boyd, Mrs C Caddick, Mrs I Campbell, Miss J Campbell, Mrs G Campbell-Sinclair, Mrs H Carmichael, Mr A Christie, Ms K Currie, Mrs M Davidson, Mr J Finlayson, Mr M 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 B McAllister, Mr A MacInnes, Mrs D Mackay, Mr G Mackenzie, Mr A Mackinnon, Mrs A MacLean, Mr C MacLeod, Mr H Morrison, Mr C Munro, Mrs L Munro, Mrs M Paterson Mr M Reiss, Mr D Rixson, Mrs F Robertson, Mrs T Robertson, Mr K Rosie, Ms N Sinclair, Ms M Smith and Mr B Thompson.

For the Amendment

Mr J Bruce, Mr A Jarvie, Mr D Mackay, Mr W Mackay, Mrs I MacKenzie, Mr S Mackie, Mr D Macpherson, Mr P Saggars, Mr A Sinclair and Mr C Smith.

Abstentions

Mr A Baxter, Ms P Hadley, Mr J McGillivray and Mr D MacLeod.

Decision

The Council:-

- (i) **AGREED** Option 2 to re-structure the Senior Leadership Team to include a Deputy Chief Executive (DCE) post and reduce the number of ECOs from 8 to 7 permanent ECO posts. The DCE post to have responsibility for major Council initiatives and strategies as well as deputising responsibilities for the Chief Executive. This appointment to attract a salary of £122,812;
- (ii) **NOTED** the ECO remits as set out in Appendix 2 of the report and that the remit areas for the ECO Transformation would be allocated to the Depute Chief Executive;
- (iii) **AGREED** the Heads of Service structure as set out in Section 5.2 and the remits set out in Appendix 4a and 4b of the report;
- (iv) **NOTED** the Heads of Service implementation process as set out in Section 7.5 and the timelines as set out in Appendix 6 of the report; and
- (v) **NOTED** that the Senior Leadership Redesign would contribute to the senior management savings of £0.500m approved by the Council in March 2020 for the financial year 2021/2022 and that this saving would be fully implemented as the Strategic service reviews were completed within the current financial year.

8. Living Wage Area Status for Highland Tuarastal Bith-beò

Declaration of Interest

Mr N McLean declared a financial interest in this item as Director of Geo-Rope Limited and, 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 and take no part in the discussion.

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

During discussion, Members raised the following issues:-

- it had to be highlighted that a living wage afforded a decent standard of living and this should be able to be attained by all Highland residents;
- there was evidence to prove that a living wage was beneficial for all, not least in terms of staff recruitment/retention and improved staff morale, productivity and positivity, and as such lessons had to be learned from elsewhere where necessary and engagement with businesses undertaken in order to develop an Action Plan in this regard;
- it was expected that terms of this report would be widely welcomed in that it conveyed an important message to the wider community that there was confidence in the Highlands;
- the Council, along with most of the major employers in the Highlands, was a living wage employer and it was of the utmost importance that encouragement was given to other companies in the area in this regard;
- the progress being made on this issue was welcomed, not least in terms of the need to try to ensure the provision of dignity for employees across the Highland area. In this respect, reference was made to a previous Member of the Council, Mr Richard Laird, who had consistently raised this issue and had championed disadvantaged residents not only in his own Ward but across the Highlands;
- the particular challenges posed in regard to seasonal work across the area had to be recognised;
- it was felt that the proposals in the report could help to address various issues associated with both the Covid-19 pandemic recovery and also any implications arising from the Brexit process across the area;
- thanks should be conveyed to Mr Gowans in particular for raising this issue initially through the City of Inverness Area Committee;
- whilst the need to encourage businesses across the area to become 'living wage employers' was supported, it had to be acknowledged that adopting these proposals in the post pandemic period might not be sustainable for all employers across the area at this time;
- in terms of the duty of care to all Highland residents, it was imperative to ensure the designation of 'living wage' status;
- there was a need to provide further information/clarification in respect of the current arrangements for the payment of employees by cash or card;
- it would be important to ensure that it was not just 'white collar' employers who were involved;
- in terms of the relative cost of living in more rural communities across the Highlands, there was a need for further work to be undertaken to establish whether it was possible to allocate a 'weighting' in this respect, similar to the 'weighting' currently in place for London;

- clarification was needed as to whether the proposals within the report would also apply to part-time contracts across the area;
- it was suggested that it should be queried as to whether there were any plans by the Scottish Government to look at the salary levels for Local Councillors in comparison with MSPs in the post pandemic period;
- the opportunities to be progressive had been highlighted by the proposals within the report and this was welcomed; and
- it was imperative that the Council demonstrated its full commitment to supporting hard working communities across the Highlands and the terms of this report conveyed that message of support for all.

Decision

Members **AGREED**:-

- (i) the proposed next steps set out in the report;
- (ii) that engagement be carried out with Living Wage Scotland and Dundee City Council to identify the opportunities and challenges in achieving Living Wage area status and to engage fully with businesses to ensure buy-in;
- (iii) that a bid for a dedicated Project Officer might be necessary to fully support the work; and
- (iv) that regular progress reports be brought back to the Council.

9. Levelling Up Fund and Community Renewal Fund Maoin Chothromachaidh

Declarations of Interest

Mr D Rixson and Ms N Sinclair declared non-financial interests in this item as the Secretary of the Mallaig Heritage Centre and Director of Wick Development Trust respectively but, having applied the test outlined in Paragraphs 5.2 and 5.3 of the Councillors' Code of Conduct, concluded that their interests did not preclude them from taking part in the discussion.

There had been circulated Report No. HC/13/21 dated 12 March 2021 by the Executive Chief Officer, Infrastructure and Environment.

During discussion, Members raised the following issues:-

- thanks should be conveyed to the Officers concerned for the work undertaken to date;
- contact was now being made with MPs and MSPs in relation to the issues/projects which had been detailed within the report and this would be continued in order that further action could now be taken, including submission of a Community Renewal bid;
- a Members' Seminar would also now be arranged and discussion undertaken with the Chairs of the Local Committees before bids were finalised and in this regard all Members of the Council were encouraged to submit advice and ideas to feed into this process in order to deliver positive change;
- clarification was needed in terms of what lobbying had been undertaken to date and specifically in the 18 month period prior to January 2021 as Borders Council was very similar and (in terms of the methodology which had been used) had been placed in the top band;

- on the basis that other Local Authorities (including Borders Council) appeared to have had more success, it was suggested that there was perhaps a need for a dedicated Policy & Research Team to be set up within Highland Council to anticipate and take forward future work in relation to the early submission of similar bids (including through more detailed research on methodologies/metrics to be used);
- it was noted that half of the projects which had been ranked as 'A' were in Inverness and had been given more detail than projects in other areas of the Highlands and it was hoped that this could be changed;
- in terms of the loss of EU funding, it had to be noted that this included ERDF funding (approximately £10m per year), European Social Fund (£4.5m per year), European Maritime & Fisheries Fund (£1.6m per year), Common Agricultural Policy (£43m per year in direct support and £28m per year in rural development grants), Horizon 2020 (£0.5m per year) and the LEADER Programme (£2.5m per year) which totalled approximately £90m per year and as such it was vital that action was taken to address the serious implications for the area;
- all Wards across the area would welcome additional investment and therefore needed further information on how to progress projects in this respect;
- in relation to the Levelling Up Fund (Scotland's share in the region of £432m) and the Community Renewal Fund (£200m for the whole of the United Kingdom – with Scotland's share approximately £17m/£18m and therefore realistic to assume a few hundred thousand pounds for the Highland area), it should be noted that the latter would act as a 'pilot' for the Shared Prosperity Fund. As such, there was no merit in arguing that the UK Government should have followed a different set of rules in terms of the methodology to be used and instead the case should be made that relevant/essential data for the Highland area had not been taken into account due to unavailability at the time but should be considered now;
- it appeared that the Highland Council had been effectively 'outmanoeuvred' by other Local Authorities and as such it was imperative that political differences were now set aside with all Members working together to work with MPs and MSPs in particular whenever and wherever necessary so that the best possible outcome could be achieved/delivered for all areas of the Highlands;
- the investment priorities which had already been set out in the report were welcomed and it was hoped that they could be expanded to include other areas wherever possible;
- it was noted that the Leader and the relevant Executive Chief Officer would attend future Local Committee meetings to hear about community priorities and this was welcomed;
- consideration also had to be given to farming priorities and to future action needed in that regard;
- there was a need to take account of outcomes from previous local Charrettes in order to guide future processes;
- as part of a future Ward management review, it would be essential to consider how 'shovel ready' bids at Ward/Area level could be in place and as such ready to be submitted as part of any future and similar processes, perhaps through the creation of an Area prospectus; and
- it was necessary to also acknowledge the Gaelic culture and its connection with all bids to be submitted by the Council.

Decision

Members **AGREED**:-

- (i) that the Council should continue to lobby for a different methodology on the metrics to be used for the priority areas for the Shared Prosperity Fund and that external analysis be carried out to strengthen the case in responding to the UK Government consultation proposed for later in the year;
- (ii) that bids be prepared for the Levelling Up Fund and the Community Renewal Fund and that external support be brought in to support the bid writing process;
- (iii) the proposed content of bids being considered as set out in Section 12 and 13 of the report, recognising the need for large scale projects that could be delivered within the spend period and that fitted with the criteria set by the UK Government;
- (iv) that Officers should continue with the preparation of the final bid submission, involving discussion with Area Chairs on an ongoing basis over the following month;
- (v) that an all Member Workshop be set up prior to the bids being submitted to report on progress and allow input to the detailed content of the bid submission;
- (vi) that, recognising the very challenging timescales to submit bids, the final bids be agreed by the Chair and Vice Chair of the Economy and Infrastructure Committee, in consultation with the Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure and Environment; and
- (vii) that a report on the final bid submission be brought back to the Council meeting on 24 June 2021 for homologation.

10. Deeds Executed
Sgriobhainnean 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 25 and 26 March 2021 was available on the Council's Website.

The meeting ended at 4.25pm.

The Highland Council

Minutes of Meeting of the **Communities and Place Committee** held **REMOTELY** on Wednesday 12 May 2021 at 11.30 am.

Present:

Mr G Adam	Mr A MacInnes
Mr B Allan	Mr D Macpherson
Mr R Balfour	Mr H Morrison
Mr J Bruce	Mrs M Paterson
Mr C Fraser	Mr I Ramon
Mr R Gale	Mr A Rhind
Mr J Gordon	Mrs T Robertson
Mr A Henderson	

Non-Members also present:

Mrs J Barclay	Mr B Lobban
Mr R Bremner	Mr J McGillivray
Mrs H Carmichael	Mr C Munro
Mrs M Davidson	Mr P Saggars
Mr J Finlayson	

In attendance:

Ms C McDiarmid, Executive Chief Officer Communities and Place
 Ms A Clark, Head of Policy, Communities and Place
 Ms C Campbell, Head of Performance and Resources, Communities and Place
 Mr A McKinnie, Senior Waste Manager, Communities and Place
 Mr A Yates, Environmental Health Manager, Communities and Place
 Mr P Mascarenhas, Community and Democratic Engagement Manager, Communities and Place
 Ms R MacKinnon, Principal Policy Officer – Equalities, Communities and Place
 Ms L Gray, Chief Registrar, Communities and Place
 Mr M Cooper, Transport and Logistics Manager, Communities and Place
 Mr S Graham, Project Manager, Communities and Place
 Ms E Barrie, Head of HR, People and ICT, Resources and Finance
 Mr M Mitchell, Service Finance Manager, Resources and Finance
 Miss J Maclennan, Principal Administrator, Performance and Governance
 Miss M Murray, Committee Administrator, Performance and Governance
 Miss M Zavarella, Committee Administrator, Performance and Governance

Also in attendance:

Mr D Wilson, Local Senior Officer, Scottish Fire and Rescue Service

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

Mr A Henderson in the Chair

Business

1. Apologies for Absence Leisgeulan

Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of Ms K Currie, Mr D MacLeod and Mr R MacWilliam.

2. Declarations of Interest Foillseachaidhean Com-pàirt

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

Item 4 – Mr A Henderson (non-financial)
Item 14 – Mr D Macpherson (non-financial)
Item 15 – Mr D Macpherson (non-financial)

3. Good News/Staff Achievements Naidheachdan Matha/Coileanaidhean Luchd-obrach

The Chair highlighted that the mobile Covid asymptomatic testing unit had been based at Council HQ for the past three weeks. 158 tests had been undertaken during that time and feedback from users of the facility had been very positive.

A smaller mobile unit was now in use and a third larger vehicle was nearing completion. All three units could be used for asymptomatic testing as well as supporting the NHS with the vaccination roll out programme.

Plans to take the mobile units out to Highland communities for asymptomatic testing were being worked on and locations would be identified on a weekly basis. Flexibility with planning was necessary to respond to requests from Public Health to attend to areas of concern at short notice, as well as to support the vaccination programme with mobile clinics.

A Community Testing Coordinator, funded by the Scottish Government, had been seconded to the team to manage the roll out of the testing schedule, ensure compliance with Scottish Government operating procedures and coordinate the mobile units between vaccination and testing deployment.

The model being used in Highland was now being looked at as the way forward for other local authorities.

The Committee **NOTED** the good news.

4. Community Asset Transfer Requests Iarrtasan Glusad So-mhaoin Coimhearsnachd

Declaration of Interest: Mr A Henderson declared a non-financial interest in this item as Chair of the B8008 Working Group but, having applied the test outlined in Paragraphs 5.2 and 5.3 of the Councillors' Code of Conduct, concluded that his interest did not preclude his involvement in the discussion.

There had been circulated Report No CP/11/21 dated 16 April 2021 by the Executive Chief Officer Communities and Place.

In response to a question, it was confirmed that the decision regarding the lease of Stac Pollaidh Car Park to Outdoor Access Trust for Scotland (OATS) was a matter for the Council, and information was provided on the legislative framework. Discussions had taken place with OATS and community groups over a number of months and officers were confident that the community supported the proposal, which would address a pressing problem.

The Committee:-

- (i) **AGREED** the lease of Tougal public toilets and car park to Road to the Isles Facilities Group, for no annual rental charge, subject to the terms of the transfer at section 2.1 of the report;
- (ii) **AGREED** the lease of Stac Pollaidh car park to Outdoor Access Trust for Scotland for £1 per annum, if asked, subject to the terms of the transfer at section 2.2 of the report;
- (iii) **AGREED** to homologate the decision by the Executive Chief Officer Communities and Place in consultation with the Chair of the Communities and Place Committee to vary terms of the economic development burden within the previously agreed asset transfer of Acharacle Community Centre, limiting it to five years in duration; and
- (iv) **NOTED** the statutory timescale for responding to these transfers required consideration at the strategic committee and future community asset transfer requests could be programmed into the Area Committee cycle in keeping with the changes to the Scheme of Delegation agreed at Council in March 2021. Area Chairs affected by the transfers included in the report had been consulted and were in agreement.

5. Progress report on the Framework for Community Participation and Involvement

Adhartas agus gnìomh bhon Fhrèam airson Com-pàirteachas Coimhearsnachd

There had been circulated No CP/12/21 dated 22 April 2021 by the Executive Chief Officer Communities and Place.

During discussion, the following issues were raised:-

- it was important to highlight that mental health conditions were predominantly non-visible disabilities, and mental health was on a spectrum;
- information was sought, and provided, as to where the 10 Community Support Coordinators would be based, how the posts were being funded and what would happen at the end of the temporary 12-month period; and
- there was overlap between Community Partnerships and Community Resilience Networks and the idea that some of them could be merged was welcomed. Information having been sought on the process, it was explained that it would be up to each area to determine whether to merge groups. The reference in the report related to Caithness, where the Community Partnership and Community Resilience Network had decided that it made sense at the present time given their shared priorities, and the learning from Caithness could be shared with other areas.

The Committee **NOTED**:-

- (i) the update against the Resilience Group Support Programme which included the ongoing weekly written and virtual briefings, the community resilience networks and the ongoing food support to community groups;
- (ii) the priorities identified in relation to developing sustainable models of food support in communities and the mental health and wellbeing resources under development to support individuals and community organisations;
- (iii) the update on the progress against the participation and engagement framework including the shift in timescales due to the latest lockdown period, with a renewed focus on engaging with equality groups as lockdown lifted;
- (iv) the recruitment of 10 Community Support Co-ordinators and the role these posts would have in supporting a better understanding of our communities and assisting in the identification of local priorities;
- (v) action underway on mental health and wellbeing supports including new signposting of resources, training and other tools for community groups, and that a Member seminar with NHS Highland was programmed for June 2021 with invites to be issued; and
- (vi) an update would be reported to the August meeting of this committee.

6. Equality Mainstreaming and Equality Outcomes Report 2021 Amalachadh Co-ionannachd agus Toraidhean Cho-ionannachdan

There had been circulated Report No CP/13/21 dated 24 April 2021 by the Executive Chief Officer, Communities and Place.

During discussion, the following issues were raised:-

- in relation to Figure 11 – the distribution of all employees by ethnic group in comparison with the Highland population, the figure of 2653 attributed to All Employees was questioned given that the Council had in the region of 10,000 employees. The Head of HR, People and ICT undertook to check the figures and report back to Councillor T Robertson; and
- with regard to bullying, the importance of improving channels of communication between employees, managers and personnel teams was emphasised, and the fact that the Council now had a team of trained staff to deal with concerns about bullying was welcomed.

The Committee **AGREED** the Equality Outcome and Mainstreaming Progress Report for the Highland Council (and incorporating the Education Authority and Licensing Board) as detailed in the report at Appendix 1.

7. Burial grounds and crematorium management rules Cladhan agus riaghailtean stiùiridh luathreachain

There had been circulated Report No CP/14/21 dated 24 April 2021 by the Executive Chief Officer, Communities and Place.

During discussion, the following issues were raised:-

- it would be helpful if people received a copy of the management rules when purchasing a lair;
- there were many diverse religions in Highland, each with different ceremonies when loved ones departed and it was necessary to have equal respect for them

all. It having been queried whether this could be included in the management rules, it was explained that there was a clear statement in the bereavement services policy document that such services were for all religious groups and that staff would work with any group if they had any particular requirements. The need to publicise both the policy and the management rules, including on the Council's website, was recognised and it was confirmed that this would be taken forward;

- given the Highland tradition of having pipers at funerals and the comfort this gave people, the deletion of the rule requiring prior notice to play music was welcomed. Similarly, Members welcomed the deletion of the rule requiring prior notice of a large number of attendees;
- in relation to breaches of the management rules, concern was expressed regarding the provision of written warnings and it was queried whether a less formal approach could be taken. In response, it was confirmed that the need to use tact, sensitivity and local knowledge to make an informal approach in the first instance would be included in the guidance to staff. However, it was helpful to set out how matters would proceed on a more formal basis if necessary;
- reference was made to instances of people being unable to purchase lairs due to capacity issues and information was sought, and provided, on the policy in that regard and whether funding was in place to extend cemeteries;
- a report on cemetery capacity across Highland having been sought, it was confirmed that it was intended to present a report to each Area Committee on capacity in local burial grounds;
- it was questioned how the rule regarding burial ground car parks being for legitimate cemetery users was going to be policed;
- whilst recognising the need to prevent hazards to grounds maintenance staff, placing memorial items on graves gave a lot of comfort to people;
- whilst the management rules indicated that some lairs could hold up to three adult coffins, it was understood that it was generally a maximum of two. It was suggested that exceptions should be made in certain circumstances – eg where parents had lost an older/teenage child and wished them to be interred in the same lair as them. Similarly, where a cemetery was nearing capacity and lairs could not be pre-purchased, it was suggested that exceptions should be made if a young person died so that their parents could be buried with/next to them. The Environmental Health Manager undertook to seek further information regarding three-coffin lairs. In relation to the exceptional circumstances described, his understanding was that staff would do everything possible to accommodate such requests but he undertook to confirm the position;
- it was important to recognise the great work carried out by burial ground staff in all weather conditions and the respectful way in which they presented the graves. Members also expressed appreciation to administrative and managerial bereavement services staff for the sensitive role they played;
- the management rules should be communicated at the earliest stage through undertakers, chaplains, celebrants etc;
- concern having been expressed that Tore Cemetery was overrun with rabbits and the need to take preventative steps having been emphasised, the Environmental Health Manager undertook to raise this with the relevant team;
- Members commended the Environmental Health Manager and his team for the work that had been done in respect of the management rules;
- some coastal burial grounds could not accommodate more than one coffin in a lair due to the water table, and it was suggested that it should be highlighted to people that some lairs could accommodate two people but, if they chose to be

buried in another part of Highland, they might have to purchase two lairs side by side; and

- reference was made to the ongoing cost implications of maintaining old church/burial ground walls, and the associated impact on the funding available for new burial grounds.

The Committee:-

- (i) **NOTED** the responses to the public consultation;
- (ii) **AGREED** the revised management rules for burials grounds as set out in Appendix 1 of the report should come into force on 1st June 2021 and should, unless revoked, continue in force for a period of 10 years from that date;
- (iii) **AGREED** the revised management rules for Inverness Crematorium as set out in Appendix 2 of the report should come into force on 1 June 2021 and should, unless revoked, continue in force for a period of 10 years from that date;
- (iv) **AGREED** to delegate powers to the Bereavement Services Manager to amend the rules for operational or legislative purposes; and
- (v) **AGREED** that, in keeping with legislation, the next formal review would be undertaken in 2030.

8. **SFRS annual performance report – 1 April 2020 to 31 March 2021** **Aithisg choileanaidh leth-bhliadhna SFRS**

There had been circulated the Local Performance Report for the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service for the period April 2020 to March 2021.

During a verbal update, all key performance indicators outlined in the report were reviewed and context provided in all areas. It was highlighted that Covid-19 affected the ability of the service to get into schools, businesses and homes, though a partnership-working approach had been maintained throughout. It was explained that once increased engagement was possible more work would be done in schools regarding anti-social behaviour fires.

During discussion, the following issues were considered:-

- Member appreciation was expressed for Scottish Fire and Rescue Service's (SFRS) involvement in Covid-19 testing;
- Members praised the SFRS report and results following a challenging year with the pandemic;
- in response to a question about the reduction in chimney fires, it was suggested that people were choosing different methods for heating such as gas and electrical;
- regarding fire staffing in rural communities, it was explained that a local focus was being used to determine where the most challenging stations were and how online or visual engagement tools could be utilised to encourage a career or volunteer work with SFRS and highlighting the diversity of the service;
- in response to a question, it was confirmed that Road Traffic Collisions were very high in Badenoch and Strathspey and this was predominantly associated with the A9;
- an update was requested on SFRS involvement regarding falls in homes and it was explained that there was a trial occurring in the Northeast. However, despite national engagement, there was no agreement reached on this matter;

- the delivery of change management and the updated business model in the SFRS was commended; and
- regarding deliberate fire setting in Inshes, police patrols had been increased and it was hoped that, once in-person school engagement was able to resume, this would allow an opportunity for ongoing discussions with young people about being responsible citizens, learning fire skills and safety and getting a Youth Volunteer Scheme launched.

The Committee scrutinised and **NOTED** Local Performance Report for the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service for the period April 2020 to March 2021.

9. Registration of Births, Deaths & Marriages – Annual report Clàrachadh air Breith, Bàs & Pòsadh – Aithisg bhliadhnail

There had been circulated Report No CP/16/21 dated 24 April 2021 by the Executive Chief Officer, Communities and Place.

During discussion, the following issues were raised:-

- information was sought, and provided, as to where burial and registration records were kept;
- lessons could be learned from the Registration Service which had the customer at the centre and was efficient, effective, and caring. Death registrations, in particular, could be difficult for Registrars to deal with and families had high praise for the sensitivity shown;
- despite the pandemic, there had been a reduction in the number of deaths since 2018. In relation to the figures for 2020, it was confirmed that they were accurate but had not yet been examined by the District Examiner;
- Registrars, many of whom worked in Service Points in addition to their registration duties, fulfilled numerous commitments within their working week;
- reference was made to the rise in weddings, particularly in Skye and Lochalsh, and it was suggested that simple things, such as replacing the carpet at Tigh-na-Sgire where a lot of weddings took place, would make a big difference;
- information was sought, and provided, on what investment the Registration received in terms of staff and whether there were any offices in Highland that dealt solely with registration;
- appreciation was expressed for Registrars who, throughout the pandemic, had had to deal with families whose loved ones had died as a result of Covid, and had done, and continued to do, an incredible job;
- concern was expressed regarding the downward trend in the number of births in Highland and the associated impact on the sustainability of schools in sparsely populated areas and future tax revenue. It was suggested that it was necessary to build more homes, as people would not start a family until they had their own home, and do everything possible to support families;
- on the point being raised, it was confirmed that the figures in the report were specific to the Highland Council area, not the wider NHS Highland area;
- clarification was sought, and provided, regarding the introduction of mixed sex civil partnerships; and
- in relation to Appendix 1 of the report, an overview was sought, and provided, of the type of corrections carried out.

The Committee **NOTED**:-

- (i) the Registration team of 41.82 Full Time Equivalent (FTE) worked across 22 locations recording around 6000 life events in the Highlands usually comprising around 2000 births, 2500 deaths and 1500 marriages and civil partnerships each year, with around half of these marriages and civil partnerships undertaken by the team;
- (ii) the team undertook other important discretionary and income generating tasks including citizenship ceremonies (96 in 2019), the Identity and Passport Service (800 interviews in 2019/20) and the Family History Search Facility (around 600 annually);
- (iii) significant disruption across all Registrar services occurred in 2020, notably the temporary suspension of birth registration, marriages and civil partnerships and other discretionary services. The backlog of 400 birth registrations built up during the first lockdown was cleared in 4 months of recommencing the service. Arrangements for marriages and civil partnerships continued to evolve. Remote death registration had been introduced through statute and this had proven to be more convenient to bereaved families;
- (iv) sadly, there had been 132 deaths registered in Highland where Covid had been recorded on the death certificate from 1.4.20 to 26.4.21;
- (v) staff had adjusted well to the new ways of working and had ensured Covid secure arrangements were in place for the safety of staff and customers. A review of incentives to encourage more staff to undertake the Certificate of Proficiency in the Law and Practice in Registration in Scotland was underway;
- (vi) there were potential risks associated with achieving the £533,240 income target for 2021/22. This would be monitored in-year and any budget pressures would be reported;
- (vii) service developments underway included preparing for mixed sex civil partnerships from end June 2021 and the new requirements for marriage visas for EU citizens from July 2021. Along with other functions in the Communities and Place (C&P) Service, the team would contribute to the Communities and Place Service Performance Framework to be developed in 2021/22 drawing on a range of data, external reports and a programme of self-evaluation;
- (viii) other potential developments might arise from legislation to enable remote or virtual appointments for both birth and death registration. A new project to digitise burial records was currently being scoped. Options for undertaking a new project to identify new products and services to celebrate and commemorate life events were being considered;

and scrutinised and **NOTED** performance based on the most recently published data which showed that for 2019:

- a. NRS examination of information recorded confirmed 97.4% accuracy, close to the national figure of 97.9% and was well placed within our family benchmark group. The examiner's report for each site was shown at Appendix 1 of the report. As well as providing assurance, this helped to identify good practice and areas for improvement across the region;
- b. the Council's performance was particularly strong given the relative resource invested in the service, as it was placed in the top quartile of all Councils for low cost (ranked 3rd lowest for net expenditure and 8th lowest for gross expenditure) and ranked 2nd lowest cost within its family group of 8 Councils, based on Local Financial Returns data for 2018/19;
- c. in the most recent survey of the Council's Citizen's Panel, the service had been ranked 3rd highest for satisfaction out of 46 Council services, with a net satisfaction score of 73% and this had been consistently high for the past 5 years; and

- d. the team continued to achieve death registration in less time than the statutory period of 8 days of the medical certificate being received from the Certifying Doctor, with 2 days usually achieved.

