

Minutes of Meetings

To be submitted to the Council

on

9 September 2021

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**The Highland Council
No. 2 2021/2022**

Minutes of Meeting of the **Highland Council** held **REMOTELY** on **Thursday, 24 June 2021** at 10.35am.

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

Present:

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

In Attendance:

Chief Executive	Executive Chief Officer, Economy & Infrastructure
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 Mr J Bruce, Ms K Currie, Ms E Knox, Mr N McLean, Mr M Reiss, Ms E Roddick, Mr A Sinclair and Mr B Thompson.

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

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

General – Mrs M Cockburn (Non-Financial) as a Council appointee on the Inverness, Badenoch & Strathspey Citizens Advice Bureau and Ms L Munro as a Director of High Life Highland respectively.

Item 8(i) – Mr B Lobban, Dr I Cockburn and Mr D Rixson (all Non-Financial)

Item 8(i) - Mr K Gowans (Financial)

Item 9 – Mr A Christie (Financial)

Item 9 – Mr A Christie, Mr G Adam, Mr D Rixson, Mr A Jarvie, Miss J Campbell, Mrs I Campbell, Mrs M Paterson (all Non-Financial)

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

The Council was advised that Mr Graham Ross had tendered his resignation as a Member of the Council with immediate effect. In this regard, a By-Election for Ward 13 (Inverness West) would be held on Thursday, 12 August 2021.

Members were also advised that Ms Nicola Sinclair had tendered her resignation as a Member of the Council and this would take effect from 28 June 2021. In this regard, a By-Election for Ward 3 (Wick and East Caithness) would also be held on Thursday, 12 August 2021.

In this regard, unanimous and grateful thanks were conveyed to both Members for the wide ranging and exceptional work which they had undertaken over the years and specifically for their contributions to their local communities.

Electronic copies of agenda/reports - at this point, the Convener also conveyed his thanks to those Members who had agreed to discontinue the receipt of paper copies of agendas/reports as this had saved the copying of 42, 500 sheets of paper for this meeting alone and was greatly appreciated.

4. **Confirmation of Minutes** **Daingneachadh a' Gheàrr-chunntais**

There had been submitted for confirmation as a correct record the Minutes of Meeting of the Council held on 13 May 2021 as contained in the Volume which had been circulated separately which were **APPROVED**.

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

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

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

Sutherland County Committee – Starred Item 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 - **AGREED**

Easter Ross Area Committee – Starred Item 5 – Tain Conservation Area Appraisal and Conservation Area Management Plan - **AGREED**

Corporate Resources Committee – Starred Item 3 – Appointments to Sub-Committees, Working Groups, etc – Appeals and Disputes Committee - **AGREED**

Tourism Committee – Item 3 – Visitor Management Plan - Page 416, Point 1V – **AGREED** to add (after Community Councils) “and Area Committees”.

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

The Council **AGREED** the following

(i) **Wellbeing Joint Sub Committee**

A meeting of the Wellbeing Joint Sub Committee to be held on Thursday, 19 August at 2pm.

Membership - Mrs M Davidson, Miss J Campbell, (Vacancy), Mrs I Campbell, Mrs M Paterson, Mrs M Cockburn, Mr K Rosie, Ms E Knox, Mr B Boyd, Mr A Christie, Mrs A MacLean, Mrs I MacKenzie, Mr C Smith and Mr J Gray.

(ii) **Dingwall & Seaforth Area Committee**

Meetings of the new Dingwall & Seaforth Area Committee to be held on 16 August and 9 November.

The original dates (5 August and 16 November) to still apply for the Black Isle Committee.

(iii) **South Planning Applications Committee**

Mr D Fraser to take up the vacant place on this Committee for Ward 12.

(iv) **Health, Social Care & Wellbeing Committee**

Mr D Fraser to replace Ms N Sinclair on this Committee and be appointed Vice-Chair.

7. **Question Time** **Am Ceiste**

The following **Public Question** had been received by the Head of Corporate Governance -

Mr M Gunn

To the Leader of the Council

“Since November 2020 Nairn Academy has had vacancies in Pupil Support Assistant roles, with 3 such PSA posts still vacant as of June 2021 because Highland Council

has refused to allow the positions to be advertised and filled. These funded posts were left gapped due to the application of a Council corporate policy, but it was self-evident that these vital positions were desperately needed as pupils returned to schooling after the worst disruption to education in living memory. Could the Highland Council therefore please explain what - if any - assessment was undertaken to determine the impact upon pupils at Nairn Academy of having such a large number of PSA positions gapped in the period November 2020 until present.

Please note that I am the Chair of the Parent Council at Nairn Academy”.

The response had been circulated.

In terms of a supplementary question, it was queried as to whether the Council would apologise to the pupils and parents of Nairn Academy for the damage the Administration had done to the education of vulnerable and disabled children by the refusal for 8 months to allow the school to fill vacant