10. Communities and Place Directorate Service Plan Plana Seirbheis

There had been circulated Report No CP/17/21 dated 28 April 2021 by the Executive Chief Officer Communities and Place.

The Committee **AGREED** the Directorate Service Plan for Communities and Place, noting the indicative budget at the present time and that it was subject to review with any changes required reported back to Committee.

11. Progress report on implementing the Visitor Management Plan Aithisg adhartais mu bhuileachadh Plana Stiùiridh Luchd-tadhail

There had been circulated Report No CP/18/21 dated 23 April 2021 by the Executive Chief Officer, Communities and Place.

During discussion, the following issues were considered:-

- frequency of waste collection was key to avoid excess waste near to filled bins;
- in response to a question about utilising Community Payback for communities that were supporting litter picks and roadside litter clearing, it was explained that this service was not fully functioning under Covid-19 compliance;
- it was important that visitors to the area were treating the local community with respect;
- appreciation was expressed to the team for their hard work;
- regarding comfort schemes, there would be continued press releases, social media and support from Members in communicating to their local communities the benefits in spreading the word;
- in response to a question, it was explained that seasonally enhanced services would be provided allowing seasonal staff to free up core staff to assist with additional waste collection in hot spot areas;
- it was positive to see communities embracing the comfort scheme;
- in response to a comment about the need to have a designated park and area for travelling families it was explained that it was a housing service matter;
- it was encouraging to see the Council realising how important conveniences were for tourism;
- it was reassuring to see the Muir of Ord toilets reopening and in response to a question about The Muir Hub reopening, the Officer agreed to determine the response and reply to the Local Member (Councillor Margaret Paterson) directly;
- the Visitor Management Plan was timely and there were already tourists coming into the area. It was positive that campsites were open though there were already some overflowing bins and human waste challenges;
- the Countryside Ranger employed in Sheildaig had already been active in managing a few situations and it was positive to see that the impact that the Ranger service had already made. Appreciation was expressed to all those responsible for the planning and delivery;

- in response to a comment, it was explained that the Countryside Rangers were not managed by the Service but there were 17 Countryside Rangers employed to help clear any debris and mess; and
- the Comfort Scheme Scoring Matrix was excellent and a good model for anyone looking at joining the scheme.

The Committee **NOTED**:-

- (i) the planned operational deployment of additional resources that year of £60k for public convenience provision by growing our comfort scheme of 37 providers and investing in six of the Council's 75 public conveniences as described in paragraphs 5.5 and 5.6 of the report;
- (ii) the planned deployment of £180k for waste management through procuring and siting additional waste bins and increasing the frequency of collections in known hot spots supported by 8 new seasonal staff and supporting community litter picks as described in paragraphs 6.1 to 6.4 of the report;
- (iii) engagement with Members was underway through Ward Business Meetings and would continue throughout the season to deal with service issues and opportunities arising;
- (iv) that the service would apply for Better Places funding administered by NatureScot to enable further response;
- (v) in responding to issues as they arise this could create budget pressures. To date this included additional costs of roadside litter clearing. Any pressures would be monitored, reported and mitigated where possible and if necessary, opportunities for further investment would be submitted as part of the 2nd tranche of one-off investment possible at the Council meeting in June 2021;
- (vi) the service would contribute to the proposed Tourism Infrastructure Plan and this would include the support from the community asset transfer process and reviewing public conveniences previously regarded as surplus to requirements or unaffordable to improve/repair;
- (vii) the service would continue to contribute to partnership and resilience meetings throughout the season; and
- (viii) the Environmental Health team would continue to support business in the tourism sector and in their Covid compliance.

12. Developing the approach to decarbonising the Large Good Vehicle Fleet Dì-carbonachadh a' Chabhlaich Thruim

There had been circulated Report No CP/19/21 dated 23 April 2021 by the Executive Chief Officer, Communities and Place.

Concern was expressed about the 2030 targets for the Large Good Vehicle Fleet as any vehicle purchased would not get to end of its life before it was out of range. In response it was explained that one of the challenges was that there was no full life costing available on hydrogen vehicles and residual value at the end of the period was unclear.

The Committee **NOTED**:-

- (i) the national target set by local government to decarbonise fleets of cars and light commercial vehicles by 2025 and large goods vehicles by 2030 with the Council's target for the region to be carbon neutral by 2025;

- (ii) from 2012/13 – 2019/20, emissions arising from Council fleet vehicles' use of petrol, diesel and gas oil had decreased from 9,166tCO₂e to an estimated 8,454tCO₂e, a reduction of just under 8%. There had been a corresponding reduction in consumption of diesel by the fleet of approximately 315,000 litres, or 10%, over the same timeframe;
- (iii) the Council had taken part in a study with other Councils and public sector partners to assess the optimum vehicle type for our various operations. This showed a shift to EV and hydrogen fuelled vehicles would be suitable for operations, although some petrol/diesel vehicles were likely still to be required due to distances travelled and rural challenges;
- (iv) the challenges around greening the LGV fleet were:
 - a. higher costs of procuring Ultra Low Emission Vehicles (ULEV) LGV. The cost of LGVs powered by electric and hydrogen remained prohibitively high. Generally, electric vehicle (EV) costs were double and hydrogen costs were treble the cost of diesel vehicles;
 - b. many manufactures were still at the prototype stage and this made whole life costing, including estimating residual value of vehicles, difficult to predict;
 - c. while costs were expected to fall as technology improved and take up increased, budget provision and external funding were not yet identified to meet decarbonisation targets. However, work was underway to quantify the costs for a phased replacement programme and to identify all potential funding sources to inform future budget setting; and
 - d. identifying a sustainable and secure supply of hydrogen was at an early stage. Potential providers were testing the market, trying to understand and estimate demand, before committing to investing in the region, although much work was being done by various organisations to produce, transfer and supply hydrogen; and
- (v) the opportunities being pursued to support greening the LGV fleet were:
 - e. through the Council's Transformation Programme, a 2-year post of Climate Change Coordinator (Transport) had been approved and was being recruited to bring in a level of expertise, and a programme management approach, approach including lobbying, to take the changes to fleet forward. The post holder would sit within the Climate Change and Energy Team to ensure decarbonising the fleet sat within the wider Council climate change strategy;
 - f. funding from Transport Scotland was provided to assist in installing infrastructure for publicly accessible charging and dedicated fleet charging. This amounted to £75,000 for fleet infrastructure in 2020. Implementing this would be an early priority for the post above.
 - g. learning from Aberdeen City Council as a European leader in hydrogen ambition and accepting their offer of supporting the retrofit of hydrogen fuel tanks to Highland Council vehicles, depending on national funding being made available;
 - h. building and developing partnerships with commercial operators and fuel providers to ensure the ULEV option was a viable one moving forward;
 - i. taking a joint approach to procurement with partner organisations in terms of vehicle demand to help the supply chain with manufacturers and fuel providers and through our shared procurement service with Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire Councils; and
 - j. work was underway to develop a hydrogen strategy for the Council and the links were being made with the feasibility into an Energy from Waste

plant including the potential to convert energy generated to hydrogen for Council and other fleet use as part of the development of a hydrogen strategy for the region.

**13. Minutes of Waste Strategy Working Group
Geàrr-chunntas Buidheann-obrach Ro-innleachd Sgudail**

The Minutes of the Waste Strategy Working Group held on 23 April 2021 were **APPROVED**.

**14. Waste Projects Update
Fios às Ùr mu Phròiseactan Sgudail**

Declaration of Interest: Mr D Macpherson declared a non-financial interest in this item on the grounds that a relative owned one of the potential sites for a waste transfer station in Fort William, and left the meeting for the duration of the item.

There had been circulated Report No CP/20/21 dated 23 April 2021 by the Executive Chief Officer Communities and Place.

The Chair had met the manager of one of the sites for the Fort William Transfer Station earlier in the week and, as discussion evolved, it did look like the Lochaber Aggregate site might be offered.

The Committee **NOTED**:-

- (i) the positive progress in awarding two contracts to construct waste transfer stations in Inverness and Aviemore;
- (ii) the continuing efforts of officers to provide the opportunity to develop similar infrastructure in Fort William;
- (iii) the parallel efforts of officers to secure a new lease for the Household Waste Recycling Centre in Fort William; and
- (iv) that the Members' Waste Strategy Working Group was updated on these matters on 23rd April 2021, as reported separately in the minute to this Committee meeting.

**15. Approach to appraising the options for the long-term management of residual waste
Dòigh-obrach a thaobh a bhith a' measadh nan roghainnean airson rianachd fad-ùine sgudail iarmadaich**

Declaration of Interest: Mr D Macpherson declared a non-financial interest in this item on the grounds that a relative owned one of the potential sites for a waste transfer station in Fort William, and left the meeting for the duration of the item.

There had been circulated Report No CP/21/21 dated 19 April 2021 by the Executive Chief Officer Communities and Place.

Whilst this was a major piece of work, it would also bring many opportunities. However; assurances were sought, and provided, that it would be possible to connect the power generated to the grid. In this connection, the Chair advised Members that

Scottish and Southern Electricity Networks was in the process of designing a substation.

The Committee **NOTED**:-

- (i) the Council currently invests approximately £11m per annum on waste disposal, including internal, external and landfill costs. Compared to other Councils our costs were relatively high (Highland Council were ranked 20/32 for low cost performance), the amount of household waste per person sent to landfill was the 2nd highest of all Scottish Councils at 0.27 tonnes per person. This created 297,808 tonnes of CO2 emissions and placed Highland Council 5th highest for carbon impact per person, with 1.26 tonnes of CO2 emitted per person. (Source: SEPA, Scottish Household Waste – Summary Data 2019);
- (ii) costs had already increased this year with additional budget of £405k agreed at the Council meeting in March 2021. These would continue to increase annually unless a sustainable long-term solution could be found for Highland residual waste;
- (iii) four studies had now been concluded and three options remained for managing local authority collected waste: continue landfilling; contract with service providers in other parts of Scotland or in England to receive and treat Highland waste; or develop an Energy-from-Waste (EfW) facility to serve the Highlands;
- (iv) appraising these options would involve cost comparisons, with assumptions clarified given uncertainty on prices, markets and funding models, along with wider legislative and climate change duties and the scope for the Council to derive value from regional waste, contributing to economic recovery, asset management and poverty reduction;
- (v) Members of the Waste Strategy Group would participate in study visits to one or two operating EfW sites in Tayside and Lothian as soon as possible and ideally during June if that could be made Covid secure; and
- (vi) alongside the study visits a desk-top review of how EfW plants in the UK had been funded to date would be commissioned. Different funding models and external funding could make this option more feasible or affordable and needed to be clarified;

and **AGREED**:-

- (vii) Appendix 1 of the report, agreed by the Member Waste Strategy Group, which set out:
 - a. the framework for critically appraising the pros and cons of the options; and
 - b. the proposed timeline for governance this year to decide on the preferred option.

16. Recycling Improvement Fund **Maoin Leasachadh Ath-chuairteachaidh**

There had been circulated Report No CP/22/21 dated 23 April 2021 by the Executive Chief Officer Communities and Place.

The Committee **NOTED**:-

- (i) that the Recycling Improvement Fund had been launched by the Scottish Government with the first call for Expressions of Interest (EOI) by 19 May 2021. The fund was a five-year programme of £70m and it would operate on a rolling basis for Expressions of Interest (EOI) forms and Stage 2 applications from local authorities;
- (ii) the objectives of the fund, the funding availability and eligibility and the process for applying as described in sections 5-7 of the report;
- (iii) the Council required support to improve recycling infrastructure given relative performance on recycling rates, waste landfilled and associated green-house gas emissions. The public showed high satisfaction with refuse collection and recycling facilities and they were regarded among the most important services provided to the public. If successful in gaining funding the Council would be able to improve services further, particularly in areas where services could be levelled up;
- (iv) the initial list of proposals as set out in section 8 of the report. These were considered in the Members' Waste Strategy Working Group on 23 April 2021, as reported separately in the minute to this Committee meeting. Feedback from the Committee had been sought on the initial list of areas for improvement as set out in paragraph 8.1 of the report. Not all would be ready for the first EOI;
- (v) discussion with Members in Ward Business meetings would be programmed over the period of the Fund to consider other potential service improvements and discussion on developing any stage 2 applications; and
- (vi) the Waste Management team would complete and submit the first initial EOI that was consistent with the eligibility criteria for the fund, with future updates brought to the Committee.

17. Response to the Scottish Government's discussion paper on the criminal law dealing with dangerous dogs
Freagairt do Phàipear Deasbaid Riaghaltas na h-Alba mun Lagh Eucorach a' Dèiligeadh ri Coin Chunnartach

There had been circulated Report No CP/23/21 dated 23 April 2021 by the Executive Chief Officer Communities and Place.

The Committee:-

- (i) **NOTED** the background information on dangerous dogs, dog control and roles of the Council and Police Scotland; and
- (ii) **AGREED** to homologate the attached response of the report to the Scottish Government consultation on the criminal law dealing with dangerous dogs.

The meeting ended at 3.50 pm

**The Highland Council
Sutherland County Committee**

Minutes of Meeting of the Sutherland County Committee held remotely on Monday 17 May 2021 at 10.30am.

Present:

Mr R Gale

Mr J McGillivray

Mrs D Mackay

Officials in attendance:

Ms F Duncan, Executive Chief Officer, Health and Social Care

Mr P Tomalin, Ward Manager, Communities and Place

Ms A Donald, North Area Manager, Education & Learning

Mr N Ross, Acting Headteacher, Dornoch 3-18 Campus, Education & Learning

Mr P Mascarenhas, Community and Democratic Engagement Manager, Communities and Place

Mr E McIntosh, Localism and Engagement Coordinator, Communities and Place

Mr J Holden, Housing Manager, Housing and Property

Mrs M Grant, Principal Housing Officer, Housing and Property

Mr C Sharp, Repairs Manager, Housing and Property

Ms S Murdoch, Common Good Fund Officer, Performance and Governance

Mr K Forbes, Property Manager, Infrastructure and Environment

Ms A Macrae, Committee Administrator, Performance & Governance

Also in Attendance:

Inspector J Thomson, Police Scotland

Mr R Gale in the Chair

**1. Apologies for Absence
Leisgeulan**

Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of Ms K Currie, Mr H Morrison and Ms L Munro.

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

There were no declarations of interest.

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

There had been circulated Report No SCC/06/21 by the North Area Commander.

In discussion, Members thanked Inspector Thomson and officers for all the work undertaken in the area and raised the following issues:-

- an update was sought and provided on the Police Scotland's response to the increased volume of traffic on the North Coast 500, including the provision for enhanced and targeted patrols and prevention and intervention actions with visitors;
- an explanation was sought and provided in relation to the figures shown for the detection rates with regard to theft by housebreaking in the area;
- clarification was sought and provided on the process for dealing with anti-social behaviour cases in the area involving the owners of private properties. The Inspector referred to the challenges in this regard and advised she would follow up on this matter;
- confirmation was sought and provided that illegal parking in cemetery car parks by visitors was a matter for the Council rather than the Police, the former having more enforcement powers; and
- confirmation was sought that Police Scotland and the Council worked jointly in relation to the removal of unlicensed cars parked in public spaces, the former having the enforcement powers to remove these vehicles.

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

4. Dornoch 3-18 Campus Overview Foir-shealladh air Campus 3-18 Dhòrnaich

There had been circulated Report No SCC/07/21 by the Executive Chief Officer Education and Learning.

The Acting Head Teacher, Dornoch Academy, provided a further update in relation to the Campus and in particular the return to schools experience, the current focus on senior phase pupils and the ongoing cross school and sector moderation being undertaken, the progress being made in relation to attainment and the focus on health and wellbeing. The Campus was committed to avoiding exclusions and on behaviour management and attendance was in line with other Highland schools. He also provided more detailed information on the 100% figures shown for leavers and positive destinations.

In discussion, Members raised the following issues:-

- an explanation was sought and provided on the range of factors taken into account in the assessment of the suitability and condition of Dornoch Academy's buildings, confirmation being provided that it was considered the building was fit for purpose;
- the suitability of the buildings at Dornoch Academy would be enhanced by the proposed investment in the tennis court/multi games area to be located to the rear of the School, and the fact the Council would take on responsibility for these facilities was welcomed.
- in addition, lobbying had been initiated to have a sports centre built in Dornoch through community renewable monies which were to become available, details of which were provided;
- the figures shown in the report for positive destinations was welcomed and further detail was sought and provided in relation to figures shown for 'unemployed and seeking'; and

- confirmation was sought and provided that it was not anticipated the peak in Dornoch Primary School's roll at Primary 4 level would create any issues going forward.

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

**5. Community Asset Transfer Requests
Glusad So-mhaoin Coimhearsnachd**

There had been circulated Report No SCC/08/21 by the Executive Chief Officer Communities and Place.

Members welcomed the recommendations in the report as a positive development. The Kyle of Sutherland Development Trust had an excellent track record in delivering projects and the proposal provided an opportunity to provide a quality facility for locals and visitors.

In relation to the resource implications, an explanation was sought and provided in relation to the net saving to the Council arising from the sale of the site. In addition, it was confirmed that if Members agreed to the sale, all responsibility for the site would transfer to the Trust.

The Committee **APPROVED** the sale of South Bonar Public Toilets, Picnic Area and Car Park to the Kyle of Sutherland Development Trust for £1, if asked on the terms outlined in the report.

**6. Housing Performance Report - 1 April 2020 to 31 March 2021
Aithisg Dèanadais a thaobh Taigheadais – 1 Giblean 2020 gu 31 Màrt 2021**

There had been circulated Report No SCC/09/21 by the Executive Chief Officer Housing and Property.

The Chair advised that Mr J Holden, Housing Manager, was retiring in the near future, and on behalf the Committee conveyed thanks for his many years of service with the Council and wished him a long and happy retirement.

In discussion, Members raised the following issues:-

- the Housing Team be thanked for the work undertaken with tenants in Sutherland;
- concern at the level of increase in rent arrears shown and the impact of deferred rent payments as a result of universal credit, on the basis this could skew the figures. It was confirmed the figures for rent arrears represented a snapshot in time, and were subject to change on a weekly basis and details were provided on the most up to date figures as of the previous week;
- an explanation was sought and provided on the figures shown in Appendix 1 in relation to rent collected as a % of rent due in Sutherland; and
- information was sought on the Council house waiting list for the IV25 postcode. It was confirmed this information would be provided to Mr J McGillivray outwith the meeting.

The Committee **NOTED** the information provided on housing performance in the period from 1 April 2020 to 31 March 2021 as detailed.

7. Dornoch Common Good - Consultation on proposal to dispose, by lease, and changes of use of Common Good land at Dornoch Links to Royal Dornoch Golf Club
Maoin Math Coitcheann Dhòrnaich – Co-chomhairle mu mholadh airson toirt seachad, tro aonta-màil, agus atharrachaidhean air cleachdadh fearann Maoin Mhaith aig Fighdeach Dhòrnaich gu Club Goilf Rìoghail Dhòrnaich

There had been circulated Report No SCC/10/21 by the Executive Chief Officer Communities and Place and Executive Chief Officer Finance and Resources.

The Common Good Fund Officer advised of an amended to Appendix 1 to correct an inaccuracy included at paragraph 2(b) in relation to the rationale for the rent proposed. She explained that no visitor levy was now proposed and this section would be amended to clarify this and also the calculation of the leasehold asset, the proposed split of the rent into two parts as an incentive for the golf club in agreeing lease terms, and the likely level of rent if the new clubhouse was not built.

In discussion, Members raised the following issues:-

- this had been a challenging negotiation and consultation process and officers were commended on the work they had undertaken on the lease;
- support for the proposal and the benefits this prestigious facility would bring to Dornoch and the wider area;
- an explanation was sought and provided in relation to the fact it was understood no rent would be payable if visitor numbers fell below the threshold point;
- in regard to the above, concern was expressed at the anomaly this created in the treatment of other existing Dornoch Common Good tenants if they were experiencing difficulties generating income and possible legal challenges that may ensue;
- Dornoch Area Community Council were content with the phrasing of the proposed new lease terms as set in Appendix 2; and
- It was important that the change of use of the bowling club and release of the tennis courts translated into funding of £100k for a new sports facility at Dornoch Academy. The fact the Council would be taking full responsibility for this new sports facility was welcomed.

* Thereafter, the Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the outcome of the consultation process undertaken as contained in the analysis at **Appendix 1**;
- ii. **APPROVED** the responses to the issues raised in connection with the proposal as outlined in the table at paragraph 2 (b) of **Appendix 1, as amended**;

- iii. **NOTED** the estimated value of RDGC against the full value of Dornoch Common Good Fund will mean it must be referred to a meeting of full Council for a decision;
- iv. **AGREED** that a recommendation should be made to full Council to approve the proposal to dispose, by lease, of the area of Dornoch Links to RDGC;
- v. **AGREED** that a recommendation should be made to full Council to approve the proposals to change the use of part of the land to allow construction of a new clubhouse and part of the Bowling Club land and tennis court for improved access and parking’
- vi. **NOTED** that, if agreed, it will be necessary to seek Sheriff Court consent because the land is classed as inalienable; and
- vii. **NOTED** that other permissions may be required relating to planning however, this is a separate process to that required under Community Empowerment legislation.

8. Minutes Geàrr-chunntas

There had been circulated and **NOTED** Minutes of the Sutherland County Committee held on 1 March 2021 and 1 April 2021, which were approved by the Council on 25 March 2021 and 13 May 2021 respectively.

Arising, the Chair referred to ongoing issues with food, fuel and other types of poverty in Sutherland and proposed that this be included as a standing item on future agendas.

The Committee **AGREED** that ‘poverty in Sutherland’ be included as a standing item on future agendas.

The meeting closed at 12.15pm.

The Highland Council

Minutes of Meeting of the **Gaelic Committee** held **Remotely** on Tuesday 18 May 2021 at 10.30 am.

Present:

Mr G Adam	Mr A MacInnes
Mrs I Campbell	Mr G MacKenzie
Miss J Campbell	Mr C Munro
Mr J Gordon	Mrs M Paterson
Mr A Henderson	Mr D Rixson

Non-Member also present:

Mr J Finlayson

In attendance:

Ms K Lackie, Executive Chief Officer – Performance and Governance
 Ms L Walker, Gaelic Development Manager
 Ms J MacDonald, Senior Gaelic Translation Officer
 Mr I Jackson, Education Officer
 Mr R Mackay, Development Officer
 Ms M A MacLeod Mitchell, Gaelic Development Officer
 Miss J MacLennan, Principal Administrator

Also in attendance:-

Mr J Graham, Chief Executive Officer, An Comunn Gàidhealach
 Mr A Campbell, President, An Comunn Gàidhealach

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 C Munro in the Chair

Preliminaries

Prior to the commencement of formal business, the Chair conveyed the following items of good news:-

- Emma Roddick, a member of the Gaelic Committee, had been elected to the Scottish Parliament on 6 May 2021. The Chair, on behalf of the Committee, extended his best wishes to her;
- an online information session on Gaelic Medium Education for parents had been held in March. This had provided an opportunity to hear from Antonella Sorace, Professor of Developmental Linguistics at the University of Edinburgh. A recording had been made and was available for schools to share with their parent communities. The session had concluded with a family ceilidh and sing-along;
- Fèis Rois was part of the Highland Culture Collective, a national pilot programme to establish creative networks. Highland Council had a long-standing partnership relationship with Fèis Rois and was pleased to see the creation of an artist-in-residence who would focus on young Gaelic learners whose access to Gaelic

beyond the classroom had been impacted when schools were closed during the pandemic;

- Dunvegan Primary School was enjoying their new Gaelic Sgoil-àraich.
- brothers Alasdair and Ruairidh Macleod, pupils at Bun-Sgoil Ghàidhlig Inbhir Nis, were recently mascots for Inverness Caledonian Thistle Football Club and had read out the team sheet in Gaelic;
- the following Highland winners of the 2021 FilmG awards were congratulated:-
 - Staffin Primary Pupils Jonathan MacDonald and Lachlann MacLeod won the People's Choice and the FilmG Gaelic awards for their film 'Thairis na Maidne', a take on the morning news programme on Radio Nan Gaidheal (Aithris Na Maidne). Jonathan also won the award for Best Performance;
 - Craighill Primary School, Tain, won two awards including Best Youth Group Film and Best Film for their 'Na Cèicean Blasta, a take on Little Red Riding Hood;
 - Best Documentary, 'Bhon Làimh Chun a' Bheòil', was won by Eoin Cuimeanach, a sixth-year pupil at Sgoil Chiùil na Gàidhealtachd in Plockton;
 - Ullapool High School pupils Finlay MacDonald and Silas Brown from Achiltibuie were awarded the Best Production category for 'Claidheamh Cutach'. Also a pupil at Ullapool High School, Nuala MacDonald won the International Representative category for her film 'Aonaichte' which looked at loneliness and the power of friendship;
 - in the Open Category the Best Mobile Short award was awarded to 'Contraigh' by Tanca Aonghais;
 - Best Film 'Am Bruadar' was won by Calum Maclean; and
 - Best Script 'Aiseirigh' was won by Fiona J NicCoinnich, archivist and manager of Canna House for the National Trust for Scotland.

Business

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of Mr R Bremner, Mr D Mackay, Ms E Roddick and Mr A Sinclair.

2. Declarations of Interest

There were no Declarations of Interest.

3. Royal National Mòd 2021

There had been circulated Report No. G/4/21 dated 26 April 2021 by the Executive Chief Officer Performance and Governance. Mr James Graham, Chief Executive Officer and Mr Allan Campbell, President of An Comunn Gàidhealach were also in attendance at the meeting to answer Members' questions regarding the Royal National Mod which had been due to be held in Inverness in October 2020 and was hoped to be held in Inverness in October 2021.

During discussion, Members made the following points:-

- holding the Royal National Mod in Inverness in October 2021 was warmly welcomed, especially after a difficult year as a result of Covid 19. Many people

would be looking forward to it and it was important, not just in term of the economy, to people's mental wellbeing;

- the investment of £80k would generate a greater considerable amount to the local economy, not just in Inverness but beyond;
- the flexible approach adopted by An Comunn Gàidhealach in 2020 to move the Mod online was welcomed. Looking ahead, this might need to be developed further in the future;
- if Covid continued to be an issue and resulted in the 2021 Mod having to move entirely online, it would be difficult to postpone Inverness again as a venue;
- moving to an online platform had generated a number of benefits. Audiences and entrants had come from many countries and it was hoped that this could be retained in the future. In addition, where venues were full to capacity, events and competitions could be streamed online;
- it was hoped competitors and audiences would have confidence coming back together;
- whilst moving to a hybrid format involving online participation, it was suggested this also offered an opportunity to increase income through merchandising;
- moving to a virtual platform had incurred additional costs;
- some Members felt that further detail was required as to specifically what the additional funding was to be used for;
- it was asked whether the additional funding would detrimentally affect grants for other Gaelic organisations. In response, the Executive Chief Officer Performance and Governance confirmed that it would not, and she went on to explain the funding model for the Mod and how it was spread over a number of annual instalments to accumulate in time for the Mod to be delivered in the local area.
- much of what the Royal National Mod delivered was as a result of voluntary efforts and delivering similar festivals elsewhere would cost considerably more;
- the Mod in October would extend the tourism season, a move which was warmly welcomed. Cultural tourism was also playing an increasing greater role;
- the benefits the Royal National Mod had for young people, such as increasing confidence, could not be underestimated;
- in response to a question, it was confirmed the syllabus for the Mod would be published at the end of May; and
- the choral community had been particularly badly affected. Choirs normally practised all year round but had been unable to do so during the pandemic. However, as the vaccination programme continued, it was hoped some would come together for a flagship event.

The Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the initial outline of events for the Royal National Mòd 2021; and
- ii. **AGREED** to support a request to the Corporate Resources Committee on 26 May 2021, to agree to a mid-year budget feed of up to £80,000 to retain the Mòd in the Highlands for another year.

4. Progress against Gaelic Language Plan 3

There had been circulated Report No. G/5/21 dated 26 April 2021 by the Executive Chief Officer Performance and Governance.

During discussion, Members made the following points:-

- the increase in the number of actions now RAG'd as green was to be welcomed as was the information provided on those marked as amber;
- progress was well on track, particularly considering the nature of Highland and the impact of Covid 19;
- one theme was to contribute to and support Community Partnership Development Plans but Community Planning Partnerships and Locality Planning Groups were at various stages of activity. Nevertheless, it was hoped such groups could be engaged to boost the Council's plans for locality development, Caol being cited as a specific example;
- Highland had an important part to play in the National Gaelic Arts Strategy and a more proactive approach was suggested;
- there was an action to develop links between Gaelic medium primary and Gaelic medium secondary schools and an audit of secondary resourcing to expand access within Highland was underway. Information as to its progress and anticipated completion date was sought, and provided;
- the Council was working collaboratively with Comhairle nan Eilean Siar and e-Sgoil to expand access to secondary Gaelic subject delivery but the Highland now had its own Virtual Academy which had had its teaching compliment extended. It was important Gaelic was part of this as it would encourage better access to areas of the curriculum and it was confirmed that there was a dedicated officer assigned to this; and
- additional place-based examples of Gaelic in the Workplace were sought, particularly in Highland Council.

The Committee **NOTED**:-

- i. the progress made in both monitoring and implementing GLP3 on a quarterly basis utilising the Performance & Risk Management System (PRMS) which was the Council's corporate performance management system in order to support delivery of GLP3; and
- ii. the progress and challenges regarding the implementation of some enabling actions in the Plan. Challenges were largely due to the pandemic, which had impacted some projected project implementation and completion dates.

5. Gaelic Translation

There is circulated Report No. G/6/21 dated 27 April 2021 by the Executive Chief Officer Performance and Governance.

During discussion, Members made the following points:-

- the Gaelic translation service provided was to be commended;
- ideally Gaelic should have a more prominent position on the Council's website;
- proofreading of sign templates was important and would avoid unnecessary errors arising at the final stage of the process;
- Gaelic place names of road signs were often more informative as to the history and nature of the area;
- there were constraints in driving the service forward in terms of resourcing; and
- there were nuances between Skye and Lewis Gaelic and languages generally often caused debate as to which terms to use.

The Committee **NOTED**:-

- i. the report and the work that had been undertaken in relation to Gaelic translation; and
- ii. the areas of current and future development.

6. Scottish Government Gaelic Specific Grant Report

There had been circulated Report No. G/7/21 dated 27 April 2021 by the Executive Chief Officer Performance and Governance.

During discussion, Members made the following points:-

- the grant increase was to be welcomed and reflected the Council's alignment with the Scottish Government's Gaelic aims and policies;
- Project 3 (Gaelic in Early Learning and Childcare, Primary and Secondary Education Description) was to be commended. However, there was a narrowing of the curriculum and the Gaelic Medium options, post S3, were being explored to increase subject choice and pathways. There were critical points in secondary education where subject choices were made and these were often based on discussions with parents and teachers and, to a significant degree, with peers. To encourage more to choose Gaelic Medium it was suggested that it could be in a course column by itself;
- an audit of secondary resources to expand access, as referred to in Item 4, was welcomed; and
- Community Planning Partnerships had been given more responsibility and the value of Gaelic should be highlighted to them.

The Committee **NOTED**:-

- i. the 3 projects outlined in the Gaelic Specific Grant;
- ii. the application and the commitment to delivering the conditions of the Grant; and
- iii. the commitment of the Gaelic Team to delivering the outcomes and promotion of the outcomes in the grant application.

7. Statutory Consultation Gaelic Medium Catchment Proposals

(a) Acharacle Primary School

There had been circulated Report No. G/8/21 dated 23 April 2021 by the Executive Chief Officer Education and Learning.

During discussion, Members made the following points:-

- the geography of the area meant that the Ardgour and Lochaline catchments were not included, as the distances and time of travel involved from these locations were beyond what might be considered reasonable. However, there was potential for confusion in terms of Associated School Groups and an indication was sought if there was a

desire in the Ardgour and Lochaline areas to be included in the catchment area;

- in terms of time, it was quicker for pupils in Ardgour to reach Acharacle than it would be for pupils from Kilchoan; and
- the area had a history of Gaelic and feisean and this had to be supported.

The Committee **AGREED** to support the proposal and **NOTED** that the Education Committee would be advised of Gaelic Committee Members' views, prior to taking its decision.

(b) Newtonmore Primary School

There had been circulated Report No. G/9/21 dated 27 April 2021 by the Executive Chief Officer Education and Learning.

The Committee **AGREED** to support the proposal and **NOTED** that the Education Committee would be advised of Gaelic Committee Members' views, prior to taking its decision.

8. Bòrd na Gàidhlig (BnaG) Gaelic Language Act Implementation Funding (GLAIF) - Draft Programme of Projects

There had been circulated Report No. G/10/21 dated 27 April 2021 by the Executive Chief Officer Performance and Governance.

Members warmly welcomed the introduction of the Gaelic Youth Champion, giving young people a Gaelic voice to represent them. They would be involved with the Council's Gaelic Language Plan, would draw attention to what the key pressures were and how Gaelic was used in their communities. It was hoped they would also be able to attend the Gaelic Committee and help develop policy.

In recognising GLAIF as one of the Council's Gaelic key funding streams, the Committee otherwise **NOTED** and acknowledged the GLAIF applications that the Highland Council Gaelic Team were managing, leading, and participating in which were submitted to BnaG by the closing date of 22 April 2021.

9. Gaelic Vision and Strategy for Highland Council

There had been circulated Report No. G/11/21 dated 6 May 2021 by the Executive Chief Officer Performance and Governance.

During discussion, Members made the following points:-

- the Executive Chief Office Infrastructure and Environment had responsibility for cultural strategy and it was important to link up with this;
- the provision of dedicated locations for touring motor homes offered an excellent opportunity to promote the contribution that Gaelic made to the Highlands in terms of culture, tourism and the economy, especially in relation to the translation of what was meant as a "shieling", the history of the origins of this word being explained. An information board of place names at such

locations could encourage tourists to get “off the beaten track”. This could be promoted with little additional expenditure; and

- if a Gaelic vision and strategy was to be promoted then it was important it was endorsed at a full Council meeting, perhaps even as part of the annual Gaelic Implementation Report.

The Committee **AGREED** the approach to developing the Council's Vision and Strategy for Gaelic.

The meeting concluded at 1.40 pm

Comhairle na Gàidhealtachd

Geàrr-chunntas coinneamh **Comataidh na Gàidhlig** a chumadh **air astar** air Dimàirt 18 Cèitean 2021 aig 10.30m.

An làthair:

Mgr G Adam

A' Bh-uas I Chaimbeul

A' Bh-uas S Chaimbeul

Mr I Gòrdon

Mgr A MacEanraig

Mgr A MacAonghais

Mgr G MacCoinnich

Mgr C Rothach

A' Bh-uas M NicPheadrais

Mgr D Rixson

Neo-Bhall an làthair cuideachd:

Mgr I MacFhionnlaigh

A' frithealadh na coinneimh:

A' Bh-uas K Lackie, Àrd-Oifigear Gnìomhach – Coileanadh agus Riaghlachas

A' Bh-uas L Walker, Manaidsear Leasachaidh na Gàidhlig

A' Bh-uas J NicDhòmhnaill, Prìomh Oifigear Eadar-theangachaidh

Mgr I Jackson, Oifigear Foghlaim

Mgr R MacAoidh, Oifigear Leasachaidh

A' Bh-uas M A NicLeòid Mitchell, Oifigear Leasachaidh na Gàidhlig

A' Bh-uas S NicIllinnein, Prìomh Rianaire

Cuideachd a' frithealadh na coinneimh:

Mgr S Greumach, Àrd-Oifigear, An Comunn Gàidhealach

Mgr A Caimbeul, Ceann-suidhe, An Comunn Gàidhealach

Tha rionnag air iomall na duilleige a' comharrachadh moladh a thèid chun na Comhairle. Tha co-dhùnidhean gun chomharra fo ùghdarras na Comataidh.

Mgr C Rothach anns a' Chathair

An Toiseach

Mus do thòisich gnothach foirmeil na coinneimh, thug an Cathraiche seachad na naidheachdan matha a leanas:-

- Bha Emma Roddick, ball de Chomataidh na Gàidhlig, air a taghadh gu Pàrlamaid na h-Alba air 6 Cèitean 2021. Chuir an Cathraiche, às leth na Comataidh, deagh dhùrachd thuice;
- Chaidh seisean fiosrachaidh air-loidhne airson Foghlam tron Ghàidhlig do phàrantan a chumail sa Mhàrt. Bha cothrom an lùib seo cluinntinn bho Antonella Sorace, Àrd-Ollamh Cànanachas Leasachail aig Oilthigh Dhùn Èideann. Chaidh clàradh a dhèanamh agus bha seo ri fhaotainn do sgoiltean airson a cho-roinn le pàrantan. Chaidh an seisean a thoirt gu crìch le cèilidh teaghlaich is òrain;
- Bha Fèis Rois na pàirt de Cho-chruinneachadh Cultar na Gàidhealtachd, prògram paidhleit nàiseanta airson lionraidhean cruthachail a stèidheachadh;
- Bha dàimh fhada chom-pàirteach aig Comhairle na Gàidhealtachd le Fèis Rois agus bha e tlachdmhor faicinn gun deach dreuchd neach-ealain air mhuinntireas a

chruthachadh airson amas air luchd-ionnsachaidh òga na Gàidhlig aig nach robh cothrom cho math air Gàidhlig taobh a-muigh a' chlas nuair a bha sgoiltean dùinte ri linn Covid-19;

- Bha an sgoil-àraich ùr aca a' còrdadh ri Bun-Sgoil Dhùn Bheagain;
- Bha na bràithrean Alasdair agus Ruaraidh MacLeòid, sgoilearan aig Bun-Sgoil Ghàidhlig Inbhir Nis, nam masgotan bho chionn ghoirid airson Club Ball-coise Caledonian Thistle Inbhir Nis agus bha iad air duilleag na sgioba a leughadh a-mach sa Ghàidhlig;
- Chaidh meal-an-naidheachd a chur air luchd-buannachaidh duaisean FilmG 2021 às a' Ghàidhealtachd, mar a leanas:-
 - Bhuannaich sgoilearan Bun-Sgoil Stafainn Ionatan MacDhòmhnail agus Lachlann MacLeòid Roghainn an t-Sluaigh agus duaisean Gàidhlig FilmG airson am film 'Thairis na Maidne', a bha stèidhichte air prògram naidheachdan maidne Radio nan Gàidheal (Aithris na Maidne). Bhuannaich Ionatan cuideachd duais Cluiche as Fheàrr;
 - Bhuannaich Bun-Sgoil Chnoc na Creige, Baile Dhubhthaich, dà dhuais: Film as Fheàrr ann am Buidheann na h-Òigridh agus Film as Fheàrr airson 'Na Cèicean Blasta', stèidhichte air Nighean Bheag a' Chòta Dheirg;
 - Chaidh am Prògram Aithriseach as Fheàrr, 'Bhon Làimh Chun a' Bheòil', a bhuannachadh le Eòin Cuimeanach, sgoilear san t-siathamh bliadhna aig Sgoil Chiùil na Gàidhealtachd sa Phloc;
 - Bhuannaich sgoilearan Àrd-Sgoil Ullapuil Fionnlagh MacDhòmhnail agus Silas Brown à Aichillidh Bhuidhe an Riochdachadh as Fheàrr airson 'Claidheamh Cutach'. Cuideachd na sgoilear aig Àrd-Sgoil Ullapuil, bhuannaich Nuala NicDhòmhnail an Riochdachadh Eadar-nàiseanta as Fheàrr le 'Aonaichte' a bha a' coimhead air aonaranachd is cumhachd càirdeis;
 - Anns an Earrainn Fhosgailte chaidh am Film Goirid Fòn-làimhe as Fheàrr a bhuannachadh le 'Contraigh' aig Tanca Aonghais;
 - Chaidh am Film as Fheàrr 'Am Bruadar' a bhuannachadh le Calum MacIlleathain; agus
 - Chaidh an Sgrìobt as Fheàrr 'Aiseirigh' a bhuannachadh le Fiona J NicCoinnich, tasglannaiche is manaidsear Taigh Chanaigh airson Urras Nàiseanta na h-Alba.

Gnothach

1. Leisgeulan

Ghabhadh leisgeulan às leth Mhgr R Bremner, Mhgr D MhicAoidh, na M-uas E Roddick agus Mhgr A Mhic na Ceàrdaich.

2. Foillseachaidhean Com-pàirt

Cha robh Foillseachaidhean Com-pàirt ann.

3. Mòd Nàiseanta Rìoghail 2021

Chuartaicheadh Aithisg Àir. G/4/21 le ceann-latha 26 Giblean 2021 leis an Àrd-Oifigear Ghnìomhach – Coileanadh agus Riaghlachas. Bha Mgr Seumas Greumach, Àrd-Oifigear a' Chomuinn Ghàidhealaich agus Mgr Ailean Caimbeul, Ceann-suidhe a' Chomuinn Ghàidhealaich an làthair aig a' choinneimh airson ceistean nam Ball a

fhreagairt mun Mhòd Nàiseanta Rìoghail a bhathar an dùil a chumail ann an Inbhir Nis san Dàmhair 2020 agus a thathar an dùil a chumail ann an Inbhir Nis san Dàmhair 2021.

Rè an deasbaid, thog na Buill na puingean a leanas:-

- Chaidh fàilte chridheil a chur air a' bheachd gun deigheadh am Mòd Nàiseanta Rìoghail a chumail ann an Inbhir Nis anns an Dàmhair 2021, gu h-àraid às dèidh bliadhna dhoirbh Covid-19. Bhiodh mòran dhaoine a' coimhead air adhart ris agus bha e cudromach, chan ann a-mhàin a thaobh an eaconamaidh, ach a thaobh slàinte inntinn dhaoine cuideachd;
- Bhiodh tasgadh £80 mìle a' tàrmachadh sùim fada na bu mhotha dhan eaconamaidh ionadail, chan ann a-mhàin ann an Inbhir Nis ach thar sin;
- Chaidh fàilte a chur air dòigh-obrach shubailte a' Chomuinn Ghàidhealaich a thaobh a bhith a' gluasad a' Mhòid air-loidhne ann an 2020. A' coimhead air adhart, math dh'fhaodte gum feumadh seo a bhith air a leasachadh barrachd san àm ri teachd;
- Nam biodh duilgheadasan Covid-19 a' leantainn air adhart agus nam feumadh Mòd 2021 gluasad gu bhith gu tur air-loidhne, bhiodh e doirbh Inbhir Nis a chur dheth a-rithist mar àite aoi gheachd;
- Bha grunn bhuannachdan an lùib a bhith a' gluasad gu àrd-ùrlar air-loidhne. Bha luchd-èisteachd is com-pàirtichean air tighinn bho iomadh dùthaich agus bhathar an dòchas gum b' urrainnear seo a ghleidheadh san àm ri teachd. Cuideachd, far an robh aitreabhan loma-làn, dh'fhaodadh tachartasan is farpaisean a bhith air an sruthadh air-loidhne;
- Bhathar an dòchas gum biodh misneachd aig com-pàirtichean is luchd-èisteachd tighinn còmhla a-rithist;
- Fhad 's a bhathar a' gluasad gu cruth measgaichte le com-pàirteachas air-loidhne, chaidh moladh gun robh cothrom an lùib seo cuideachd teachd-a-steach a mheudachadh tro mharsantachd;
- Bha cosgaisean a bharrachd an lùib a bhith a' gluasad gu àrd-ùrlar air-loidhne;
- Bha cuid de Bhuill a' faireachdainn gun robh barrachd fiosrachaidh a dhìth a thaobh na bhiodh air a dhèanamh leis a' mhaoineachadh a bharrachd;
- Chaidh faighneachd co-dhiù a bheireadh am maoinachadh a bharrachd droch bhuaidh air tabhartasan do bhuidhnean Gàidhlig eile. Mar fhreagairt, dhearbhadh an t-Àrd-Oifigear Gnìomhach airson Coileanadh agus Riaghlachas nach toireadh, agus mhinich i modail maoinachaidh a' Mhòid agus mar a bha e air a sgaoileadh thairis air grunn phàighidhean bliadhna a bhiodh a' càrnadh suas mus deigheadh Mòd a libhrigeadh san sgìre ionadail;
- Bha mòran de na bha am Mòd Nàiseanta Rìoghail a' libhrigeadh mar thoradh air oidhirpean saor-thoileach agus bha e a' cosg mòran a bharrachd fèisean coltach ris a' Mhòd a chumail ann an àiteachan eile;
- Bheireadh am Mòd san Dàmhair leudachadh air ràith na turasachd, agus bha fàilte chridheil air a seo. Bha àite na bu mhotha aig turasachd chultarail cuideachd;
- Cha bu chòir dì-meas a dhèanamh air na buannachdan a bha an lùib a' Mhòid Nàiseanta Rìoghail do dhaoine òga, a leithid a bhith a' togail am misneachd;
- Mar fhreagairt do cheist, chaidh dearbhadh gun deigheadh clàr-gnothaich a' Mhòid fhoillseachadh aig deireadh a' Chèitein; agus
- Bha buaidh shònraichte air coimhearsnachd nan còisirean. Bhiodh còisirean san àbhaist a' seinn is a' ruith thairis tron bhliadhna air fad, ach cha b' urrainn dhaibh seo a dhèanamh ri linn Covid-19. Ach, ri linn prògram na banachdaich,

bhathar an dòchas gum b' urrainn do chuid tighinn còmhla airson prìomh thachartas.

Às dèidh sin:-

- i. **THUG** a' Chomataidh **FA-NEAR** do dhreachd thùsail tachartasan Mòd Nàiseanta Rìoghail 2021; agus
- ii. **DH'AONTAICH** a' Chomataidh taic a chur ri iarrtas gu Comataidh nan Goireasan Corporra air 26 Cèitean 2021, airson suas ri £80,000 a chur ris a' bhuidseat ann am meadhan na bliadhna, airson am Mòd a ghleidheadh sa Ghàidhealtachd airson bliadhna eile.

4. Adhartas Mu Choinneamh Plana na Gàidhlig 3

Chuartaicheadh Aithisg Àir. G/5/21 le ceann-latha 26 Giblean 2021 leis an Àrd-Oifigear Ghnìomhach – Coileanadh agus Riaghlachas.

Rè an deasbaid, thog na Buill na puingeann a leanas:-

- Bhathar a' cur fàilte air an àireimh de ghnìomhan a bha a-nis air an 'RAGadh' mar uaine agus air an fhiosrachadh mun fheadhainn a bha air an comharrachadh òmar;
- Bha adhartas air an t-slighe cheirt, gu h-àraid nuair a dheigheadh beachdachadh air suidheachadh na Gàidhealtachd agus buaidh Covid-19;
- B' e aon chuspair a bhith a' cur ri agus a' toirt taic do Phlanaichean Leasachaidh Chom-pàirteachasan Coimhearsnachd ach bha Com-pàirteachasan Dealbhadh Coimhearsnachd agus Buidhnean Dealbhadh Ionadachdan aig diofar ìrean gnìomhachd. A dh'aindeoin seo, bhathar an dòchas gum faodadh buidhnean a leithid seo a bhith air an com-pàirteachadh gus spionnadh a thoirt do phlanaichean na Comhairle airson leasachadh ionadachdan, agus chaidh An Caol ainmeachadh mar eisimpleir sònraichte;
- Bha pàirt chudromach aig a' Ghàidhealtachd ann an Ro-innleachd Ealain Nàiseanta na Gàidhlig agus chaidh dòigh-obrach nas gnìomhaiche a mholadh;
- Bha gnìomh ann ceangalan a thogail eadar bun-sgoiltean Foghlam tron Ghàidhlig is àrd-sgoiltean Foghlam tron Ghàidhlig agus bhathar an-dràsta a' gabhail os làimh sgrùdadh air goireasan àrd-sgoile airson cothroman a leudachadh. Chaidh fiosrachadh mu adhartas is ceann-latha crìochnachaidh a shireadh agus fhaotainn;
- Bha a' Chomhairle a' co-obrachadh le Comhairle nan Eilean Siar agus e-Sgoil airson cothroman a leudachadh a thaobh chuspairean àrd-sgoile sa Ghàidhlig ach bha a-nis Acadamaidh Bhiortail aig a' Ghàidhealtachd fhèin le barrachd luchd-teagaisg. Bha e cudromach gun robh a' Ghàidhlig mar phàirt dhen a seo seach gum biodh cothrom na b' fheàrr ann air raointean curraicealaim agus chaidh a dhearbhadh gu bheil oifigear sònraichte ann mu choinneamh seo; agus
- Bhathar a' sireadh tuilleadh eisimpleirean de Ghàidhlig san Àite-obrach, gu h-àraid ann an Comhairle na Gàidhealtachd.

THUG a' Chomataidh **FA-NEAR**:-

- i. dhan adhartas a rinneadh ann a bhith a' sgrùdadh is a' buileachadh Plana na Gàidhlig 3 air stèidh ràitheil, a' cleachdadh Siostam Coileanaidh is Rianachd

- Cunnairt (PRMS) a tha na shiostam rianachd airson coileanadh corporra aig a' Chomhairle airson taic a chur ri libhrigeadh Plana na Gàidhlig 3; agus
- ii. dhan adhartas is dha na dùbhlain ann a bhith a' buileachadh cuid de na gnìomhan comasachaidh anns a' Phlana. Bha dùbhlain gu ìre mhòir air sàillibh galar Covid-19, agus tha seo air buaidh a thoirt air cuid dhen bhuileachadh is air cuid de na cinn-latha crìochnachaidh ris an robh dùil.

5. Eadar-theangachadh Gàidhlig

Chuartaicheadh Aithisg Àir. G/6/21 le ceann-latha 27 Giblean 2021 leis an Àrd-Oifigear Ghnìomhach – Coileanadh agus Riaghlachas.

Rè an deasbaid, thog na Buill na puingean a leanas:-

- Bha an obair a bha Seirbheis eadar-theangachaidh na Gàidhlig a' toirt seachad airidh air moladh;
- Bhiodh e math nam biodh a' Ghàidhlig na b' fhollaisiche air làrach-lìn na Comhairle;
- Chaidh aontachadh gun robh e cudromach gun deigheadh teamplaidean nan soidhnichean a dhearbhadh-leughadh airson nach biodh mearachdan a' tighinn am bàrr aig a' cheum mu dheireadh;
- Gu tric, bha ainmean-àite Gàidhlig air na soidhnichean rathaid a' toirt seachad tuilleadh fiosrachaidh a thaobh eachdraidh is nàdar na sgìre;
- Bha cuingealachaidhean ann a thaobh a bhith a' toirt na seirbheis air adhart barrachd air sàillibh cion ghoireasan; agus
- Bha mion-atharrachaidhean dual-chainnt eadar Gàidhlig an Eilein Sgitheanaich is Leòdhais agus bha deasbad buailteach a bhith a' tighinn am bàrr am measg chànanan a thaobh a' bhriathrachais a bu chòir a chleachdadh.

THUG a' Chomataidh **FA-NEAR**:-

- i. dhan aithisg agus dhan obair a chaidh a dhèanamh a thaobh eadar-theangachadh Gàidhlig; agus
- ii. dha na leasachaidhean a tha a' gabhail àite an-dràsta agus dhan fheadhainn a tha san amharc.

6. Aithisg Tabhartas Sònraichte Gàidhlig Riaghaltas na h-Alba

Chuartaicheadh Aithisg Àir. G/7/21 le ceann-latha 27 Giblean 2021 leis an Àrd-Oifigear Ghnìomhach – Coileanadh agus Riaghlachas.

Rè an deasbaid, thog na Buill na puingean a leanas:-

- Bhathar a' cur fàilte air a' mheudachadh tabhartais agus bha seo a' sealltainn co-thaobhadh na Comhairle le amasan is poileasaidhean Riaghaltas na h-Alba;
- Bha Pròiseact 3 (A' Ghàidhlig ann an Tràth-ionnsachadh is Cùram-chloinne, Foghlam Bun-sgoile is Àrd-sgoile) ri mholadh. Ach, bha an curraicealam air fàs na bu chumhainge agus bha na roghainnean Foghlam tron Ghàidhlig, às dèidh ÀS3, gan sgrùdadh gus roghainn is slighean cuspair a mheudachadh. Bha na h-amannan seo riatanach ann am foghlam àrd-sgoile nuair a bhathar a' taghadh chuspairean agus bha iad seo tric stèidhichte air còmhraidhean le pàrantan is tidsearan agus, gu ìre chudromach, le co-aioisean. Airson barrachd

sgoilearan a bhrosnachadh gus Foghlam tron Ghàidhlig a thaghadh, chaidh moladh gum faodadh e a bhith ann an colbh cùrsa leis fhèin;

- Chaidh fàilte a chur air sgrùdadh air goireasan àrd-sgoile gus cothrom a leudachadh, mar a chaidh a thogail ann an Cuspair 4; agus
- Bha Com-pàirteachasan Dealbhadh Coimhearsnachd air barrachd dleasanais fhaotainn agus bu chòir luach na Gàidhlig a shoilleireachadh dhaibh.

THUG a' Chomataidh **FA-NEAR**:-

- i. dha na trì pròiseactan a tha air am mìneachadh ann an Tabhartas Sònraichte na Gàidhlig;
- ii. dhan tagradh agus dhan ghealladh do bhith a' libhrigeadh chumhaichean an tabhartais; agus
- iii. do dhealas Sgioba na Gàidhlig a thaobh a bhith a' libhrigeadh nan toraidhean agus a' cur air adhart nan toraidhean ann an tagradh an tabhartais.

7. Co-chomhairle Reachdail air Molaidhean do Sgìrean-sgoile airson Foghlam tron Ghàidhlig

(a) Bun-Sgoil Àth Tharracail

Chuartaicheadh Aithisg Àir. G/8/21 le ceann-latha 23 Giblean 2021 leis an Àrd-Oifigear Ghnìomhach – Foghlam agus Ionnsachadh.

Rè an deasbaid, thog na Buill na puingeann a leanas:-

- Bha cruinn-eòlas na sgìre a' ciallachadh nach robh sgìrean-sgoil Àird Ghobhar agus Loch Àlainn air an gabhail a-steach, seach gun robh na h-astaran is an ùine siubhail às na h-àiteachan seo na b' fhaide na bhiodh air a mheas reusanta. Ach, dh'fhaodadh mì-chinnt a bhith ann a thaobh Buidhnean Sgoiltean Co-cheangailte agus chaidh faighneachd co-dhiù a bha miann ann an sgìrean Àird Ghobhar agus Loch Àlainn a bhith air an gabhail a-steach san sgìre-sgoile;
- A thaobh ùine, bha e na bu luaithe do sgoilearan ann an Àird Ghobhar faighinn gu Àth Tharracail na bhiodh e do sgoilearan à Cille Chòmhain; agus
- Bha eachdraidh aig an sgìre a thaobh na Gàidhlig is a thaobh nam fèisean agus bha e cudromach taic a thoirt dhan a seo.

DH'AONTAICH a' Chomataidh taic a thoirt dhan mholadh agus **THUG** a' Chomataidh **FA-NEAR** gun deigheadh comhairle a thoirt do Chomataidh an Fhoghlaim mu bheachdan Buill Chomataidh na Gàidhlig, mus dèanadh i a co-dhùnadh.

(b) Bun-Sgoil Bhaile Ùr an t-Slèibh

Chuartaicheadh Aithisg Àir. G/9/21 le ceann-latha 27 Giblean 2021 leis an Àrd-Oifigear Ghnìomhach – Foghlam agus Ionnsachadh.

DH'AONTAICH a' Chomataidh taic a thoirt dhan mholadh agus **THUG** a' Chomataidh **FA-NEAR** gun deigheadh comhairle a thoirt do Chomataidh an

Fhoghlaim mu bheachdan Buill Chomataidh na Gàidhlig, mus dèanadh i a co-dhùnadh.

8. Maoineachadh Maoin Buileachaidh Achd na Gàidhlig (GLAIF) aig Bòrd na Gàidhlig – Dreachd Phrògram Phròiseactan

Chuartaicheadh Aithisg Àir. G/10/21 le ceann-latha 27 Giblean 2021 leis an Àrd-Oifigear Ghnìomhach – Coileanadh agus Riaghlachas.

Chuir Buill fàilte bhlàth air dreuchd Gaisgeach Òg na Gàidhlig, a bha a' toirt guth Gàidhlig do dhaoine òga airson an riochdachadh. Bhiodh iad an lùib Plana Gàidhlig na Comhairle, bhiodh iad a' tarraing aire gu na prìomh chùisean a bha nan cuideaman agus mar a dh'fhaodadh a' Ghàidhlig a bhith air a cleachdadh sna coimhearsnachdan aca. Bhathar an dòchas gum b' urrainn dhaibh cuideachd Comataidh na Gàidhlig a fhrithealadh agus cuideachadh gus poileasaidh a leasachadh.

Bha a' Chomataidh ag aithneachadh gun robh GLAIF am measg prìomh shruthan maoineachaidh Gàidhlig na Comhairle, agus THUG a' Chomhairle FA-NEAR do na h-iarntasan GLAIF a bha Sgioba na Gàidhlig a' stiùireadh agus a chaidh a chur a-steach gu BnaG ron cheann-latha dùnadh air 22 Giblean 2021.

9. Lèirsinn agus Ro-innleachd Ghàidhlig airson Comhairle na Gàidhealtachd

Chuartaicheadh Aithisg Àir. G/11/21 le ceann-latha 6 Cèitean 2021 leis an Àrd-Oifigear Ghnìomhach – Coileanadh agus Riaghlachas.

Rè an deasbaid, thog na Buill na puingeann a leanas:-

- Bha dleastanas aig an Àrd-Oifigear Ghnìomhach airson Bun-structair is Àrainneachd airson ro-innleachd chultarail agus bha e cudromach ceangalan a thogail;
- Bha solar nan àiteachan sònraichte airson dachaighean-motair a' tabhann cothrom air leth a' Ghàidhlig is na tha i air cur ris a' Ghàidhealtachd a thaobh cultar, turasachd agus an eaconamaidh a bhrosnachadh, gu h-àraid a thaobh eadar-theangachadh air na bha 'àirigh' a' ciallachadh, agus eachdraidh is tùs an fhacail a mhìneachadh. Nam biodh bòrd-fiosrachaidh anns na h-àiteachan seo, dh'fhaodadh seo luchd-turais a bhrosnachadh gu àiteachan na b' iomallaiche. Dh'fhaodadh seo a bhith air a bhrosnachadh gun mhòran cosgais a bharrachd; agus
- Ma bha lèirsinn is ro-innleachd Ghàidhlig gu bhith air an cur air adhart, bha e cudromach gun deigheadh seo aontachadh aig coinneamh dhen Làn-Chomhairle, math dh'fhaodte mar phàirt de dh'Aithisg Bhuileachaidh Bhliadhnail na Gàidhlig.

DH'AONTAICH a' Chomataidh an dòigh-obrach airson a bhith a' leasachadh Lèirsinn is Ro-innleachd Ghàidhlig na Comhairle.

Chrìochnaich a' choinneamh aig 1.40f.

The Highland Council

Minutes of Meeting of the **Health, Social Care and Wellbeing Committee** held **remotely** on Wednesday 19 May 2021 at 10.30am.

Present:

Mrs J Barclay
Mr B Boyd
Mrs I Campbell
Mrs M Cockburn
Mrs M Davidson
Mr A Jarvie
Mr D Louden
Mr W Mackay

Mrs I Mackenzie
Mr C Munro (substitute)
Mrs L Munro
Mrs M Paterson
Mr D Rixson
Mr C Smith
Ms N Sinclair

Non Members also present:

Mr A Christie
Mr D Fraser
Mrs E McAllister

Mr J McGillivray
Mr D Macpherson
Mrs T Robertson

Participating Officials:

Mrs D Manson, Chief Executive
Ms F Duncan, Executive Chief Officer Health and Social Care and Chief Social Work Officer
Ms F Malcolm, Interim Head of Integration Adult Social Care, Health and Social Care
Mr I Kyle, Head of Improvement and Performance, Health and Social Care
Ms J Park, Interim Head of Health, Health and Social Care
Mr G MacLachlan, Area Care & Learning Manager, Health and Social Care
Ms J Jennett, Head of Service (Children YP & Fam), Health and Social Care
Ms D Munro, Lead Officer (Child Prot. Committee), Health and Social Care
Mr B Porter, Head of Support Services, Health and Social Care
Mr M Mitchell, Service Finance Manager, Resources and Finance
Mr J Robertson, Programme Manager, Health and Social Care
Mrs S McKandie, Head of Revenues & Customer Services, Resources and Finance
Ms A Clark, Head of Policy & Reform, Performance and Governance
Mr J Shepherd, Head of ICT & Digital Transformation
Mrs L Dunn, Principal Administrator, Performance and Governance
Ms F MacBain, Committee Administrator, Performance and Governance
Ms M Zavarella, Committee Administrator, Performance and Governance

Also in Attendance:

Mr S Steer, Director of Adult Social Care, NHS Highland
Ms L Bussell, Chief Officer, NHS Highland
Ms R Connolly, Connecting Carers

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

Linda Munro in the Chair (except Item 9, when Nicola Sinclair was in the Chair).

**1. Apologies for Absence
Leisgeulan**

Apologies were submitted on behalf of Mrs D Mackay, Mr K Rosie and Mr J Finlayson (substituted by Mr C Munro).

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

Item 9 – L Munro (financial)
Item 9 – D Louden (non-financial)
Items 4, 11 & 14 – A Jarvie (non-financial)

**3. Good News
Deagh Naidheachdan**

During a verbal update, the Executive Chief Officer Health and Social Care provided good news stories on the subjects of:-

- The Placement Program Team aimed to bring out-of-area children back to the Highlands, and a bespoke residential unit had been built in Highland resulting in three children being brought back thus far;
- MCR Pathways a charitable organisation providing mentoring, coaching and resilience building to care experienced young people and aimed to help young people achieve educational outcomes, realise life chances and move into positive school destinations; and
- The Just Ask a telephone enquiry line for children, young people, parents, carers where callers could ask for appropriate advice and support from professionals.

The Committee **NOTED** the Good News.

**4. Highland Integrated Children's Service Plan
Plana Seirbheis Amalaichte Chloinne na Gàidhealtachd**

Declarations of Interest – Mr A Jarvie declared a non-financial interest in this item as a Director of HLH but, having applied the test outlined in Paragraphs 5.2 and 5.3 of the Councillors' Code of Conduct, concluded that the interest did not preclude her involvement.

There had been circulated Report No HCW/06/21 dated 29 April 2021 by the Executive Chief Officer Health and Social Care. A presentation was provided by the Head of Improvement and Performance.

During discussion, the following issues were considered:

- Members commended the report as interesting, comprehensive and informative;
- several Members queried how outcomes would be measured and regular Member updates were requested given the length of time between meetings of the Committee;

- regarding performance and measuring outcomes, it was explained that through Transformational funding experienced consultants would be brought in to assist the Service with benchmarking and self-evaluation;
- several Members voiced support that the six Delivery Plans be reported to a future meeting of the Committee;
- in response to a question, it was explained that behind the overarching Highland Integrated Children's Service Plan there were six Delivery Groups and each had plans with performance measurements, timelines and RAG included and a link to the plans was included in the report;
- regarding governance, it was explained that the Highland Community Planning Partnership (CPP) would provide governance and the Integrated Children's Service Plan Board, which included a number of key stakeholders, would also provide a high level of scrutiny;
- regarding scrutiny of the report, it was explained that the Head of Policy would discuss with the Chair of the Community Planning Partnership (CPP) and through the Area Chairs Meeting and Chairs of Community Partnerships on the most appropriate mechanism for reporting to Members at a local level;
- information was sought, and provided, about CPP's. Several Members voiced concerns about the variation in success among CPP's across localities and it was explained that there was an action underway to have a Member Seminar in relation on this subject with resourcing to be a central theme;
- in relation to resilience of community groups and a need for dedicated resources it was explained that the resilience landscape had changed the nature of communities over the past 12 months and discussion was occurring about how resilience partnerships could link in at a local level;
- in response to a question, it was explained that the report was currently in draft format, once finalised there would be input from the Graphics team to enhance the visual look of the plan;
- young people had a very difficult time at present as it related to unemployment, mental health and general stresses;
- care experienced children and young adults having to be in acute crisis before they were able to access the proper services was concerning and had to be dealt with as a matter of urgency;
- it was important to listen to the voices of children and the crucial piece was how they would be heard and it was explained that the Highland and Young People Forum would be working alongside the Service on the Participation Strategy with a focus on active participation;
- information was sought, and provided about how the Promise presented an opportunity to think radically about care;
- in response to a question about educational outcomes and digital disadvantage, it was explained that over the past several months 610 devices (iPads and Chromebooks) had been secured through Connecting Scotland Award for those that were having difficulty connecting and almost all had been delivered;
- securing housing for care experienced youth and leavers was a massive challenge;
- clarification was sought, and provided that the report was a successor plan for For Highlands Children's 4;
- it was crucial to deliver the ambitious and far reaching strategy as there was nothing more important than preparing the next generation;
- regarding accessibility of language, it was explained that following the finalisation of the report a child-friendly version would be produced; and

- Teachers and Guidance Counsellors were in touch with young people at length and would be a useful way to keep the voice of the child heard and it was important to supplement this by talking to children directly.

Thereafter, the Committee **NOTED**:-

- i. the work undertaken by the Integrated Children's Service Plan Board in producing a draft of the Highland Integrated Children's Services Plan 2021 – 2023;
- ii. the proposed draft of the Plan prior to sign off by the Community Planning Partnership Board;
- iii. that there would be a Member Seminar in relation to Community Planning Partnerships with resourcing to be a central theme;
- iv. that the six Delivery Plans would be reported to a future meeting of the Committee; and
- v. that the Head of Policy would discuss with the Chair of the Community Planning Partnership and through the Area Chairs Meeting and Chairs of Community Partnerships on the most appropriate mechanism for reporting to Members at a local level.

5. Presentation: Children and Young People's Services Assurance Report
Taisbeanadh: Aithisg Barantais Seirbheisean na Cloinne is nan Daoine Òga

A presentation was provided by the Interim Head of Health whereby the context of Service Delivery was overviewed in the areas of; protection of children and young people most at risk, undertaking mandatory and statutory duties, identifying children and families who might become vulnerable in response to the pandemic, maintaining clinical and professional safety in practice, ensuring staff safety and wellbeing, deployment of staff to vaccination programme, responding to families and new ways of working.

There had been circulated Report No HCW/07/21 dated 23 April 2021 by the Executive Chief Officer Health and Social Care.

During discussion, the following issues were considered:

- Members were pleased that there was a lot of positive information provided;
- Allied Health Professionals (AHP) were dedicated and innovative professionals and it was hoped that support was given to develop an early intervention programme within Education;
- information was sought, and provided about future-proofing the Service and ensuring that vacancies were filled and succession planning completed;
- regarding young people in care and incomplete vaccinations, it was explained that the number had increased to 75% and efforts were underway to meet the target; and
- there was a clear commitment over the period on meeting needs and it was good to have a focus on mental health and its role in the development of the attainment gap.

The Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the measures put in place across the Covid-19 pandemic to support the commissioned child health service;
- ii. **NOTED** and considered service delivery arrangements and comment on plans for service improvement and clinical and professional governance; and
- iii. **AGREED** that a detailed report would be submitted to the next meeting of the Committee.

6. **Adult Social Care Assurance** **Barantas Cùram Sòisealta Inbheach**

There had been circulated Report No HCW/08/21 dated 23 April 2021 by the Executive Chief Officer Health and Social Care.

During discussion, the following issues were considered:

- Members expressed appreciation for the report and Officers involved;
- the impact of the losses felt over the course of the pandemic were not only on the families but those that cared for them;
- in relation to the Feeley Report, it was hoped that as a result there would be more attention paid to the conditions, training opportunities and compensation for care home staff to ensure a better future of Adult Social Care;
- it was a difficult time for care home staff and concerning that many might decide not to continue in their role as a result;
- information was sought, and provided on the current stability and security of the care home sector;
- regarding care at home, clarification was sought, and provided on recruitment issues and assessments in the community for Self-Directed Support (SDS);
- in response to a suggestion about communication and Care at Home, it was agreed that the Director of Adult Social Care, NHS Highland would investigate the feasibility of NHS Highland Locality Managers providing local briefings at ward level;
- information was sought, and provided about regaining public and staff trust in the sector;
- regarding respite for care at home staff, it was agreed that the Director of Adult Social Care, NHS Highland would include the provision of short breaks for respite care into one of the Transformational Programme workstreams;
- in response to a question about waiting times for elective surgeries delayed due to Covid, it was agreed that the Director of Adult Social Care would liaise with the Member (Mrs E McAllister) directly; and
- regarding access to training, it was explained that the focus had to be on building a career with meaningful development and income opportunities.

Thereafter, the Committee **NOTED** the contents of the report and that the Director of Adult Social Care, NHS Highland would:-

- i. investigate the feasibility of NHS Highland Locality Managers providing local briefings at ward level;
- ii. include the provision of short breaks for respite care into one of the Transformational Programme workstreams; and
- iii. seek further information for Mrs E McAllister on hospital waiting times for elective surgeries which had been delayed as a result of Covid.

**7. Update on Joint Transformational Programme with NHS Highland
Fios às Ùr mu Cho-Phrògram Cruth-atharrachaidh le NHS na
Gàidhealtachd**

There had been circulated Report No HCW/09/21 dated 5 May 2021 by the Executive Chief Officer Health and Social Care.

During discussion, the following issues were raised:-

- regular updates and exception reports when required would be welcomed by the Committee;
- the risk of not achieving the savings target of £3m in Year 1 was queried, noting that only £1m of savings had been identified to date. The services in which further savings were being sought were challenging, with the situation having worsened due to covid-19, and Mr Loudon offered to help identify possible areas of overspend or duplication. In response, a summary was provided of the monitoring and governance that was in place, which included weekly meetings of the Project Team, and fortnightly scrutiny by both Chief Executives. The PMO / pipeline approach being used was summarised and it was clarified that although £1m of savings had been reported, the up to date figure was £1.4m of adjusted savings, with other savings projects currently in the pipeline (£1.7m) but not yet cleared. There had been a short-term focus on 'quick win' savings, with savings arising from service transformation likely to take longer to be achieved. The importance of communication with communities during the change process was emphasised and any help offered by Members with scrutiny was welcomed;
- it was hoped the savings target was not the only driver for the programme and attention was drawn to the risks arising from possible negative public responses to transformational change, which would have to be closely monitored. It was clarified that transformation was still at an early stage and that full engagement with stakeholders would be undertaken; and
- attention was drawn to the role of the Recovery, Improvement & Transformation Board and the intention to report progress with transformational change to all relevant strategic committees to ensure their ownership of the projects and their awareness of any changes in ways of working. It was important the Joint Monitoring Committee had the information it required to make decisions.

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

**8. Health and Social Care Directorate Service Plan
Plana Seirbheis Buidheann-Stiùiridh na Slàinte is a' Chùrain Shòisealta**

There had been circulated Report No HCW/10/21 dated 5 May 2021 by the Executive Chief Officer Health and Social Care.

During discussion, the following issues were raised:-

- it was important to consider how local initiatives, such as Pathfinder in Caithness, would feed into the Plan to continue to improve lives for all. It was explained that key issues included cascading and sharing learning, but also tailoring processes to suit local needs, and taking geographical issues into consideration;

- reducing duplication to improve efficiency was vital, and attention was drawn to the links between the different issues on the agenda for the meeting and the need to have appropriate personnel in place to achieve the aims of the Plan;
- the improved relationship between the Council and NHS Highland was welcomed and information was sought on digital connectivity between the two organisations. In relation to IT, the increased use of mobile technology such as iPads was a key aspiration to allow frontline staff to work more flexibly and be less desk-bound. There remained issues around the wider IT systems communicating with one another, as well as issues of data protection and further consideration of this was a significant piece of work that would be required in future. Work was ongoing on various aspects of this with NHS Highland's eHealth team;
- in relation to gathering data, it was important to consider and action challenging data as it was obtained, and to learn and support change as part of the journey of care, with particular reference to the role of corporate parent and carer;
- information was sought and provided on the recruitment of Mental Health Officers (MHOs), noting there were national issues with many MHOs approaching retirement age. Work was being undertaken with universities on this;
- there had been an increase in the number and duration of Child Protection registrations during the Covid-19 crisis, partly due to the cessation of some wraparound services and the extension of some legal processes. Numbers were returning to pre-Covid levels. It was suggested schools could act as a useful early warning system for child protection issues and continued links between schools and children's services were encouraged;
- it was necessary to tackle the housing shortage in remote and rural areas of the Highlands to encourage more professionals to work there. Various initiatives were highlighted including joint recruitment campaigns with other public sector organisations, marketing the Highlands as an attractive place to live, encouraging training opportunities to retain local people, and ensuring national recruitment websites provided accurate job location information. It was suggested Community Psychiatric Nurses be included in this due to the ongoing mental health challenges being faced;
- attention was drawn to the declining number of foster carers;
- the intention to seek and record the views of young people was crucial;
- discussion took place on how to reach and / or report children suspected of experiencing trauma, and a brief summary was provided of plans to develop a trauma-informed workforce; and
- information was sought and provided on data protection legislation covering the sharing of information between public sector organisations.

The Committee **NOTED** the comments made during discussion and **APPROVED** the Service Plan for 2021/22.

9. Self-Directed Support (Children) Taic Fèin-Stiùirichte (Clann)

Declarations of Interest:

Ms L Munro declared a financial interest in this item as an employee of Carr Gomm and SDS advisor and left the meeting during this item. Ms N Sinclair took the Chair for this item.

Mr D Louden declared a non-financial interest in this item as a Director of "Made in Tain" a charity providing Self Directed Support but, having applied the test outlined in Paragraphs 5.2 and 5.3 of the Councillors' Code of Conduct, concluded that the interest did not preclude her involvement.

There had been circulated Report No HCW/11/21 dated 6 May 2021 by the Executive Chief Officer Health and Social Care.

During discussion, the following issues were raised:-

- information in the report on efforts to meet living wage levels was welcomed;
- engagement with Community Planning Partnerships was important;
- a report to a future Committee outlining the views and opinions of service users to inform future actions was requested; and
- attention was drawn to the possible need for redundancy payments to contracted personal assistants once their services were no longer required, for example after transition of the client from Children's to Adult Services, and whether there could be an ongoing role for experienced and trained assistants.

The Committee **NOTED** the report and **AGREED** to present a report to a future committee outlining views and opinions of service users to inform future actions.

10. Welfare Update **Fios às Ùr mu Shochair**

There had been circulated Report No HCW/12/21 dated 23 April 2021 by the Executive Chief Officer Health and Social Care.

During discussion, the following issues were raised:-

- it was clarified the £200 Child Winter Heating Assistance was an application-based one-off payment per child;
- in order to provide early intervention and support, especially for low paid workers, continued strengthening of links between the welfare team and related health and social care services was urged;
- practical, local measures, such as breakfast clubs at schools, should be considered to help combat child poverty, in addition to encouraging uptake of Universal Credit. Some Covid-related food bank provision was being wound down and could create gaps. Attention was drawn to other initiatives, such as summer programmes for children, and a report on child poverty was due to be presented at the next Committee meeting; and
- the latest child poverty data would be circulated after the meeting.

The Committee **NOTED** the:-

- i. range of benefits and support available to families and the work undertaken by the Highland Council to ensure that the right people received the right benefit at the right time;

- ii. work being undertaken to produce the Local Child Poverty Action Update Report 2020 – 2021; and
- iii. Head of Revenues & Customer Services would provide the latest child poverty data to the Committee outwith the meeting.

11. Vulnerable Children and Young People Clann agus Daoine Óga So-leònte

Declarations of Interest – Mr A Jarvie declared a non-financial interest in this item as a Director of HLH but, having applied the test outlined in Paragraphs 5.2 and 5.3 of the Councillors’ Code of Conduct, concluded that the interest did not preclude her involvement.

There had been circulated Report No HCW/13/21 dated 15 April 2021 by the Executive Chief Officer Health and Social Care.

During discussion, the following issues were raised:-

- it was important to tackle issues before they became a crisis when possible, and a consistent approach was required across all public sector and third party organisations and groups;
- the value to children and young people of sports and other activities outside the home was highlighted;
- it would be helpful if school coursework could be used to emphasise the consequences of sharing inappropriate images on the internet. Parents were key in reinforcing this message, alongside support and education services, and attention was drawn to the need to also provide support on recovery measures that could be undertaken after a young person had shared an image; and
- the children of Looked After young people sometimes lacked wider family such as grandparents, aunts and uncles who might provide support. Issues such as this required a Members’ seminar to develop and better understand the role of the corporate parent, ideally an in-person seminar if Covid-19 restrictions permitted.

The Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the content of the report;
- ii. **NOTED** the further development of family support services;
- iii. **AGREED** to support further consultation with services, communities, children, young people and families to identify gaps and possible solutions in relation to the provision of prevention and early intervention services; and
- iv. **AGREED** that a Members’ seminar be held to develop and understand the role of the corporate parent.

12. Mental Health Strategy Ro-innleachd Slàinte Inntinn

There had been circulated Report No HCW/14/21 dated 4 May 2021 by the Executive Chief Officer Health and Social Care.

During discussion, the following issues were raised:-

- Mental Health issues overlapped with many different services and organisations, at local, regional and national level, and a scoping exercise should be undertaken to establish a comprehensive list of all groups and individuals involved in the provision of Mental Health Services, detailing their roles and the services being provided;
- it was important that mental health services were person-centric, with a tiered approach that supported community driven change and place-based planning, with officer assistance to groups where appropriate;
- the Pathfinder programme in Caithness was welcomed and it was hoped the outcomes would soon be validated and rolled out elsewhere without waiting until the end of the project; and
- attention as drawn to transition issues for young people accessing mental health services when they turned 18, and to the challenges of keeping track of young people aged 16-18 who had left school.

The Committee:-

- NOTED** the work being undertaken in this area and the proposals for building on this to create a mental health strategy that addressed the wide-ranging needs of those in the community;
- NOTED** the development of a practice model that embraced universal services through to more complex and serious mental health conditions that required inpatient treatment; and
- AGREED** a scoping exercise be undertaken to establish a comprehensive list of all groups and individuals involved in the provision of Mental Health Services, detailing their roles and the services being provided.

13. North Coast Care Facility Goireas Cùrain a' Chosta a Tuath

There had been circulated Report No HCW/15/21 dated 15 April 2021 by the Executive Chief Officer Health and Social Care.

During discussion, the following issues were raised:-

- the update was welcomed and thanks were extended to the staff and local communities for their work in future-proofing the north coast with a new blended way of working which involved the public and private sectors. In addition to providing care, the facility would provide valuable employment and training opportunities; and
- information was sought by Mrs McAllister on the history of the project development with a view to replicating it elsewhere.

The Committee:-

- NOTED** the progress and actions taken forward to support development of a new North Coast Care Facility;
- NOTED** that a report detailing recommendations on procurement and delivery route for the project would be considered by the 24 June 2021 Council; and
- AGREED** the Head of Support Services provide further information to Mrs E McAllister on the history of the development of the North Coast Care Facility.

14. Minutes
Geàrr-chunntas

Declarations of Interest – Mr A Jarvie declared a non-financial interest in this item as a Director of HLH but, having applied the test outlined in Paragraphs 5.2 and 5.3 of the Councillors’ Code of Conduct, concluded that the interest did not preclude her involvement.

The following Minutes had been circulated and were **NOTED**:-

- i. Highland Child Protection Committee held on 3 March 2021;
- ii. Highland Violence Against Women Partnership Group held on 16 December 2020; and
- iii. Highland Council/NHS Highland Joint Monitoring Committee held on 8 March 2021.

The meeting ended at 4.50pm

The Highland Council

Minutes of Meeting of the **Education Committee** held remotely on Thursday 20 May 2021 at 10.35 am.

Present:

Mr G Adam	Mr T Heggie (Vice Chair)
Mrs I Campbell	Mr A Henderson (substitute)
Mr A Christie	Mr A Jarvie
Mrs M Cockburn	Ms E Knox
Mr J Finlayson (Chair)	Mr G MacKenzie
Mr L Fraser	Mr A Sinclair
Mr K Gowans	Ms N Sinclair
Mr A Graham	

Religious Representatives:

Mr R Finlay
Ms S Lamont

Youth Convener:

Ms A Johnston

Non-Members also present:

Mrs J Barclay	Mrs E McAllister
Mr A Baxter	Mr J McGillivray
Mrs G Campbell-Sinclair	Ms L Munro
Mrs H Carmichael	Mrs M Paterson
Mrs A MacLean	Ms T Robertson
Mr D Macpherson	Mr B Thompson

In attendance:

Ms D Manson, Chief Executive
Ms N Grant, Executive Chief Officer – Education and Learning
Mr B Porter, Head of Resources
Ms L Walker, Education Support Officer
Ms M MacDonald, Professional Learning, Leadership and Empowerment Team
Ms T Stones, Head Teacher, Dornoch Academy
Mr R Quigley, ICTiLearning, Improvement and Strategy
Mr D Paterson, Quality Improvement Officer
Mr I Jackson, Education Officer
Ms R Mackay, Head Teacher, Holm Primary School
Ms J Skene-Maclean, Head Teacher, Kyle and Kyleakin Primary Schools
Mr R Campbell, Estate Strategy Manager, Environment and Infrastructure
Ms J Douglas, Care and Learning Alliance (Third Sector)
Ms G Newman, Highland Children's Forum (Third Sector)
Mr J Hasson, Highland Parent Council Partnership
Miss J MacLennan, Principal Administrator

Miss M Murray, Committee Administrator
Mrs O Bayon, Committee Officer

Also in attendance:

Ms S Amor, Child Health Commissioner, NHS Highland
Mr S Walsh, Chief Executive, High Life Highland
Ms Y Ross, Youth Development Officer, High Life Highland
Mr D Cundall, Caithness Cares Project

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 Finlayson in the Chair

Preliminaries

Prior to the commencement of formal business, the Chair stated that today's meeting was important as, since the Committee had last met in February 2021, there had been many changes in terms of lockdown easing and returning pupils to school. The meeting would focus on the return to school and the plans going forward and would once again recognise the great work of all school staff, parents, pupils, communities and key third sector stakeholders. Whilst acknowledging the many challenges being faced, the meeting provided an opportunity to recognise the positive things happening in all educational settings in Highland.

He went on to welcome Anja Johnston, who had recently taken up the role of Youth Convener, to her first meeting of the Committee. Anja had previously worked as an Assistant Youth Worker with High Life Highland and was actively involved in volunteering with Scouts Scotland. As Youth Convener, Anja provided a consistent link for Elected Members and senior Council officials, representing young people's views, and would act as a sounding board for youth issues in the Highlands. Anja would attend full Council and Community Planning meetings and had full voting rights on the Education Committee with speaking rights at all other Council Committees.

Business

1. Apologies for Absence
Leisgeulan

Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of Mr S Mackie, Mr R MacWilliam, Mrs F Robertson, Mr G Ross and Mr W Skene.

2. Declarations of Interest
Foillseachaidhean Com-pàirt

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

- Item 5 – Mr A Jarvie (non-financial)
- Item 8 – Mr K Gowans (financial)
- Item 9 – Mr A Christie (financial) and Mr A Jarvie (non-financial)

Item 14 – Mr A Christie (financial), Mr K Gowans (financial) and Mr A Jarvie (non-financial)

Mr T Heggie declared a non-financial interest, as a Director of High Life Highland, in any item that might raise discussion on High Life Highland but, having applied the test outlined in Paragraphs 5.2 and 5.3 of the Councillors' Code of Conduct, concluded that his interest did not preclude his involvement in the discussion.

Ms N Sinclair declared a general non-financial interest, but particularly relevant to items 4 and 10, as a parent of two children attending Newton Park Nursery and Primary School but, having applied the test outlined in Paragraphs 5.2 and 5.3 of the Councillors' Code of Conduct, concluded that her interest did not preclude her involvement in the discussion.

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

Ms L Walker, Education Support Officer, informed Members of outstanding achievements by pupils and schools, a digital summary of which had been circulated via ThingLink in advance of the Committee.

The Chair then introduced a short video created by the Corporate Communications team which highlighted the Council's recruitment of young people for the recent Scottish Parliament election and the organisation's engagement with them in the democratic process. During the video, Members heard some of the young people involved outlining what they had enjoyed, learned and gained from the experience.

The Committee **NOTED** the outstanding achievements and video.

4. Return to School Tilleadh dhan Sgoil

In introducing this item, the Chair commented that despite the challenges of the last year it had been an exciting term for Highland schools as children and young people had reconnected with face to face learning. School staff had shown tremendous resilience and enthusiasm as they had coped with the periods of remote learning, the need for careful risk mitigation and other challenges that had arisen as pupils had returned to school while the pandemic continued. Secondary schools had faced an additional challenge as a result of the SQA's Alternative Certification Model and teachers' professionalism and compassion had been hugely important in supporting young people through the assessment process. School communities were at the heart of the Council's work and gratitude was expressed to Head Teachers and all other school staff for their hard work and commitment as the end of a very challenging school session approached.

The Chair, Vice Chair and Education Committee spokesperson for the Opposition, who had been actively involved in the Return to School Project Board and meetings with the Highland Parent Council Partnership, officers and Head Teachers, then provided verbal updates on the return to school summer session 2021, during which detailed information was provided on key areas including: the Return to School Project Board and the collaborative and cross-service work that had taken place to support the return to school; ICT in Learning; Early Learning and Childcare; Scottish

Qualifications Authority – Alternative Certification Model; Education Scotland; recruitment; leadership; and parental/partner engagement.

The Child Health Commissioner, NHS Highland, referred to the ongoing dialogue between NHS Highland and the Council and expressed appreciation for how hard colleagues in the Education and Learning Service and schools had worked to support the work of the specialist health protection team and the wider public health team to ensure an appropriate response in relation to Covid. Whilst the current number of Covid cases in Highland was low, ongoing attention to detail in terms of face coverings, hand washing and physical distancing was important and it was necessary to stay mindful about mixing as lockdown restrictions eased, with outdoors continuing to be safer than indoors. She went on to summarise the current testing and symptom management arrangements in schools and explained that the Public Health Consultant leading on Covid was preparing a letter, clarifying several key points, which would be distributed to Head Teachers at the end of the week.

The Chair of the Highland Parent Council Partnership (HPCP) explained that the HPCP had been working closely with the Executive Chief Officer Education and Learning and her team. The work that had been done had been energetic and the ideas and processes being taken forward were creative and, it was considered, would reveal a different side to how schools were performing in the coming months and years. He commended teachers, support staff and officers for their efforts and looked forward to working together going forward.

During discussion, information was sought on the number of young people that had asked to repeat S6. The Executive Chief Officer Education and Learning undertook to look at the data and respond to Councillor Cockburn outwith the meeting.

The Committee otherwise **NOTED** the update.

5. Children and Young People Summer of Hope Programme Prògram Samhraidh Chloinne is Dhaoine Òga

Declaration of Interest: Mr A Jarvie declared a non-financial interest in this item as a Director of High Life Highland but, as a Council appointee and in terms of the specific exclusion in Section 5.18 of the Councillors' Code of Conduct, confirmed that he would remain and take part in the discussion.

There had been circulated Report No EDU/07/21 dated 25 April 2021 by the Executive Chief Officer Education and Learning.

The Chair was sure all Members would be delighted to see this report given the difficult times young people had lived through during the last year. He welcomed the funding from the Scottish Government to support the Summer of Hope Programme (the Programme), adding that he was certain all Members would support any and all programmes that looked to sustain improved wellbeing and engagement which would help make readiness for learning more accessible and enjoyable for children and young people when the new school session began in August 2021.

During discussion, the following issues were raised:-

- whilst recognising the need to target priority pupils, Members welcomed the Programme being made available to all pupils;
- there appeared to be some gaps in terms of location of delivery and an assurance was sought, and provided, that all areas of Highland would have equal and equitable access to the Programme;
- the impact of Covid was not going to be addressed by the end of the summer and information was sought, and provided, as to what could be done to encourage the Scottish Government to provide repeat funding to build on the Programme in 2022, how it was intended to evaluate the Programme, both qualitatively and quantitatively, and what surveys could be undertaken with the young people that would be experiencing the fabulous activities on offer;
- the Highland Children and Young People's Forum (HCYPF) welcomed the report and the partnership approach being taken. Any progress that had been made in terms of closing the inequality gap had been undone by the pandemic, many young people at the wrong end of the gap having had a tough year due to greater caring responsibilities, increased stresses at home, domestic abuse etc. However, at the other end of the gap, some young people had leaped ahead having had one to one learning support from parents and the opportunity to develop life skills. It was also recognised that there were young people who were not at the wrong end of the gap but had struggled with mental health or other issues, and it was important that the Programme was inclusive. It was suggested that, after the summer, it was necessary to look at mentorship or tutors to support the young people that had fallen behind. The proposed evaluation of the Programme was welcomed, as was the inclusion of a Children's Rights and Wellbeing Impact Assessment in the report, and it was added that the project would not only help children be healthy and active but would help them be included; and
- reference was made to the instructive and valuable Health and Social Care Committee the previous day, and the collaborative work taking place between Education and Learning and Health and Social Care teams was welcomed. It was important to take cognisance of the challenges and risks facing families and, as an organisation, to continue to emphasise the collaborative work taking place and ensure it was Highland-wide. Data was a tool, and it was necessary to receive updates at every Committee as the impact of Covid would be ongoing.

The Committee **AGREED**:-

- i. to the delivery of a 2021 summer of hope programme and outcomes as described within the report, within the expected funding envelope of £500,000 from Scottish Government, and with detailed finalisation of the programme and implementation to be assigned to officers; and
- ii. to the principles set out in section 4 of the report to support the readiness for learning of children and young people.

6. Wellbeing Counselling Update **Fios às Ùr mu Chomhairleachadh Soirbheis**

In introducing this item, the Chair commented that the Committee had discussed the importance of counselling in schools many times. However, whilst Members had talked about how to allocate funding and what was available in each area, education was about children, young people, staff, schools, and communities, and hearing and understanding their contexts, successes and challenges. This item was therefore

being presented by Head Teachers from schools in two different settings which it was hoped would help Members appreciate what was being done across the vast local authority area and the impact it was having in terms of supporting young people.

Ms R Mackay, Head Teacher, Holm Primary School, and Ms J Skene-Maclean, Head Teacher, Kyle and Kyleakin Primary Schools, then gave verbal updates on school counselling provision from two different perspectives, Holm Primary School having only been involved for a few months whereas schools in Skye and Lochalsh had been able to offer children and young people a professional counselling service for many years. Counselling was an important step in the journey towards ensuring the positive mental health of young people and detailed information was provided on the arrangements that were in place, the many and varied issues young people might require counselling for and the positive impacts of counselling, as well as any associated challenges. In addition, feedback was provided from parents and young people on their experiences of school counselling.

During discussion, the following issues were raised:-

- hearing perspectives from two different school settings was helpful and the powerful, inspirational and informative contributions from both Head Teachers were welcomed;
- it was necessary to minimise bureaucracy to ensure that accessing counselling services was as easy as possible;
- information was sought, and provided, on whether secondary schools were as fully engaged with counselling; how the pupils who received counselling were selected; whether there was any unmet need and, if so, whether there was sufficient funding to meet it; how Head Teachers worked with other agencies to assist families that might require other services; and the interface with Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services;
- it was encouraging to hear that there was prompt intervention on mental health issues;
- people often underestimated the positive impact counselling could have on lives;
- the importance of working with community planning partners to take this forward was emphasised;
- the Chair suggested that consideration be given to a seminar to better Members' understanding of the current practice model;
- reference was made to a community action plan survey carried out by the Lochalsh Collaboration, the results of which indicated that mental health issues were far more prevalent in the 18 and under age group than older age groups, and it was questioned whether this was because young people were more aware of and spoke more openly about mental health issues. The Chair added that this highlighted the need to ensure that the Committee continued to hear from young people; and
- it was highlighted that the Health, Social Care and Wellbeing Committee had made a commitment, at its meeting on 19 May 2021, to carry out an asset mapping exercise in respect of mental health support services, which would also identify unmet need.

The Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the update; and

- ii. **AGREED** that consideration be given to a Members' Seminar on the current practice model.

In terms of Standing Order 9, the Committee **AGREED** to consider item 14 at this stage.

14. High Life Highland Update Report Aithisg às Ùr mu High Life na Gàidhealtachd

Declarations of Interest:

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

Mr K Gowans declared a financial interest on the grounds that a close family member was an employee of High Life Highland but, having applied the test outlined in Paragraphs 5.2 and 5.3 of the Councillors' Code of Conduct, concluded that his interest did not preclude his involvement in the discussion.

Mr A Jarvie declared a non-financial interest as a Director of High Life Highland but, as a Council appointee and in terms of the specific exclusion in Section 5.18 of the Councillors' Code of Conduct, confirmed that he would remain and take part in the discussion.

There had been circulated Report No EDU/15/21 dated 28 April 2021 by the Executive Chief Officer Education and Learning.

The Chief Executive, High Life Highland (HLH), gave a presentation in amplification of the report during which he provided a general update, reported on the company's performance against key performance indicators over the last year, HLH's recovery plan, facility opening and the charity's on-going digital innovation. A short video clip was also shown which highlighted the benefits of HLH's High Life Highland's virtual presence.

During discussion, the following issues were raised:-

- it was confirmed that it was the main charity which would have responsibility for bringing back in-house the operation of Bellfield Park and, depending on the decision of the City of Inverness Area Committee on 27 May 2021, which would be involved in discussions around the running of Inverness's Events and Festivals programme;
- HLH was commended on its innovative approach which had enabled music tuition to continue during both Lockdowns with further details were sought, and provided, as to how this had been achieved. Although there had been a decrease in demand, 70% of pupils had been retained;
- additional detail was sought on each of HLH's services to illustrate their key benefits and to enable Councillors to promote them and celebrate their success. It would also allow a greater understanding of the challenges the charity faced;
- it was not surprising that *highlife* subscriptions had dropped but, as facilities reopened, the number of subscriptions would no doubt recover. However,

further information was sought as to the strategy that was to be adopted in the interim;

- online engagement had increased and a blended approach would be adopted going forward; and
- appreciation was expressed for the exceptional hard work of HLH's employees during the pandemic.

The Committee **NOTED**:-

- i. the services that were delivered by High Life Highland during lockdown through the increased use of technology, including over 4 million online customer engagements in 2020/21;
- ii. the general updates, including those on High Life Highland's recovery work; and
- iii. the opening plan for High Life Highland services from 26 April 2021 as set out in Appendix A of the report.

7. Caithness Cares Progress Report Aithisg Adhartais Cùram Ghallaibh

There had been circulated Report No EDU/08/21 dated 30 April 2021 by the Executive Chief Officer Education and Learning.

The Chair introduced two young people, Dylan Cundall and Anja Johnston, who spoke about their involvement in the Caithness Cares project which included presenting to Elected Members on Personal and Social Education (PSE) and sexual abuse within Caithness and the wider Highlands, and sharing and identifying potential solutions to the issues that young people faced on a day to day basis. In relation to PSE and supporting young people, one suggestion put forward was expanding the Safe Highlanders event currently delivered to P7 pupils by bringing people into PSE classes and Secondary Schools to deliver life skills to young people in a more intimate way.

The Chair of the Caithness Committee then spoke to the pathfinder project, commenting that before it had been agreed there had been a growing sense of despair amongst the community and Elected Members. Longstanding challenges around poverty, long-term ill health, addiction and rural isolation had been magnified by the pressures of Covid and, tragically, many lives had been lost to overdose or suicide, many of them young people. The Community Resilience Group, with support from the local Community Partnership, had worked tirelessly to support the most vulnerable people and a campaign group called No More Lost Souls had given voice to the frustration and sadness that many shared. The arrival of the funding for the Caithness Cares project had been crucial in regaining some sense of control over the circumstances and gratitude was expressed to Elected Members for allowing this important work to begin in Caithness and to officers for their support in taking it forward. In particular, thanks were expressed to Tina Stones and Yvonne Ross for their wisdom, hard work and compassion.

The structure continued to evolve and there had been many early learning points. From the beginning, one of the greatest challenges had been managing public expectation around what Caithness Cares could deliver. The issues were deeply ingrained and the funding pot was not bottomless, so it had been necessary to be cognisant of the reality that whole system transformation took time, that the funding was specific for 5-26 year olds and there was a high level of corporate governance

and data collection that needed to be undertaken, and that there were multiple corporate and community partners all with their own remits and challenges. Early intervention and prevention were critical in building resilience for future generations but the tide would not turn overnight and sadly it could not be guaranteed that there would be no more lost souls.

However, what could be done and what had been done was to work with urgency, pragmatism and passion to move the project forward as quickly as possible. The report highlighted a substantial range of actions that had been put in place within a few months, from PSE curriculum to street work to supporting the recovery community. This could not have happened without the astonishing outpouring of support from local educationalists, health workers, youth workers, volunteers, community activists and people with lived experience of the issues. Throughout the public sector providers – the Council, NHS Highland, Police Scotland and High Life Highland – there had been a concerted effort to remove bureaucratic barriers to move things along. In fact, the biggest challenge had been to manage the response and put together structures that captured the enthusiasm and channelled it into a coherent strategy. The importance of communication and engagement had not been underestimated but it had been underlined massively in the past few months. It was necessary to really listen rather than just inform, and, on a few occasions, she had been surprised by what she had heard, which often went against her own assumptions. Most of all, it was important to listen to those with lived experience of mental health issues and addiction, and the young people at the heart of the project.

With regards to the structure, the tiered system sought to address the cluttered and confusing landscape. Caithness Cares would span the Council's Education and Health, Social Care and Wellbeing Committees, NHS Highland and the work of the Community Planning Partnership. However, young people would not come with a label or present as a tier. Each person was a unique individual and it was crucial that, whatever corporate structure was drawn up, people knew how to ask for help to make them safe, and the community fabric that was there to help them knew what support they could access and who to contact for it. Members talked about SHANAARI indicators, primary and secondary care, tertiary prevention, GIRFEC and all the associated policies and acronyms. However, this was the invisible scaffolding that linked everything together. It was not what communities should have to navigate, and they needed it to be demystified. Communities needed funding and staff and to know who did what. For lost souls, this could literally be the difference between life and death. In conclusion, she welcomed the report and looked forward to continuing to support its ambitions in Highland's communities.

During discussion, the following issues were raised:-

- the Chair concurred regarding the need to demystify the various acronyms, models etc and where they intersected, and it was hoped that, working in conjunction with the Chair of the Health, Social Care and Wellbeing Committee and relevant officers, something could be pulled together that would support Members as well as service users;
- whilst online resources were available, they were scattered and young people often did not know they existed. It would be helpful to create an app that was quick and easy to use and had all the information in one place so that young people could actively help themselves or support others. Reference was made to the suicide prevention app which was a step in the right direction;

- on a point being raised, it was confirmed that the timescale for rolling out the project to other areas was set out in the report;
- reference was made to Wellbeing Black Isle, which had been established in response to a series of suicides and attempted suicides, particularly amongst young people, and it was suggested it would be helpful for the Chair of the Caithness Committee and the young people involved in Caithness Cares to attend a meeting to exchange ideas and get an idea of the challenges in each area and how they might be overcome. Whilst it was recognised that localised approaches might be required, there were lessons that could be learned from each other;
- the views of the young people in attendance were sought on how PSE should be delivered in the future and it was queried what their involvement had been in the development of mental health support for young people in Caithness and how their engagement in the Caithness Cares project had enabled them to be a stronger advocate for young people in their area. In relation to PSE, it was explained that a wide consultation was taking place and, as part of Caithness Cares, Wick and Thurso High Schools, in consultation with pupils, were looking at redesigning their PSE curriculum. PSE was currently delivered by guidance teachers who were often under a tremendous amount of pressure and not able to fully deliver the curriculum they wished to. The Safe Highlander idea referred to earlier would allow guidance teachers the space they needed by bringing in experts to provide focussed sessions on a variety of topics decided by young people. This would be a more interactive and exciting way of learning and the same sessions being delivered at a number of schools would provide consistency. In relation to the development of mental health support, Anja Johnston had been actively involved with No More Lost Souls, a peer support group where people in the community could seek help. The group were not professionals but had lived experience and were willing to offer a listening ear and direct people to support services that the public were often not aware of. She was also part of the Caithness Cares group, particularly the youth sub-group, where she had provided input as a young person and helped with the development of the street work project which aimed to engage with young people and find out exactly what they wanted;
- there had been a significant increase in guidance teacher caseload during the pandemic and information was sought, and provided, as to what progress had been made in terms of increasing capacity to allow cases to be discharged and give teachers a better work-life balance as normality returned; and
- Members congratulated Anja Johnston on her appointment as Youth Convener and welcomed her involvement in important projects like Caithness Cares.

The Chair having thanked Dylan and Anja for their input, the Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the successful engagement and inclusion of children and young people and community partners in Caithness Cares;
- ii. **NOTED** the development of a practice model for universal mental health approaches in Caithness in tiers 1 and 2;
- iii. **NOTED** that The Highland Council would now work with partners in Caithness to create a structure that would enable the localised enhancement and re-design of services, including appropriate out of hours services as required in the local context ie create a tiered framework of service delivery and intervention from universal to targeted and legislative in Caithness ie tiers 3 and above; and

- iv. **AGREED** that the strategic 5 year development plan agreed at the February Education Committee be brought back to the Education and Health and Social Care Committees in September with details of roll out across the Highlands linked to the national recurring funding grants that would be available.

8. **Virtual Academy – update and next steps** **Acadamaidh Bhiortail – fios às ùr agus ath cheumannan**

There had been circulated Report No EDU/09/21 dated 10 May 2021 by the Executive Chief Officer Education and Learning.

The Chair highlighted that the report was divided into two sections, Section A looking at the progress and work of the Highland Virtual Academy (HVA) and how it had supported learners across Highland, and Section B looking at how things were going to develop going forward. He referred to the following quote from “A changing nation: how Scotland will thrive in a digital world”, commenting that there was no doubt that this also included education.

“Scotland’s future will be forged in a digital world. It’s a world in which data and digital technologies are transforming every element of our nation and our lives - people, place, economy and government.”

During discussion, the following issues were raised:-

- Members welcomed the report, which was hugely important for the future of education in the Highlands, particularly in smaller and more remote schools;
- in relation to the table at section 4.1.2 of the report setting out examples of courses offered, disappointment having been expressed that there was no mention of Gaelic, it was explained that Gaelic had not previously been requested by Head Teachers but it had been introduced for next session and it was hoped to increase uptake in the future. On the point being raised, it was confirmed that the asterisk related to courses that the HVA had capacity to deliver but had not been requested this year;
- there could be demand for virtual learning opportunities from both S6 pupils and adults, and information was sought, and provided, as to what focus had been given to these cohorts;
- given that one of the Council’s budget aims was to make a commercial success of the HVA, it was suggested that adult education was an area that could be expanded upon;
- further information was sought, and provided, on Google Workspace tenancies;
- in relation to Appendix 2, information was sought, and provided, on the reasons for the discrepancy in uptake across all sizes of school and what efforts were being made to encourage wider participation in what could only be an advantageous scheme for all schools;
- the HVA had huge potential and it would be helpful to hear more about how it was intended to promote it;
- there had been mention of a sixth form college approach for Advanced Highers, and it was necessary to discuss what that might look like;
- it was important to look again at the recovery angle. There was huge potential for community learning and for people to retrain and it was necessary to promote the HVA as a talent attraction concept as well;

- the report was forward looking as to how education could be delivered in a large rural local authority area in partnership with UHI, Inverness College and potentially anyone else across the world that would invest time and human resources in putting together a curriculum that was suited to Covid recovery and the 21st century;
- the number of Full Time Equivalent staff seemed very low given the number of subjects on offer;
- information was sought, and provided, on the reasons behind the drop-off in virtually every subject and how it was intended to tackle it;
- many S6 pupils were not currently moving on to tertiary education as they were uncertain what it was going to look like – ie online, blended or face-to-face learning – and it was suggested that, in conjunction with colleges, it was necessary to have additional conversations with pupils to reflect the current situation with Covid, provide relevant information and encourage them to move on to further or higher education;
- a sixth form college approach would help with transitions and would be popular; and
- where skills gaps had been identified, it was suggested that consideration be given to some form of sponsorship package to enable people who would otherwise not have the funding to retrain.

The Committee:-

- NOTED** the progress made with regards attainment and achievement in the Highland Virtual Academy;
- NOTED** the plans and position for continuing to support Highland Schools;
- scrutinised and **NOTED** the progress made to support inclusion and engagement of pupils in Highland; and
- NOTED** the plans for the expansion of the Highland Virtual Academy.

9. Education and Learning Directorate Service Plan 2021/22 Plana Buidheann-stiùiridh Foghlaim agus Ionnsachaidh 2021/22

Declarations of Interest:

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

Mr A Jarvie declared a non-financial interest as a Director of High Life Highland but, as a Council appointee and in terms of the specific exclusion in Section 5.18 of the Councillors' Code of Conduct, confirmed that he would remain and take part in the discussion.

There had been circulated Report No EDU/10/21 dated 10 May 2021 by the Executive Chief Officer Education and Learning.

During discussion, the following issues were raised:-

- the Service Plan was the one developed for the period 2017-2022 but, due to Covid, it had been necessary to have a specific plan in place for the short term.

The Chair thanked the officers involved and welcomed the collaborative approach adopted with schools, pupils and parents;

- the Education Service had had to be particularly responsive over the last year given the ever-changing circumstances;
- whilst it was suggested that the Education Service was the most important function the Council provided, it was contested that there were many other important services such as Adult Social Care, Children Services and those services provided by the Welfare and Homelessness teams. No specific Service should be promoted above others;
- it was argued that there was little evidence in the Plan to provide assurance that change would be achieved;
- clarification was sought as to what specifically was meant by closing the attainment gap;
- the Council's performance in a recent Times newspaper national ranking of secondary schools whose pupils attained five Highers or more was disappointing and it was suggested this was a result of restricting subject choices and teaching cuts;
- Highland Council had one of the worst teacher:pupil ratios so the review of this was welcomed. However, it needed to be actioned with some urgency, especially post Covid;
- in addition to structure change there also needed to be a culture change and a change of practises. The Chair pointed out that this was a short-term plan to respond to the impact of Covid and the full Service Plan would have a change of culture at its centre;
- clarification was sought as to what was meant by "workforce plans will be developed in line with the corporate strategy";
- it was disappointing that Elected Members were not going to be given the opportunity to discuss the implementation of the directorate structure;
- referring to the Scheme of Delegation, it was argued that there was a requirement for Members to be aware of staffing restructures. Structures for senior tiers had been agreed at the Full Council the week before but it was disappointing information sought on some of the details was still awaited, though a commitment was given that this would be provided to Councillor Jarvie shortly. Further, wider consultation with Members and Parent Councils would have been beneficial and would have helped to define the difference between what was operational and what was strategic. In response, the Chair explained that Committees were tasked with "considering" significant structure issues. The main purpose of this Directorate Service Plan was to set out the key priorities and outcomes and how these were to be monitored and delivered. The report before Members was to allow them to consider the delivery of the Service Plan at a strategic level and not how it would be achieved;
- in commending the Service Plan, it was questioned how it would be evaluated to demonstrate it was on track and to evidence that it was building on the improvements already made. It was suggested that Members could be involved in the evaluation, benchmarking and the taking forward of the Service Plan;
- significant savings had made but evidence was sought as to where and what had been changed, how this had been achieved and the consequent impact of these;
- it was important to recognise however that 70% of the key performance indicators for the Service had improved. Details provided by the Executive Chief Officer Education and Learning in her introduction about the improvements would be circulated to all Members;

- parents, pupils, staff and associated professionals were all working incredibly hard to improve attainment across the board, particularly to address the issues caused by Covid. The advances to reduce the attainment gap were to be welcomed and, while it was important not to be complacent, the journey had begun;
- clarification was sought as to how the move towards Collaborative Teachers would differ from the current Education Improvement Team. It was recognised that there had been weaknesses in the approach in the past and, going forward, there needed to be certainty that robust discussions could be facilitated between school professionals. It was vital Head Teachers were involved in peer evaluation and support;
- clarification was once again sought as to the status of the Education Improvement Team. Their substantive posts had been filled temporarily but the uncertainty as to what was happening was unfair to all concerned and there needed to be some resolution. The Chair explained that, by reviewing the staff structure, this would be resolved and that there would be greater clarity by the time the Committee next met in August;
- reference was made to Education Scotland's Quality Indicators for school inspections and the average evaluation of Highland Schools since 2017/18. By closer engagement with Education Scotland and HM Inspectors this could be improved. Continuing, by schools using "How good is our school" as a self-evaluation tool, any areas that needed to be improved would be highlighted together with how these could be addressed. It was important that schools used this and it was robustly promoted through the Continued Professional Development programme;
- school self-evaluation had been a focus for some time and there was no reason why schools could not achieve scores of Good or Excellent. It was questioned therefore if there was enough time and resources in place to do so. Self-evaluation was an ongoing process and should be part of the School Development Planning process;
- ideally Education Scotland would give schools a period of consolidation;
- the profile of education in the future was likely to change; and
- two of the nine themes in the National Improvement Plan referred to the relationship between schools and parents and the relationship and behaviours within schools. Measuring these would require listening to children and families to ensure progress was made in these positive relationships and the method as to how to do this would need careful consideration.

Thereafter, Mr J Finlayson, seconded by Mr T Heggie, **MOVED** the recommendation.

As an **AMENDMENT**, Mr A Jarvie, seconded by Mr A Sinclair, moved to agree the Service Plan with the exception of paragraphs 10.7 and 10.8 on structuring with more full details of the savings to date and structure to come to Members first and then to either Education Committee or Full Council.

On a vote being taken, the **MOTION** received 13 votes and the **AMENDMENT** received 2 votes, with 1 abstention, and the **MOTION** was therefore **CARRIED**, the votes having been cast as follows:-

For the Motion:

Mr G Adam, Mrs I Campbell, Mr A Christie, Mrs M Cockburn, Mr J Finlayson, Mr L Fraser, Mr K Gowans, Mr A Graham, Mr A Henderson, Mr T Heggie, Ms E Knox, Mr G Mackenzie and Ms N Sinclair.

For the Amendment:

Mr A Jarvie and Mr A Sinclair.

Abstention:

Mr R Finlay

Decision

The Committee **APPROVED** the Education and Learning Directorate Service Plan for 2021/22.

10. Early Learning and Childcare (ELC) Update
Fios às Ùr mu Thràth-ionnsachadh is Cùram-chloinne

There had been circulated Report No EDU/11/21 dated 29 April 2021 by the Executive Chief Officer Education and Learning.

After a summary of the report, Officers and the Team were commended for their excellent progress and hard work over the year on the ELC expansion programme.

Thereafter, the Committee **NOTED**:-

- i. the updated position regarding ELC and provision of 1140 hours;
- ii. progress towards delivering 1140 hours in all Highland settings;
- iii. the current status of ELC capital projects and work being taken forward to progress project delivery;
- iv. the work being taken forward, with partner involvement, to review funding arrangements and establish sustainable rates in line with Scottish Government guidance, with recommendations to come back to a future meeting of the Committee;
- v. the work being taken forward to support partner settings, including the administration of Scottish Government Covid-19 financial support schemes; and
- vi. the updates provided regarding ongoing discussions with Scottish Government in respect of service provision and development.

11. St Clements Primary School Update
Fios às Ùr mu Bhun-Sgoil Naomh Chliamain

There had been circulated Report No EDU/12/21 dated 10 May 2021 by the Executive Chief Officer Education and Learning.

During discussion, the following comments were made:-

- Members welcomed the inclusion of St Clements replacement school on the agenda and conveyed positive local interest by parents and school children who supported the project;

- the long journey into developing the capital project replacement for St Clement's school in Dingwall was recognised. However, Members highlighted the urgent need to ensure parent groups were adequately supported throughout the process. Local parents were wanted to be involved in the process rather than just being consulted;
- it was queried what actions were in place to secure funding to finance the delivery of the replacement school, as concerns were expressed that some part funding opportunities might have been already been missed. It was suggested that funding might be dependent on sourcing a site in the first instance;
- reference was made to a recent parental survey which had resulted in an overwhelming majority in favour of a stand-alone school located in Dingwall. In addition, Members referred to an email from the new build sub-committee established by parents, which demonstrated the strength of feeling on the matter;
- it was hoped that the sites at Ferry Road would be strongly considered and that any technical challenges could be overcome, as it was a locally preferred location. However, all possible sites irrespective of the local development plan should be considered and planning permission could then be investigated;
- the duties placed upon Highland Council to provide suitable education for children with physical disabilities was highlighted. Members expressed there were further needs for developing additional special schools in Highland; and
- it was important to recognise that Highland Council might have made mistakes in the past regarding delivering this school project. Thanks were expressed to parents, young people, officers and Members for their continued perseverance, tolerance and understanding. The need to re-engage and re-establish the project as a priority was emphasised.

The Committee **NOTED**:-

- i. the actions being taken forward to support the development of a project for a new St Clement's School;
- ii. the positive discussions that have taken place with parents and local stakeholders; and
- iii. the expectation of further reports to this Committee and/or Full Council in the coming months.

12. Newtonmore Gaelic Medium Education - Statutory Consultation Foghlam tron Ghàidhlig Bhaile Ùr an t-Slèibh – Co-chomhairle Reachdail

There had been circulated Report No EDU/13/21 dated 16 April 2021 by the Executive Chief Officer Education and Learning.

Congratulations were expressed for the report and the level of detail in the public consultation. Credit was also given to the Head Teacher in Newtonmore for their input into the process.

The Committee **AGREED** to proceed to statutory consultation on the basis of the proposal attached to the report.

13. Statutory Consultation – Gaelic Medium Catchment Proposal for Acharacle Primary School
Co-chomhairle Reachdail – Moladh airson Sgìre-sgoile Foghlam tron Ghàidhlig airson Bun-Sgoil Àth Tharracail

There had been circulated Report No EDU/14/21 dated 10 May 2021 by the Executive Chief Officer Education and Learning.

Members welcomed the report and the further development of Gaelic in Lochaber. Tribute was also paid to former Councillor Dr Michael Foxley for his contributions towards promoting the Gaelic language in the area.

The Committee **AGREED** to proceed to statutory consultation on the basis of the proposal attached to the report.

The meeting concluded at 3.55 pm.

The Highland Council

Minutes of Meeting of the **Badenoch and Strathspey Area Committee** held remotely on 25 May 2021 at 10.30 am.

Present:

Mr J Bruce
Mrs M Cockburn

Ms P Hadley
Mr B Lobban

In attendance:

Mrs K Lackie, Executive Chief Officer Performance & Governance
Ms L Cowie, Ward Manager, Policy & Reform
Mr D Wood, Principal Housing Officer, Housing & Property
Ms F Shearer, Area Education and Learning Manager, Education & Learning
Mr R Porteous, Roads Operations Manager, Infrastructure & Environment
Mrs L Dunn, Principal Administrator, Performance & Governance

Also in attendance:

Mr K Rodgers, Project Director, NHS Highland
Inspector V Tough, 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 B Lobban in the Chair

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. NHS Redesign Project Update Fios às Ùr mu Phròiseact Ath-dhealbhadh an NHS

There was a verbal update by the Project Director, NHS Highland, on the NHS Redesign project. The Project Director advised that the project continued to be progressed against the revised Covid-19 Plan and the scheduled handover date was 18 August 2021. He gave an update on work currently being progressed which included mapping out the patient journey, liaising with the existing workforce and recruitment, and softening the internal environment through the use of public art. Further information was provided on the redesign and investment of ongoing community services such as Care at Home, End of Life Care and Therapy Beds. With regard to Health Centres, he advised that work had started to increase the

footprint in Kingussie and Grantown had reached the stage of advanced planning. In conclusion, he advised that there would be an open weekend at the end of August 2021 whereby members of the public would be able to book an appointment to take a tour of the hospital prior to opening.

During discussion, the following main points were raised:-

- Members welcomed that the project was nearing completion;
- During a query on the future use of Aviemore Health Centre, it was explained that NHS Highland was awaiting a response from the Council regarding this. It was requested that the ECO Performance & Governance and Ward Manager pursue this response;
- In terms of local schools providing art for the hospital, it was reported that the secondary schools had been involved and would be providing the glass manifestations but work would be undertaken with a view to involving primary schools;
- Concern was expressed at the removal of changing facilities from the new hospital but it was clarified that there would be provision for this within the accessible WC;
- The recruitment for district nurses and mental health officers was welcomed;
- Further information was sought on the independent sector contract and assurance sought that this would cover all aspects of care required;
- An update was sought and provided on the Radiology Services during which it was reported that assurance was being sought to ensure the provision of local X-ray facilities. It was indicated that it did not seem sensible for this service to be omitted given the high level of visitors to the area;
- In terms of in-patient entertainment, it was explained that most people had their own devices and that access was provided to a dedicated WIFI network for patients;
- It was confirmed that there would be 24 hospital beds in total with 20 being used in the first instance and four being retained for future proofing purposes; and
- It was confirmed that there was a multi-disciplinary approach to End of Life Care. Provision of this service along with support from hospices was commended.

Thereafter, the Committee **NOTED** the presentation on the NHS Redesign and **AGREED** that the ECO Performance & Governance and Ward Manager pursue the response from the Council to NHS Highland regarding the future use of Aviemore Health Centre.

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

There had been circulated Report No BSAC/06/21 dated 11 May 2021 by the Area Inspector.

During discussion, the following main points were raised:-

- Appreciation was expressed to the Police for their continued support;
- It was indicated that 2020 had been an extraordinary year and this should be borne in mind when making any future statistical comparisons;
- The Council had incurred expenditure as a result of a number of instances of vandalism, and although it did not excuse or condone this behaviour, it did emphasise the importance providing young people with positive options, such as of youth groups and activities, to do during their free time;
- Further information was sought and provided on the partnership working being undertaken to enhance the services and support to young people; and
- With regard to the increasing public anxiety in respect of drugs in the community, assurance was provided that this was a Police priority and that every effort was being made to address this issue.

Thereafter, the Committee **NOTED** the 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 1 April 2020 – 31 March 2021.

5. Housing Performance Report – 1 April 2020 to 31 March 2021
Aithisg Coileanaidh Taigheadais – 1 Giblean 2020 gu 31 Màrt 2021

There had been circulated Report No BSAC/07/21 dated 28 April 2021 by the Executive Chief Officer Housing and Property.

During discussion, the following points were raised:-

- Increasing rent arrears had been an ongoing concern. In comparing Quarter 4 2020/21 to the same period for the previous year, it was very similar and it was welcomed that the position had not further deteriorated;
- Further information was provided on the changed provision for Homelessness during which it was explained that due to the Scottish Government's Unacceptable Accommodation Order, Badenoch House could no longer be used for this purpose. It was explained that the Council did not have any surplus stock. Council stock was being used as temporary units and a flexible approach was being adopted to ensure that there was provision across the Badenoch and Strathspey area. In addition, Badenoch House was being developed into five self-contained units which should be available for use next year;
- Concern was expressed at tenants being evicted from the private rental market in order that the accommodation could be used for holiday lets. It was confirmed that demand on the housing waiting list had not increased; and
- The return of doorstep visits was welcomed. It was reported that there had been some isolated incidents of Anti-social Behaviour, mainly arising from pressures from lockdown, but that these had been managed.

Thereafter, the Committee **NOTED** the information provided on housing performance for the period 1 April 2020 to 31 March 2021.

**6. Education Report - Badenoch & Strathspey
Aithisg Foghlaim – Bàideanach & Srath Spè**

There had been circulated Report No BSAC/08/21 dated 10 May 2021 by the Area Education and Learning Manager.

During discussion, the following points were raised:-

- Further information was sought and provided on the steps being taken to ensure the local pupils were not being disadvantaged by the SQA assessment process;
- It was queried how many pupils had elected to repeat 6th year and the importance of ensuring that there was no stigma attached to this was emphasised. It was confirmed that this information would be circulated to the Committee;
- Assurance was provided that Members would be kept informed of the local programme of events for the ‘Summer of Hope’;
- Further information was sought on whether there were sufficient staffing levels to deliver the 1140 Early Learning Care provision. It was queried how many staff were being recruited in regard to this and this information would be sought and circulated to the Committee;
- Praise was expressed for the positive integration of pupils on returning to school but it was queried if there had been any instances of young people experiencing difficulty. Further information was provided on the support being provided in this regard; and
- It was queried whether there had been any uptake within the ward of the Government’s STEM training scheme for Early Year practitioners. Further information would be provided on this to the Committee.

Thereafter, the Committee **NOTED** the contents of the report, including the new format and **AGREED** that further information be circulated to the Committee on:-

- i. the number pupils electing to repeat 6th year;
- ii. the number of Early Years staff being recruited; and
- iii. whether there had been any uptake within the ward of the Government’s STEM training scheme for Early Year practitioners.

**7. Area Roads Programme 2021/22
Càradh Rathaidean Sgìre 2021/22**

There had been circulated Report No BSAC/09/21 dated 5 May 2021 by the Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure and Environment.

During discussion, the following points were raised:-

- The increase in the capital programme was welcomed but there was a need for sustained investment in order to plan ongoing maintenance improvements;
- It was suggested, and supported, that a report should be submitted to a future Ward Business Meeting on implementing charges for on-street parking and that the revenue generated could be utilised to provide additional car parking; and

- Further information was sought and provided on whether there had been a need for extra emergency resource for drainage and gully cleaning.

The Committee **APPROVED** the proposed prioritised 2021/22 Roads Programme for Badenoch and Strathspey Area and **AGREED** that a report be submitted to a future Ward Business Meeting on implementing charges for on-street parking.

8. Minutes Geàrr-chunntas

There had been circulated and **NOTED** Minutes of Meeting of the Badenoch and Strathspey Area Committee held on 9 February 2021 which were approved by the Council on 25 March 2021.

The meeting was closed at 11.47pm.

The Highland Council

Minutes of Meeting of the **Easter Ross Area Committee** held remotely on Tuesday, 25 May, 2021, at 10 am.

Present:

Mr M Finlayson
Mr D Louden
Ms P Munro

Mr A Rhind
Ms F Robertson (**in the Chair**)
Ms M Smith

Officials in Attendance:

Helen Ross Senior Ward Manager, CSER
Mark Rodger, ECO - Property & Housing
Alison Clark, Head of Policy
Jim Holden, Housing Manager
Andrew Puls, Acting Environment Manager/Conservation Officer
Sarah James-Gaukroger, Townscape Heritage Assistant Project Officer
Jane MacLennan, Principal Administrator
Fiona MacBain, Committee Administrator

Also in Attendance:

Alex McKinley, Scottish Fire and Rescue Service

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

1. Apologies for Absence Leisgeulan

There were no apologies.

2. Declarations of Interest Foillseachaidhean Com-pàirt

Item 4 – Mrs P Munro (non-financial)
Item 5 – Mr D Louden (financial)

3. Fire – Area Performance Summary Report Smàladh – Geàrr Aithisg Coileanadh Sgìreil

There had been circulated Report No ERA/11/21 dated 12 May 2021 by the Group Commander – Service Delivery, Highland North, Scottish Fire & Rescue Service.

During discussion, Members thanked retained firefighters for their services, and their employers for supporting their valued participation. Fire and Rescue Service

staff were thanked for their handling of the Park Primary school fire on behalf of the local community.

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

4. Lease of HRA Property in Milnafua to Action for Children
Aonta-màil air Cuid-seilbh HRA ann am Muileann nam Fuatha do Action for Children

Declaration of Interest - Mrs P Munro declared a non financial interest as a volunteer at the unit but, having applied the test outlined in Paragraphs 5.2 and 5.3 of the Councillors' Code of Conduct, concluded that her interest did not preclude her involvement in the discussion.

There had been circulated Report No ERA/12/21 dated 28 April 2021 by the Executive Chief Officer Housing and Property.

During discussion, the following issues were raised:-

- Action for Children were praised and thanked for their work during the pandemic, providing food and other support to the community;
- although official consultation would be undertaken as part of the planning permission process, it was clarified that Action for Children had been engaging with residents in the vicinity, seeking views and raising awareness of their plans. The Council, as landlord, would deal with any issues that arose through normal processes; and
- the Area Housing Manager was wished well for his imminent retirement.

The Committee **APPROVED** the granting of a lease of 55 Milnafua to Action for Children at a reduced annual rent, as set out in the report.

5. Tain Conservation Area Appraisal and Conservation Area Management Plan
Measadh Sgìre Ghlèidhteachais agus Plana Stiùiridh Sgìre Ghlèidhteachais Bhaile Dhubhthaich

Declaration of Interest – Mr D Louden, as an owner of a property in the Conservation Area and of another property referred to in the report, as a joint owner of a further two properties in the Conservation Area, and as a Director of Tain Heritage Trust, declared a financial interest in this item and left the meeting for the duration of this item.

There had been circulated Report No ERA/13/21 dated 27 April 2021 by the Executive Chief Officer, Infrastructure and Environment.

During discussion, the following issues were raised:-

- with reference to paragraph 10.3 of the report, Members asked that although there was no statutory requirement to do so, all properties within the Conservation Area boundary (as amended) should be notified of any changes by letter;

- concern was expressed that the Conservation Area regulations could significantly increase the cost of building maintenance and renovation and therefore lead to buildings deteriorating further because the maintenance was unaffordable. It was important the Council and the planning permission process encouraged and supported property owners who wished to make improvements to their buildings. It was explained that some of the problems being faced at present with older buildings were the result of incorrect renovation having been undertaken, and it was hoped the Conservation Area regulations would help to avoid this in future. There was a hope to pursue a conservation area regeneration scheme with the Scottish Government in future, to provide grant funding to assist with appropriate building renovation, but this was dependent on a number of external factors outwith the Council's control; and
- it was disappointing there had only been two responses to the consultation and it was clarified that the online consultation portal used was the one the council used for all consultations.

The Committee:

- NOTED** the public comments and agree the Council response;
- *AGREED to RECOMMEND** that the Economy & Infrastructure Committee formally approve and adopt the Tain Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan, including the amended conservation area boundary, at a forthcoming meeting; and
- AGREED** that all properties within the Conservation Area boundary (as amended) would be notified of any changes by letter.

6. **Easter Ross Place Based Funds Maointean Stèidhichte air Àite Rois an Ear**

There had been circulated Report No ERA/14/21 dated 14 May 2021 by the Executive Chief Officer, Community and Places.

During discussion, the following issues were considered:-

- the joint working between wards in relation to the proposals for the Nigg-Cromarty Ferry route was welcomed and the project was of value to the wider area;
- it was important to encourage children to play outdoors and consideration was being given to creative, more natural type of play equipment, the design and location of which would be taken forward by the proposed part-time play officer, who would also consult with local communities to establish their requirements. High Life Highland was thanked for its involvement with this position; and
- in response to a suggestion that there were already adequate staff within the Council dealing with play parks, the essential and developmental nature of the proposed role was explained. In response to a suggestion that a similar post might be required in Tain and Easter Ross, it was proposed that the pilot run in Cromarty Forth for 2-3 months before being assessed for roll-out elsewhere.

The Committee **AGREED** the proposed allocations of Place Based Funds as follows:

- i. up to £12,000 from the Cromarty Firth Place Based Investment Funds to fund the costs of a part time temporary post via Highlife Highland for a play officer to support the development new approach to play areas;
- ii. £2,500 from the Cromarty Firth Place Based Investment Funds and £2,500 Tain & Easter Ross Place Based Investment Funds towards the Council's contract for the Nigg- Cromarty Ferry route in order to avoid a fare increase and so support the local economy; and
- iii. up to £ 20,000 Tain & Easter Ross Place Based Investment Funds in order to support cost effective investment into key play areas. This investment will be informed by community discussions and will aim to minimise ongoing maintenance and play chip requirements.

7. Minutes Geàrr-chunntas

There had been circulated and were **NOTED** Minutes of Meeting of the Easter Ross Area Committee held on 20 January, 17 February and 7 April 2021.

The meeting ended at 10.50am

The Highland Council

Minutes of Meeting of the **Corporate Resources Committee** held (REMOTELY) in the Council Chamber, Council Headquarters, Glenurquhart Road, Inverness on Wednesday 26 May 2021 at 10.30 am.

Present:

Mr B Boyd	Mr A Jarvie (substitute)
Mr R Bremner	Mr B Lobban
Mr J Bruce	Mr D Louden
Mrs C Caddick	Mr G MacKenzie
Mrs H Carmichael	Mr D Macpherson
Dr I Cockburn	Mr C Munro (substitute)
Mrs M Davidson	Mr M Reiss
Mr R Gale	Mr D Rixson
Mr J Gray	

Non-Members also present:

Mr J Barclay	Mr J McGillivray
Mr A Christie	Mrs L Munro
Mr J Finlayson	Mrs M Paterson
Mr A Henderson	Mr I Ramon
Mrs L MacDonald	Mr T Robertson

Officials in Attendance:

Mrs D Manson, Chief Executive
 Ms L Denovan, Executive Chief Officer Resources and Finance
 Mrs K Lackie, Executive Chief Officer Performance and Governance
 Mr A Gunn, Executive Chief Officer Transformation
 Mr E Foster, Head of Finance and Commercialism, Resources and Finance
 Mrs S McKandie, Head of Revenues and Customer Services, Resources and Finance
 Mr J Shepherd, Interim Head of ICT & Digital Transformation, Resources and Finance
 Ms E Barrie, Interim Head of HR, Resources and Finance
 Mr B Porter, Head of Resources, Care and Learning
 Mrs L Dunn, Principal Administrator, Performance and Governance
 Ms A Macrae, Committee Administrator, Performance and Governance
 Ms M Zavarella, Committee Officer, Performance and Governance

Also in attendance:

Mr C Innes, Head of Commercial and Procurement Shared Service, Aberdeenshire Council
 Mr A Collins, Strategic Commercial and Procurement Manager, Aberdeenshire Council

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

Mr J Gray in the Chair

Preliminaries

Prior to the commencement of the formal business the Chair paid tribute to Mr A Mackinnon for his commitment and work as former Chair of the Corporate Resources Committee and for helping guide the Council's finances through one of the most difficult periods for local government.

The Chair advised Members that normally the first substantive items on the agenda for the Committee were the revenue and capital budget monitoring reports. As officers had explained separately to the respective group leaders a slightly different process was being followed this year, where the outturn position would be fully reported to the Council meeting at the end of June. This change was for operational reasons to address some of the challenges brought about by the very unique circumstances faced over the last year. This change would in no way affect Members' ability to scrutinise the overall position with a full suite of reports going to Council in June and service outturn positions being reported to the August round of Strategic Committees.

Thereafter, an update was sought and provided in relation to the staffing of the Corporate Finance team going forward.

BUSINESS

1. Apologies for Absence Leisgeulan

Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of Mr S Mackie, Mr A Mackinnon and Mr P Sagers.

2. Declarations of Interest Foillseachaidhean Com-pàirt

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

Items 4, 6 and 9: Mr A Jarvie (non-financial)
Item 7: Mr R Bremner (non-financial)

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

- * The Committee **AGREED** that Mr Donnie Mackay replace Mr D MacLeod on the Appeals and Disputes Committee.

4. Directorate Service Plans 2021/22 Planaichean Seirbheis na Buidhne-Stiùiridh

Declarations of Interest: Mr A Jarvie declared a non-financial interest in this item as a Director of High Life Highland but, having applied the test outlined in Paragraphs 5.2 and 5.3 of the Councillors' Code of Conduct, concluded that his interest did not preclude his involvement in the discussion.

a. Resources and Finance Service Plan

There had been circulated Report No RES/11/21 dated 13 May 2021 by the Executive Chief Officer Resources and Finance.

During discussion, the following issues were raised:-

- the significant improvement in the Council's financial position was welcomed and thanks were conveyed to the Corporate Finance Team for their exceptional work in challenging times over the past year;
- the Service Plan be supported and officers encouraged to drive forward the improvements and plans for the future given the challenges presented by the pandemic and Brexit;
- the Business Grants Team be thanked for their professionalism and flexibility and the fact the Council had granted the highest number of Small Business Bonus Awards in Scotland;
- confirmation was sought and provided that the Money Worries leaflet would be translated into Gaelic;
- the importance of the Council generating its own business intelligence to strengthen the Council's case in negotiations for funding at a UK Government level;
- concern at the decisions being made around spend in relation to the Council's improved financial position and on the impact on staff given the bulk of savings had been achieved through staff underspends;
- further information was sought and provided on progress with the transitioning of staff, and on the need to ensure that as part of the redesign, processes and procedures supported a flexible workforce going forward;
- confirmation was sought and provided that the Council was a living wage employer and further information was provided on the project to fully consolidate the living wage rate into the Council's pay model; and
- the need to make provision for unexpected events such as fires, flooding, landslips and to pre-empt this by seeking assurances from the Scottish Government that the Council and residents of the Highlands would not be disadvantaged as a result.

Thereafter, the Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the broad extent of the Service's strategic leadership responsibilities to enable business as usual activities, one off projects, the Transformation Programme and for delivery of the ambitious Health & Prosperity Strategy 2021/22;
- ii. **NOTED** strategic leadership and support for the Council's Service Redesign, which was one of nine priority projects in the Council's Transformation Programme, remained a key priority for the Resources & Finance Service, in particular the Human Resources (HR) section;
- iii. **NOTED** that the Service Plan was subject to review and would be updated as required to respond to internal changes and external influences; and
- iv. **AGREED** the Directorate Service Plan appended to the report for the Resources & Finance Service and **NOTED** that arising changes would be reported to Committee for consideration.

b. Performance and Governance Service Plan

There had been circulated Report No RES/**12**/21 dated 12 May 2021 by the Executive Chief Officer Performance and Governance.

During discussion, the following issues were raised:-

- an assurance was sought and provided that arrangements were being made to engage with Members on the training provided during this term of the Council and on developing induction training for the new Council in 2022;
- concern at the lack of detail in the report and the fact this was not being reported to the Corporate Resources Committee as the accountable body;
- in regard to the above, while the Recovery, Improvement and Transition Board should fulfil its function, it should not duplicate the decision-making process which rested with the Committee;
- confirmation was sought and provided that a response would be provided to Mr A Jarvie outwith the meeting on the status of his subject access request;
- in terms of promoting and supporting the Gaelic language and culture, the importance of linking with the ECO Infrastructure, Environment and Economy in developing the cultural strategy and economy in the Highlands;
- benchmarking be undertaken not only against other local authorities but also periodically over time within the Council to allow trends to be analysed;
- confirmation was sought and provided that Performance and Governance would be the lead service for climate change and energy underlining the importance of a corporate approach being taken to this key priority for the Council;
- the need to understand the barriers and focus on the key priorities within the Council's Climate Change Plan to ensure the Council could deliver and lead on climate change wherever possible;
- it was hoped the new Policy Development Unit would be functional as soon as possible to respond to national consultations and funding opportunities;
- the importance of bringing the workforce planning and employability services strands together in terms of sustaining communities, supporting young people and those not in employment; and
- a response would be provided directly to Mr D Macpherson on the treatment of fines for fly tipping and dog fouling on Council land, and on any penalties imposed for abandoned cars and breaches of planning.

Thereafter, the Committee **APPROVED** Directorate Service Plan for 2021/22.

c. Transformation Service Plan

There had been circulated Report No RES/**13**/21 dated 17 May 2021 by the Executive Chief Officer Transformation.

During discussion, an update was sought on the new ways of working the project and the move towards more remote working, and specifically the complex range of issues to be considered around equipment, IT and health and safety with regard to home working and the rebalancing of the workforce as the impact of the pandemic eased. The primary focus on people within the Service Plan was welcomed and reference was made to the need to invest in training for managers and staff in relation to new ways of working to ensure they had the relevant skillsets and support. The need for a blended approach going forward to reflect the needs of staff and Members was also emphasised.

It was confirmed that the new ways of working project was considering the issues raised in the discussion and that Members would be kept up to date with progress on significant amount of work ongoing.

The Chief Executive thanked Members for the concern shown for staff wellbeing and welfare as a priority within the Council and advised she looked forward to bringing the results of the wellbeing staff survey to Members. She paid tribute to the work of the Trade Unions in new ways of working and their key role in overcoming the challenges and bringing new ideas and solutions to the table.

Thereafter, confirmation was sought and provided that some of KPIs detailed in the report were statutory and others within the gift of the Council and the aim was to achieve a balanced approach by which to measure performance.

The Committee **AGREED** the Transformation Directorate Service Plan for 2021-22.

5. **Treasury Management - Summary of Transactions Quarter ended 31 March 2021** **Rianachd Ionmhais - Geàrr-chunntas Ghnothaichean**

There had been circulated Report No RES/14/21 dated 26 April 2021 by the Executive Chief Officer Resources and Finance.

During discussion, the following issues were raised:-

- officers be thanked for all their work in relation to Treasury Management, and the reassurance this provided in relation to the Council's finances in challenging times due to the pandemic, Brexit, and climate change;
- clarification was in relation to the additional borrowing capacity that was available to fund spend to save projects going forward. It was confirmed that a report was to be brought to the next full Council in relation to creating capacity through borrowing that was sustainable over the medium term;
- a summary was sought and provided on progress with the repayment of older higher cost loans; and
- it would be helpful for Members to be provided with more in depth information on the gearing of the Council's finances to inform discussion on the opportunities and strategies for the medium term going forward.

The Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the Treasury Management Summary of Transactions report for the period from 1 January to 31 March 2021; and
- ii. **AGREED** that further work be undertaken with Members to provide a more in depth understanding of the gearing of the Council's finances.

6. **Transformation Programme: Procurement and Contract Management Project** **Fios às Ùr mu Sholar**

Declarations of Interest: Mr A Jarvie declared a non-financial interest in this item as a Director of High Life Highland but, having applied the test outlined in Paragraphs 5.2 and 5.3 of the Councillors' Code of Conduct, concluded that his interest did not preclude his involvement in the discussion.

There had been circulated Report No RES/15/21 dated 13 May 2021 by the Executive Chief Officer Resources and Finance.

During discussion, the following issues were raised:-

- the importance of place-based procurement and the role of the Council in supporting SMEs and communities across the Highlands, and it was hoped lessons had been learned from the past in this regard;
- in particular, consideration be given to the delivery of services in the remote and rural areas of the Highlands to ensure SMEs were not disadvantaged. The Highlands was unique in terms of geography and therefore decisions on pricing should have a weighting for travel and timescales;
- concern in relation to rising electricity costs and the opportunities to consider this issue more widely and generate alternative methods of power in the area to achieve significant savings and also help tackle fuel poverty in the area. A more enlightened approach from suppliers was also required;
- frustration that access to the grid was denied in respect of solar PV and other forms of energy generated in the Highlands and the need for pressure to be placed on the Government to change the legislation on this matter. It was confirmed that further discussions would be progressed offline in relation to this issue;
- clarification was sought and provided on the savings generated in 2020/21 and the extent to which these were due to the Covid-19 lockdown situation;
- the need to move from managed printing contracts to printing in-house and more tasks being done electronically to significantly reduce costs in this area;
- Members be strongly encouraged to move towards electronic papers and not rely on the high volume of papers printed each month for full Council and Committee meetings;
- in term of the savings targets outlined in the report, an explanation was sought and provided on the new framework for agency teachers; and
- an explanation was sought and provided on the training, support and methodologies to be rolled out in respect of the supplier relationship management.

Thereafter, the Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the initiation of the Procurement and Contract Management project and the key components of the project as set out in Section 5 to the report;
- ii. **NOTED** the project's alignment with strategic priorities, including the Health and Prosperity Strategy 2021/22, net carbon zero, and delivering value for money;
- iii. **AGREED** that project updates be provided periodically to this Committee;
- iv. **NOTED** that an integral component of this project was to undertake a review of capital procurement;
- v. **NOTED** that savings of £0.565m were delivered in 2020/21 together with cost avoidance and enabled savings. A further amount of £0.183m in carry over savings into 2021/22 were created;
- vi. **AGREED** the opportunities to improve best value through continuous improvement, further enhancing the performance of procurement activities for both revenue and capital spend, and ongoing effective collaboration across the shared service partnership; and
- vii. **NOTED** that further discussions would be progressed offline in relation to access to the grid in respect of solar PV and other forms of energy generated in the Highlands.

7. **Royal National Mòd**
Am Mòd Nàiseanta Rìoghail

Declarations of Interest: Mr R Bremner declared a non-financial interest in this item as as the Convener of the Committee of the Local Organising Committee of the National Mòd in 2010 and as the Convener of the Local Branch of An Comunn Gàidhealach in Caithness which could have an interest in bidding to host a future National Mòd and, having applied the test outlined in Paragraphs 5.2 and 5.3 of the Councillors' Code of Conduct, left the meeting during the discussion of this item.

There had been circulated Report No RES/16/21 dated 13 May 2021 by the Executive Chief Officer Performance and Governance.

During discussion, the following main points were raised:-

- the Royal National Mòd was one of the largest cultural events in Scotland and unique in its celebration of Gaelic language and culture;
- the opportunity to host the event in 2021 was aligned with many aspects of the Council's Programme and policies in terms of its commitment to the Gaelic Language Plan and supporting and promoting the Gaelic language and culture;
- the wider picture in relation to the Mòd supporting economic recovery in the Highlands. It was listed as one of the commitments in the Recovery, Improvement and Transformation Board's economic recovery plan, would showcase the Highlands as a first class venue and destination and generate significant income for the local economy;
- the mental health benefits in supporting social and cultural interaction following the pandemic and the positive impact it would have on young people by giving them the opportunity to participate in the event;
- concern that no breakdown had been provided in relation to the additional funding being sought and that the Council was being asked to contribute a significant amount of funding at a time when there was no programme for the Mòd, indication of participation levels, and no certainty the event would go ahead in 2021;
- An Comunn Gàidhealach had recently provided the Gaelic Committee with a full explanation in relation to the level of funding being sought, the costs that had been incurred in delivering the virtual Mòd in 2020 and the potential for a blended event in future to reach a wider audience;
- funding from Inverness Common Good Fund had been agreed towards this year's event; and
- any award of funding should be with the proviso that the Mòd takes place in 2021.

The Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the initial outline of events for the Royal National Mòd 2021; and
- ii. **AGREED** to a one-off budget feed of up to £80,000 to retain the Mòd in the Highlands for another year with the proviso that the event goes ahead in 2021.

8. The Haven An Caladh

There had been circulated Report No. RES/**17**/21 dated 21 April 2021 by the Executive Chief Officer Health and Social Care.

During discussion, the following issues were raised:-

- the project had been a herculean effort over a sustained period by a very determined group of people and this was to be commended;
- The Haven would benefit an enormous amount of people in Inverness and the wider Highland community, for those with multiple disabilities it would be a great source of hope;
- regarding governance, the Executive Chief Officer Resources and Finance and the Head of Support Services (Resources, Care and Learning) agreed to connect to ensure the appropriate level of governance was in place for the project; and
- clarification was sought, and provided, on the source of the capital funding and land sale.

The Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** and welcome the progress made by the Elsie Normington Foundation in securing full funding for the capital costs of the Haven Centre project;
- ii. **NOTED** the business case assessment and other due diligence work undertaken by Council Officers in relation to the Haven Centre project; and
- iii. **AGREED** to the release of the Council's previous funding commitment of £250,000 capital to the Haven Centre project, with detailed written terms attached to the funding to be prepared by Officers.

9. ICT Transformation and Contract Performance Cruth-atharrachadh ICT agus Coileanadh Cùmhnaint

Declarations of Interest: Mr A Jarvie declared a non-financial interest in this item as a Director of High Life Highland but, having applied the test outlined in Paragraphs 5.2 and 5.3 of the Councillors' Code of Conduct, concluded that his interest did not preclude his involvement in the discussion.

There had been circulated Report No RES/**18**/21 dated 30 April 2021 by the Executive Chief Officer Resources and Finance.

During discussion, the following issues were raised:-

- the Head of ICT and Digital Transformation and their team were commended on their remarkable efforts over the past year supporting the Council in the move to remote-working, inspirational results in Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and the ICT Contract coming in under budget;
- credit was due to WiPro staff for their efforts in KPI results; and
- it was agreed that the Head of ICT and Digital Transformation would circulate to Members the full details of KPIs.

The Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the update on the Wipro ICT Transformation Programme and overall Wipro performance, noting the significant achievement in the completion of the Programme;
- ii. **NOTED** that the priority for the Council now would be the successful transition of ICT services from Wipro to in-house provision (noting also that a separate report on the transition followed later on the agenda) supporting the Council's Digital Transformation project as part of the Council's Transformation Programme contained in the Health & Prosperity Strategy; and
- iii. **AGREED** that Members be circulated with full details of the Key Performance Indicators set out at section 5.1 of the report.

10. Minutes of Meetings
Geàrr-chunntasan Choinneamhan

There had been circulated and **NOTED** the following Minutes of Meetings:-

- i. Appeals Committee held on 10 March 2021; and
- ii. Non-Domestic Rates Appeals Committee held on 20 May 2021.

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

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

12. Project Dòchas Update Report
Pròiseact Dòchais Aithisg Ùrachaidh

There had been circulated to Members only Report No. RES/**19**/21 by the Executive Chief Officer Resources and Finance.

Following discussion, the Committee **NOTED** the recommendations as set out in the report.

13. Debts Recommended to be Written Off
Fiachan a Thathar a' Moladh airson an Dubhadh Às

There had been circulated to Members only Report No RES/**20**/21 by the Executive Chief Officer Resources and Finance.

Following discussion, the Committee **AGREED** the recommendations as set out the in the report.

The meeting was closed at 2.41pm.

The Highland Council

Minutes of Meeting of the **City of Inverness Area Committee** held **REMOTELY** on **Thursday, 27 May 2021** at 10.00am.

Present:

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

Officials in Attendance:

Mr M MacLeod, Executive Chief Officer, Infrastructure & Environment
 Mr A Gunn, Executive Chief Officer, Transformation
 Mrs A Clark, Head of Policy
 Mr C Howell, Head of Infrastructure
 Mr G Smith, Principal Engineer
 Mr C Baxter, Planner
 Ms F Cameron, Programme Manager
 Mr S Manning, Principal Traffic Officer
 Mr J Taylor, Road Operations Manager
 Mr R MacLeod, Housing Manager (Inverness)
 Mr L MacDonald, Repairs Manager, Housing & Building Maintenance
 Mr D Haas, Inverness City Area Manager
 Miss J MacLennan, Democratic Services Manager
 Miss M Zavarella, Committee Administrator

Also in attendance:

Chief Inspector M MacInnes, Inverness Area Commander, Police Scotland
 Group Commander R Nixon, Scottish Fire & Rescue Service

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

Mrs H Carmichael in the Chair

Prior to the commencement of the formal business, the Provost & Leader of Inverness and Area advised the Committee that Mr G Ross (Depute Provost and Depute Leader of the City) had resigned as a Member of the Council with immediate effect for family reasons.

In this regard, warm tributes were paid to Mr Ross by both Members and Officers which recognised his huge contribution to the work of the Council, the City of Inverness (including through the City of Inverness & Area Committee and in his role as Depute Provost) and as a member of countless Sub Committees over very many years. As such, he would be very much missed and the best wishes of all present at the meeting were conveyed to him and his family.

Congratulations were also conveyed to Ms E Roddick on her success in being elected as a Member of the Scottish Parliament (Highlands and Islands Regional Constituency) at the recent election on 6 May 2021.

Business

1. Apology for Absence Leisgeulan

An apology for absence was intimated on behalf of Ms E Knox.

2. Declarations of Interest Foillseachaidhean Com-pàirt

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

Item 3 – Mr A Christie (financial)

Item 8 – Mr A Jarvie (non-financial)

Item 14(a) – Mr K Gowans (non-financial)

Item 14(c) – Mr K Gowans and Mr A Jarvie (both non-financial)

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

Declaration of Interest – Mr A Christie declared a financial interest in relation to this item on the grounds of being the General Manager of Inverness, Badenoch and Strathspey Citizens Advice Bureau but, having applied the test outlined in Paragraphs 5.2 and 5.3 of the Councillors' Code of Conduct, concluded that his interest did not preclude his involvement in the discussion.

There had been circulated Report No. CIA/9/21 dated 14 May 2021 by Chief Inspector Mairi MacInnes, Inverness Area Commander.

In this regard, and during a summary of the report, the efforts of Officers and staff during a challenging year were acknowledged and reference made to the unusual policing environment as a result of Covid-19 restrictions.

During discussion, Members raised the following issues:-

- the wording of the section of the report titled 'City Centre v Merkinch' was queried as it seemed to suggest that there were links between the reduction in anti-social behaviour in the City Centre and the increase in Merkinch which was not in fact the case. As such, it was felt that more sensitive wording should perhaps be considered in future;

- concerns were expressed in relation to the '101' phone service, with several anecdotes provided of calls not being answered within a reasonable amount of time and lack of follow-up of reported incidents. It was also suggested that responders often lacked local knowledge and a more local service would be preferable. There was also thought to be confusion amongst the public about when to call '101' and in this respect it was clarified that '999' was for life or death situations whilst '101' was for any other incidents, including those which might not be the responsibility of the Police but for which they could provide a signposting service, for example fly tipping. In this respect, Members were assured that their concerns would be taken forward;
- the implementation of 20mph zones by the Council was welcomed but it was the case that speeding remained a problem in some areas;
- the resources being put into tackling the supply of illegal drugs was noted but it was important that efforts were also made to tackle and prevent addiction;
- the pathfinder programme to improve the wellbeing of people affected by alcohol issues was highlighted;
- the exploitation of vulnerable people as part of 'cuckooing' was of concern and the additional resources being deployed to combat this were welcomed. In this respect, it was suggested that work could be done through the Community Planning Partnerships to assist and protect vulnerable people and people who had experienced trauma;
- the community beat teams were commended for their work;
- in response to queries, it was explained that while the report did not differentiate between drink and drug related driving offences, recent increases in reported drug-driving was partly related to the increased use of drug wipes to detect traces of drugs. In relation to sexual crimes, these were challenging to break down into categories as circumstances varied considerably; and
- the success of Operation Respect was noted and welcomed.

Thereafter, the Committee **NOTED** the 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 1 April 2020 – 31 March 2021.

4. SFRS Annual Performance Report Aithisg choileanaidh leth-bhliadhnaid SFRS

There had been circulated Report No. CIA/10/21 dated 9 May 2021 by the Local Senior Officer for Highland.

During a summary of the report, two recent deaths as a result of fire were highlighted and condolences extended to the respective families.

During discussion, Members also raised the following issues:-

- information was sought and provided on actions being taken to encourage more females to consider becoming fire fighters;
- the appointment of a champion to deal with Unwanted Fire Alarm Signals (UFAS) was welcomed;

- clarification was sought and provided on the difference between the annual Inverness figures in each section of the report and the Highland totals;
- information was sought and provided on the regime for inspecting higher risk properties, such as Air BnBs and Houses of Multiple Occupancy, both during the Covid-19 pandemic and in general and it was confirmed that complaints received were actioned as necessary;
- it was noted that the hosting of organised bonfires and firework displays for 5 November was beneficial in reducing fires and injuries; and
- fire safety education in schools was important and information was provided on activities being undertaken.

Thereafter, the Committee **NOTED** the Area Committee Performance Report as circulated.

5. Appointment to Sub-Committee, Working Groups etc Cur an dreuchd gu Fo-Chomataidh, Buidhnean Obrach is eile

In respect of confirmation from the SNP Group of a replacement for Mr B Boyd on the Inverness Common Good Fund Sub Committee, it was **AGREED** that this could be deferred until the next meeting.

6. Inshes Junction Improvements – Update Aithisg air Ceann-rathaid nan Innseagan

There had been circulated Report No. CIA/11/21 dated 4 May 2021 by the Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure and Environment

Following a summary of the report, and during discussion, Members raised the following issues:-

- the traffic situation at Inshes was complex with no perfect solution and many uncertainties, notably the approval of a number of unplanned developments which added to the volume of traffic using the junction;
- a number of specific areas of concern were highlighted, including the distributor road approach and the Caulfield Road North junction;
- it had to be acknowledged that the impact of the east link road, which was still to be completed, was not known;
- local Members expressed concern about the impact of the proposals on the residents of Drakies, not least in terms of increasing the amount of traffic travelling through residential areas at high speed;
- it was hoped that the proposed consultation could take place face to face as well as online, given the need for people to view plans;
- it was suggested that successful signalised roundabouts needed to be of a sufficient size to allow queuing cars to wait between exits and it was queried therefore why a 4-way junction, instead of a roundabout, had been removed from the preferred options. In response, it was explained that traffic modelling had shown little difference between a 4-way junction and a roundabout with 4 exits but the creation of a junction would involve digging up the existing roundabout at considerable additional expense. However, the public would still be able to comment on discounted options during the consultation;

- as the situation had been discussed and considered for around ten years already, prompt action on the consultation was urged;
- with such a complex situation, it was emphasised that no solution would be ideal and each option was likely to have both positive and negative aspects for different communities and / or groups;
- an improved public transport network was required to discourage individual car journeys, especially for regular trips such as commuting to and from work. A park and ride facility would also be beneficial;
- it was disappointing that some vehicles, including Heavy Goods Vehicles, were travelling though Milton Of Leys to avoid the Inshes junction on their way to the A9;
- the owners of Inshes Retail Park were thought to be undertaking a traffic management survey and it was suggested that they should perhaps be contacted in that regard;
- adequate levels of developer contributions were essential to help fund road improvements;
- a comprehensive traffic census in the area was proposed and it was explained that traffic modelling for the area had already been undertaken in relation to the east link and the dualling scheme and that figures could be provided outwith the meeting for each design solution, including 'doing nothing'; and
- in response to various comments, it was explained that the consultation with all stakeholders was the starting point to gather views after which proposals would be brought back to the Committee. Consultation would also include in-person meetings when Covid-19 guidance permitted.

Thereafter, the Committee:-

- NOTED** the changing priorities for investing in transport as set out in the emerging local policy and published national policy; and
- AGREED** to proceed with a public consultation on design options to improve Inshes Corridor as detailed in the report.

7. Highland Coastal Communities Fund – Assessment of Application Maoin Choimhearsnachdan Cladaich na Gàidhealtachd – Measadh Iarrtasan

There had been circulated Report No. CIA/12/21 dated 11 May 2021 by the Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure and Environment.

During discussion, and in thanking Officers for the work undertaken in relation to this application, it was highlighted that the area surrounding the Merkinch Local Nature Reserve Boardwalk was one of the most precious 'green spaces' in the Highlands and its value could not be overstated.

As such, it was an area that the local community were rightly proud of (and had taken ownership of) and it was envisaged that repairing the Boardwalk would enable the Nature Reserve to be enjoyed by all for many future years.

Thereafter, the Committee **APPROVED** funding for the application for the Merkinch Local Nature Reserve Boardwalk & Active Travel Route in the sum of £12,156 as detailed in the report.

8. Use of City Wards Covid-19 Response Funds Riarachadh Maoinachadh Uàird

Declaration of Interest – Mr A Jarvie declared a non-financial interest in this item as a Director of High Life Highland but, having applied the test outlined in Paragraphs 5.2 and 5.3 of the Councillors’ Code of Conduct, concluded that his interest did not preclude his involvement in the discussion.

There had been circulated Report No. CIA/13/21 dated 12 May 2021 by the Executive Chief Officer Communities and Place.

During discussion, Members raised the following issues:-

- there was concern amongst some Members about this use of Covid-19 monies as the situation with play parks had occurred (and become urgent) due to them falling into disrepair and it was felt that this was due to neglect in previous years by the Council;
- there was also concern about references to this being an ‘ongoing situation’ and ‘recurring’ as it had been understood that this was a ‘one-off’ use of this type of funding and that responsibility was with the Council and not individual Wards;
- it was clarified that the proposals related to specific requests from the Wards mentioned in the report and as such this was not a general and/or recurring situation which applied to all Wards;
- some Members had been under the impression that use would be made of Ward Discretionary Funds to enable play parks to re-open/purchase the bark required and as such it had come as a surprise that Covid-19 funds were to be used;
- it was the case that some play parks had been closed suddenly due to safety issues and agreement had been given for funding to be allocated to re-open them as soon as possible but it had been felt that this funding should in fact have come from the Council;
- there was a need to correct the terms of the report as it had been stated that Members had requested that Covid-19 monies should be used for play parks in the specified Wards and this had not been the case in relation to all Members and all Wards. In this regard, Members within the Culloden and Ardersier Ward specifically believed that this had not been the case in relation to their Ward;
- it had to be highlighted that the pandemic was by no means over and as such there was concern about use of this funding now for this purpose as it might be more needed later in the year for specific Covid-19 related issues;
- it was suggested that there was a need for a statutory duty to be placed on Local Authorities to maintain play parks;
- it was felt that there had been a lack of preparedness/processes in place during the early stages of the pandemic in regard to the use of Covid-19 resilience funding and the interaction with local communities across the area by the Council and as such this should be included as part of any future review;
- there was a need to be mindful of the discussion which was being undertaken and its potential effect on employees of the Council who had

been working hard throughout the pandemic across a number of Services;

- it had to be appreciated that there were occasions when solutions had to be put in place quickly to deal with situations like this and as such Officers had taken action as needed to ensure the Council met with expected standards of health & safety and that play parks were re-opened for children across various locations as soon as practicable;
- the Scottish Government had made a pledge to make funding available for play parks across the country and it was vital that this was followed up for Highland play parks where the sum involved was expected to be £3m for upgrading etc; and
- it was still felt that there should be a correction to the report to make clear that Members envisaged that the funding to be used for these play parks would come from the Ward Discretionary Budgets (and not Covid-19 monies).

Thereafter, the Committee **AGREED** the decision to allocate funding from Covid-19 Ward Discretionary funds to support the provision of play park bark in the 5 City Wards as outlined at Paragraph 6.1 of the report.

9. **Bught Park Feasibility Study** **Pròiseact Dèanamh Co-ionann**

There had been circulated Report No. CIA/14/21 dated 13 May 2021 by the Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure and Environment.

During discussion, Members raised the following issues:-

- Officers were thanked for developing the bid to the UK Government's Levelling Up Fund given the tight timescales. In this respect, Highlands & Islands Enterprise and High Life Highland were also thanked for their assistance;
- the Bught Park area required modernisation, with particular reference to the Stadium and the changing facilities;
- it was felt that the more ambitious options in the report should not be discarded completely as the City would benefit from a significant indoor Sports Hub, including an indoor running track;
- it had to be acknowledged that the traffic and parking infrastructure in the Bught area was not suitable to host a significant number of large sporting events;
- attention was drawn to the need for sports facilities on the eastern side of the City and in this respect a meeting was proposed between Members, partners and stakeholders to consider the development of a strategic plan for sports provision in that location;
- it was suggested that there had been insufficient engagement with Local Members and Community Councils on the bid and information was sought and provided on the composition of the reference group mentioned in the report;
- it would be preferable if bids for projects could be prepared in advance so that when funds became available, it would be relatively quick to submit applications;
- the ongoing revenue cost implications of the various options in the report also required to be taken into consideration;

- it was noted that the likelihood of success of the bid was relatively low given that Highland was categorised as Tier 3 with regard to Levelling Up funding. The timescales for applying had been tight and an exceptional bid was required to maximise the chances of success. It was also clarified that the bid was in relation to the regeneration of culture and heritage facilities and was not a sports application;
- an update from Transport Scotland on progress with the east link road would be welcomed;
- in response to comments that there was no reference in the report to the amount of funding being bid for or to discussions that were taking place with the Scottish Government, the Leader of the Council clarified that there had been a report submitted to the Full Council on 13 May on the Levelling Up applications and Shared Prosperity Fund; and
- it was agreed that Mr A Jarvie could meet with the Leader and Depute Leader of the Council to discuss the bid and the Council's current lobbying position in relation to Levelling Up funding.

Thereafter, the Committee:-

- AGREED** the emerging findings of the Bught Park Feasibility Study;
- NOTED** the inclusion of the Bught Park facilities improvement (refurbishment and/or new build) for inclusion within the UK Government Levelling Up Fund bid;
- AGREED** that an early meeting should be arranged between the Council (including Members), partners and stakeholders to discuss potential proposals and aspirations for the east side of the City in terms of the provision of sporting facilities; and
- AGREED** that an early meeting would be arranged between the Leader and Depute Leader of the Council and Mr A Jarvie as requested by him in order to further discuss the bid and the Council's current lobbying position in relation to Levelling Up funding.

10. Proposed Car Parking Charge Amendments

There had been circulated Report No. CIA/15/21 dated 10 May 2021 by the Executive Chief Officer, Infrastructure and Environment.

During discussion, Members raised the following issues:-

- in regard to the Shore Street Quay Car Park proposals, it would be important to ensure that the necessary safety measures were in place from the outset;
- it was felt that further extending the 1 Hour Free Period at the Rose Street Multi Storey Car Park from June to August would encourage footfall in the City Centre and this would be welcomed;
- it was not clear as to whether tourists or local residents would be expected to use the proposed parking meters at Torvean Car Park and there was unease about the implementation of further car parking charges being introduced in the City in comparison with the situation in other parts of the Highlands;
- it was also queried as to whether the roll out of car parking charges was to be continued in other parts of the Highlands in the coming months;

- it was noted that there would be consultation/proposals coming forward at a later date in respect of the possible introduction of car parking charges at the Fishermen's Car Park in the Bught area;
- the proposals for parking for motorhomes at the Shore Street Quay Car Park were welcomed as an addition for the City; and
- in respect of Torvean Car Park, it was still felt that parking meters should not be introduced at that location and that instead a further report on enforcement around the Bught area should be submitted to a future meeting of the City Committee.

Thereafter, Mrs H Carmichael, seconded by Mr J Gray, **MOVED** the recommendations within the report – subject to the 1 Hour Free Period at the Rose Street Multi Storey Car Park applying from June to August inclusive (and not just the month of June as had been proposed within the report).

As an **AMENDMENT**, Mr A Jarvie, seconded by Mr C Smith, moved that the installation of parking meters at Torvean Car Park on an Invitation to Pay basis should not be taken forward at this time and that a further report on enforcement around the Bught area should instead be submitted to a future meeting of the Committee.

On a vote being taken, the **MOTION** received 14 votes and the **AMENDMENT** received 2 votes, with 1 abstention, and the **MOTION** was therefore **CARRIED**, the votes having been cast as follows:-

For the Motion

B Boyd, I Brown, C Caddick, J Campbell, G Campbell-Sinclair, H Carmichael, A Christie, M Davidson, A Graham, J Gray, I MacKenzie, D Macpherson, B McAllister and T Robertson.

For the Amendment

A Jarvie and C Smith.

Abstention

D Fraser

The Committee **AGREED**:-

- i. the amended tariff schedule for Rose Street Multi Storey Car Park which had a forecast 'cost neutral' impact on service budgets – on the basis that the 1 Hour Free Period would apply from June to August inclusive (and not just the month of June as had been proposed within the report) ;
- ii. the installation of parking meters at Torvean Car Park on an Invitation to Pay basis;
- iii. that formal consultation of a Traffic Regulation Order should take place later in 2021 for the implementation of enforceable car parking charges at Torvean Car Park; and
- iv. the partnership approach being taken forward with the Port Authority in respect of Shore Street Quay Car Park.

**11. Road Maintenance Programme 2021/2022
Prògram Càradh Rathaid 2021/2022**

There had been circulated Report No. CIA/16/21 dated 10 May 2021 by the Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure and Environment.

The Committee **APPROVED** the proposed prioritised 2021/2022 Roads Maintenance Programme for the City of Inverness Area as detailed in the report.

**12. Housing Performance Report – 1 April 2020 to 31 March 2021
Aithisg Dèanadais Taigheadais – 1 Giblean 2020 gu 30 An t-Òg mhios**

There had been circulated Report No. CIA/17/20 dated 27 May 2021 by the Executive Chief Officer Property and Housing.

During discussion, and with specific reference to the impact of Covid-19 and the significant increase in claimants for Universal Credit, thanks were conveyed to the Officers concerned for the supportive and ongoing work with tenants in respect of issues connected to rent arrears which was widely appreciated.

Information was also sought and provided in relation to start dates for the installation of new central heating systems in Smithton and also work in connection with replacement kitchens and bathrooms across the Culloden & Ardersier Ward.

Thereafter, the Committee otherwise **NOTED** the information provided on housing performance in the period 1 April 2020 to 31 March 2021.

**13. St Joseph's Primary Traffic Calming
Socrachadh Trafaig Bun-Sgoil an Naoimh Iòsaph**

There had been circulated Report No. CIA/18/21 dated 28 April 2021 by the Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure and Environment.

The Committee **APPROVED** the installation of one set of road humps on King Street, Inverness.

**14. Inverness Common Good Fund
Maoin Math Coitcheann Inbhir Nis**

Declaration of Interest – Mr K Gowans declared a non-financial interest in relation to item a) on the grounds of a family member being employed by High Life Highland but, having applied the test outlined in Paragraphs 5.2 and 5.3 of the Councillors' Code of Conduct, concluded that his interest did not preclude his involvement in the discussion.

**a) Events and Festivals
Tachartasan agus Fèisean**

There had been circulated Report No. CIA/19/21 dated 12 May 2021 by the Executive Chief Officer, Transformation.

During discussion, Members raised the following issues:-

- clarification was sought and provided on the partners who were expected to have involvement and also the specific role that Inverness Caledonian Thistle Football Club would play in this new arrangement;
- it had been mentioned that merchandising would be included as part of the opportunities for future income generation but there was slight concern in this regard as it had not been wholly successful in the past;
- it was also hoped that all future events would continue to be offered free of charge wherever possible in the spirit of the Common Good Fund;
- future close working arrangements with High Life Highland were warmly welcomed and it was felt that whilst the aim would be to keep events as free and accessible as possible, there was still a need to focus on opportunities for commercial advantage wherever and whenever possible;
- a formal review after a period of 12 months would be imperative and it was noted that this would be actioned as part of the new arrangements with a report to the City Committee at that time;
- there was a need to recognise the considerable work which had been undertaken by Mr G Ross as Chair of the Working Group in the past;
- opportunities for sponsorship should be followed up wherever possible;
- it was felt that the economic assessment of event expenditure had perhaps not been as adequate as it could have been over previous years and it was important to receive confirmation that best value was being achieved in this respect;
- there would have to be a focus post Covid-19 on economic development within the City and this fund would have to be available to assist in that regard so whilst the change in governance was welcomed, it would be important to ensure that this was the correct way of doing it.

Thereafter, the Committee:-

- i. **AGREED** the new operating model and for High Life Highland (HLH) to be invited to act as managing agent for a refreshed Inverness Common Good Fund (ICGF) Events Programme;
- ii. **NOTED** HLH's involvement in potential transfer of the Events and Festivals programme;
- iii. **NOTED** that HLH Officers had been instructed to respond positively to any formal requests to adopt the management and operations of Events and Festivals in the City of Inverness;
- iv. **NOTED** that the 2021/22 events budget would be allocated to HLH for delivery of the ICGF events programme;
- v. **AGREED** the governance structure as detailed in Section 9 and Appendix 6 of the report; and
- vi. **NOTED** that the operating model fell within the scope of existing operational agreements in place between the Council and HLH.

**b) Capital Projects Update Report
Sgrùdadh Ionmhasail agus Pròiseactan Calpa**

There had been circulated Joint Report No. CIA/20/21 dated 11 May 2021 by the Executive Chief Officer (Infrastructure and Environment) and the Executive Chief Officer (Communities and Place).

The Committee **NOTED** the current status of capital projects as detailed in the report.

Declarations of Interest – Mr K Gowans and Mr A Jarvie declared non-financial interests in item c) on the basis of a family member being employed by High Life Highland and as a Director of High Life Highland respectively but having applied the test outlined in Paragraphs 5.2 and 5.3 of the Councillors’ Code of Conduct, concluded that their interests did not preclude their involvement in the discussion.

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

There had been circulated Report No. CIA/21/21 dated 11 May 2021 by the Inverness City Area Manager.

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

Following discussion, the Committee **AGREED** grant applications for funding as undernoted -

Florians (£17k)
Rowing Club (£30k)
FLOW Photofest (£11,920)
Merkinch Local Nature Reserve Boardwalk (£22,500)
Highlands & Islands Blood Bikes (£30k)

It was also **AGREED** that the application from High Life Highland (Bellfield Park Upgrading) should be deferred meantime to allow further information to be provided.

**15. Minutes
Geàrr-chunntas**

There had been circulated Minutes of Meetings as follows:-

- (i)**City of Inverness Area Committee** held on 18 February and 22 April 2021 – **NOTED** - on the basis that a correction would be made to the Minutes of the Meeting held on 18 February to include a declaration of interest made at that meeting by Mr A Jarvie which had been omitted in error;
- (ii)**Inverness Common Good Fund Sub-Committee** held on 8 March and 26 April 2021 – **APPROVED**;
- (iii)**Victorian Market Stakeholder Management Group** held on 23 February and 13 April 2021 – **NOTED**;
- (iv)**Inverness Events and Festivals Working Group** held on 15 March 2021 – **APPROVED**; and
- (v)**City and Area Recovery Group** held on 1 March and 1 April 2021 – **NOTED**.

The meeting ended at 4.55pm.

The Highland Council

Minutes of Meeting of the **Isle of Skye and Raasay Committee (Comataidh an Eilein Sgitheanaich agus Ratharsair)** held remotely on **Monday, 31 May, 2021 at 10.30 am.**

Present:

Mr John Finlayson
Mr Calum MacLeod
Mr Calum Munro

Participating Officials:

Mr Willie MacKinnon, Ward Manager, Communities and Place
Mr Don Esson, Interim Area Care and Learning Manager, Education & Learning Service
Mr Scott Dalgarno, Development Plans Manager, Infrastructure and Environment Service
Mr Rory MacLeod, Housing Manager, Property & Housing Service
Ms Jennifer Bruce, Principal Housing Officer, Property & Housing Service
Mr Colin Simpson, Tourism Co-ordinator, Transformation & Economy Service
Mrs Coila Hunter, Environmental Health Officer, Communities & Place Service
Mr John Murray, Environmental Health Officer, Communities & Place Service
Mr Hugh Gardner, Bereavement Services Project Manager, Communities & Place Service
Mr Alasdair MacInnes, Administrative Assistant, Performance & Governance Service

Also in Attendance:

Group Commander Mike Colliar, Scottish Fire and Rescue Service
Station Commander Raymond King, Scottish Fire and Rescue Service
Mr Stuart MacPherson, Highlands & Islands Enterprise

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

Interim Chair

In the absence of the Chair, Mr J Finlayson was unanimously appointed as Interim Chair for this meeting.

1. Apologies for Absence Leisgeulan

An apology for absence was intimated on behalf of Mr J Gordon.

2. Declarations of Interest Foillseachaidhean Com-pàirt

Mr C Munro - Items 5, 8, (financial) and Item 7 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 29 March, 2021, the terms of which were **NOTED**.

4. 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 SR/6/21 by the Local Senior Officer, Scottish Fire and Rescue Service.

During discussion, the following main points were raised:-

- Station availability was becoming more challenging in terms of recruitment and retention of staff. Staffing in 4 stations remained positive, but there would be significant retirement and resignations in particular in Portree and Broadford stations soon. The Service continued to try and proactively recruit and retain personnel.
- It was queried whether there was any discussion nationally regarding changing the age of when young people could join the volunteer fire service. It was advised that it was unlikely that the minimum age of 18 years old for joining the Service would change. This was due to legislative requirements under the Employment Act for employing young people. In terms of engagement of young people and the community to join the Service, it was challenging to recruit young people as there seemed to be an apathy towards the on call retained firefighter model. Reviewing the model may be an option to make it more attractive for young people to join and Members would be informed of any national developments in this respect. Details of engagement activities with young people in the area for recruitment purposes were highlighted.
- Support was sought from the Committee to engage with Community Councils to try and improve the recruitment to the Portree and Broadford stations in particular.
- Along with partners, options for a new Station in Portree were being considered. It was anticipated that a multi agency building would be established. It was hoped that this would assist with recruitment to the Service as well.
- There was a 6 year Development Plan for stations on the Isle of Skye and Members would be updated on the Plan as it progressed.
- It was queried if there were any initiatives to raise awareness of the dangers of wild camping fires with the likely increase in tourists over the Summer months. It was confirmed that the Service did have social media campaigns raising awareness to the public of the need to be careful with campfires, disposal of barbecues etc. Officers also distributed information leaflets at campsites on good practice guides for fire safety. Public awareness in terms of water safety was also provided.
- The work of the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service over the past year was acknowledged.

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

5. Education Update Fios às Ùr mu Fhoghlam

Declaration of Interest

Mr C Munro declared a financial interest in this item as his wife was a Gaelic Medium Teacher in a School in the area. Having considered the general nature of the item and, 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.

The Interim Area Education & Learning Manager (West) provided an education update in relation to Acting up and Head Teacher appointments. An overview of education from January to April was provided in relation to support to vulnerable children and children of keyworkers; remote learning and phased return to primary and secondary schools. Area teams had been liaising with school staff when Covid guidance had been issued by the Scottish Government. There had been good collaboration between Services during this period in these challenging times. An update of projected school rolls in the local area was provided as well as Portree Associated School Group successes.

During discussion, the following main points were raised:-

- Members extended their thanks and payed tribute to all staff within Schools for their tremendous work in very challenging conditions over the past year.
- It was encouraging that all Head Teacher appointments in the area had now been made;
- Remote learning in Highland had been well received at a national level and a lot of the national guidance on remote working had been based on the experience in Highland.
- During the Covid period, the empowerment of Head Teachers to make local decisions was essential, particularly in rural areas.
- Highland Schools were following the Scottish Qualifications Authority guidance during the Covid period and this was progressing well;
- The variety of School successes was acknowledged;
- Some progress had been made in relation to School lets and in particular outdoor lets, but given the current Covid restrictions a cautious approach was being taken. A Working Group had been set up to look at School internal and external lets and it was anticipated that internal School lets would not take place until after the School holidays, subject to Covid restrictions being lifted.
- Virtual pupil transitions were highlighted and as Covid mitigations were reduced there would be transitions from nursery into primary and primary into secondary.
- Details were provided in relation to school transport arrangements and the good collaboration between central/area transport officers and Schools to ensure arrangements went smoothly.

The Committee **NOTED** the Education update for the Isle of Skye and Raasay area and that the Committee's thanks and best wishes would be intimated to all School staff in the area for their commitment and effort during the Covid-19 period.

**6. Newton Rooms
Seòmraichean a' Bhaile Ùir**

This item was withdrawn from the agenda and would be submitted to the next meeting instead.

**7. Isle of Skye and Raasay Investment Plan
Plana Tasgaidh an Eilein Sgitheanaich is Ratharsair**

Declaration of Interest

Mr C Munro declared a non financial interest in this item as a trustee of a Community Trust which will participate in the development of an investment plan for the Isle of Skye and Raasay. Having considered the general nature of the item and, 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 was a verbal update on progress and an outline of the consultation Programme on the Isle of Skye and Raasay Investment Plan with the intention that the Plan would be submitted to Committee later in the year. The various methods of engagement were highlighted with the first engagement commencing on 1 June, 2021 followed by further engagement sessions over the next few weeks. The consultation would allow the public to give their views on the priorities they felt most important.

During discussion, the following main points were raised:-

- The Plan would evolve over time, would be ongoing and would be done in partnership with the public;
- A paper version of the consultation survey would be available to those who could not access it online.
- This latest engagement was in response to what the public asked for and would ensure that there was comprehensive feedback from the community on their priorities for the Investment Plan.
- The main aims and objectives of the Plan had been changed to reflect the outcomes from the initial engagement exercises. Thereafter after the current engagement these aims and objectives may change again and feedback on the outcomes on the consultation would be given at a future Committee meeting.
- Architecture and Design Scotland would independently provide the outcomes from the workshops and their advice and guidance was an important part of consultation process.
- The consultation was ambitious given the length of time and number of people involved in the engagement and it was progressing well.

Thereafter, the Committee **NOTED** the update on the Isle of Skye and Raasay Investment Plan.

8. Visitor Management Plan Plana Stiùiridh Luchd-tadhail

Declaration of Interest

Mr C Munro declared a financial interest in this item as the joint owner of a self catering business. Having considered the general nature of the item and, 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.

The Tourism Co-ordinator provided a verbal update on the Visitor Management Plan with some of the main areas covered being:- road and parking improvements; seasonal access Rangers; public conveniences; enhanced waste services; motor home waste disposal; public transport and rural tourism infrastructure fund.

During discussion the following main points were raised:-

- It was requested that contact details for the 3 seasonal Rangers on Skye and the locations and contacts for comfort schemes be provided to Members;
- it was queried what responsibility takeaway businesses had for providing extra bins outside their premises. It was advised that there was an expectation that takeaways/shops would help their customers dispose of rubbish. Clarification would be sought from the Waste team if there was a legal obligation for these businesses to provide extra bins.
- given the increased number of motorhomes in the area, road safety was paramount in terms of visitor management and it was queried if there were any initiatives that could help engage Transport Scotland in road safety campaigns. It was advised that Transport Scotland and Police Scotland did liaise every year to provide information via leaflets and social media on road safety and there had been targeted campaigns on motorbike safety in the past. It would be checked if there were any road safety campaigns this year.
- Tribute was payed to the many community groups involved in litter pick up events.
- The proactive approach to tourism was very important in terms of Highlands reputation as a destination.
- A report on the Visitor Management Plan for all of Highland would be submitted to the Tourism Committee on 16 June, 2021;
- An announcement was still to be made by the Scottish Government on further projects to be awarded Rural Tourism Infrastructure Funding.
- There was a weekly visitor management operational group meeting and Members would be briefed on discussions of that Group at Ward Business Meetings.
- It would be checked if there had been an appointment to the Access Officer post for this area.

The Committee **NOTED** the update on the Visitor Management Plan.

At this point the meeting was adjourned for a short break and the meeting resumed at 12.15 p.m.

9. Housing Performance Report Aithisg Choileanaidh Taigheadais

There was circulated Report No. SR/7/21 by the Executive Chief Officer Property and Housing.

During discussion, the following main points were raised:-

- The Chairman extended the Committee's best wishes for a long and happy retirement to Mr Jim Holden, Housing Manager and thanked him for his support and service to the Council.
- It was queried what support tenants were receiving in relation to rent arrears. The universal credit case load for Skye North West had the largest increase in Highland in the last year of 201%; South Skye was an increase of 135% and Skye North East at 119%. It was understandable therefore that rent arrears were increasing. It was advised that support and advice to tenants with rent arrears and those in receipt of universal credit was given by Housing Officers and the Welfare support team.
- Members were receiving an increasing number of requests for housing from people who had been appointed to jobs in the area. It was queried if there were any short term housing options until long term housing became available as there was an extensive house building programme on the Isle of Skye. It was advised that the Council did have short term furnished accommodation and secure tenancies but the number of properties available was low. The Council did what it could to address housing needs, but it was acknowledged that it was very difficult situation. The Council was appointing a Private rented sector Officer within the Housing Service covering all of Highland and this Officer would look at options for housing need. Housing Officers were also liaising with Lochalsh and Skye Housing Association regarding Shared Equity and Mid market rents. There was also a significant housing development programme for the Isle of Skye and details on this would be provided at a future Ward Business meeting.
- It was noted that the Skye/Raasay area had a higher proportion of homelessness presentations compared to the Highland average.
- The good work of the local housing team was acknowledged and this could be seen by positive results in relation to time taken to complete repairs and re-let times.

The Committee **NOTED** the information provided on housing performance in the period 1 April 2020 to 31 March 2021.

10. Environmental Health Update Fios às Ùr mu Shlàinte Àrainneachdail

There was circulated Report No. SR/8/21 by the Executive Chief Officer Communities and Place which was supplemented by a presentation on Environmental health local issues and wider Environmental health service issues.

During discussion, the following main points were raised:-

- Members acknowledged the important work Environmental Health had carried out over the Covid period;
- It was queried if a Communities Works Officer/Dog Warden could be appointed for this area;
- If there were enough signs to show that a vehicle was clearly abandoned then Environmental Health could put a notice on them and have them removed. However, if the vehicle was on private ground then the landowners permission would be required. The number of abandoned vehicles tended to fluctuate depending on the value of scrap metal. At present the value of scrap metal was low. Environmental Health, DVLA and the Police did carry out targeted campaigns at times to tackle the problem of abandoned vehicles in areas where there was a significant number of them.
- It was explained that the sampling regime for private water supplies placed a legal duty on the owners to get them tested and Environmental Health would carry out the testing and receive income for doing this.
- If there were problems with septic tanks, the public would normally advise Environmental Health and they would investigate.
- Additional comfort schemes were proposed for Skye and they would require additional emptying of septic tanks. However, Scottish Water did not seem to have the capacity to do this and it was queried if there were any private operators that could carry out this work. It was explained that if a septic tank was managed properly it should only require emptying every 2/3 years. However, if there was more demand in rural areas for emptying tanks, with there being new comfort schemes and motor home sites then more private operators may be interested in carrying out this work.

The Committee **NOTED**:

- i. the background information on the Environmental Health team;
- ii. the type and volume of work being undertaken locally by team;
- iii. the ongoing challenges in responding to the Covid-19 pandemic and the other statutory duties undertaken by environmental health; and
- iv. the new report format and content.

**11. Burial Ground Capacity Update, Isle of Skye & Raasay
Fios às Ùr mu Chomas nan Cladhan, An t-Eilean Sgitheanach is Ratharsair**

There was circulated Report No. SR/9/21 by the Executive Chief Officer Communities and Place.

The report showed where the pressures were on burial ground capacity and timescale for projects and Members indicated their support to efforts with land acquisition for burial grounds.

Reference was made to some areas only being allowed 10 burials per annum. These were Scottish Environment Protection Agency guidelines based on the soil type at burial grounds.

Further, an update was provided in relation to acquisition of burial grounds in areas where there were pressures on burial ground capacity such as in Ashaig, Staffin, Dunvegan and Strath – Broadford. Also, for a small investment existing burial ground capacity could be increased substantially in some areas.

The Committee **NOTED**:-

i progress made on establishing the accurate numbers of available lair capacity and the ongoing work to secure land for burial ground expansion focusing on priority sites; and

ii that discussions would continue on burial ground capacity with local communities.

The meeting ended at 1.20 p.m.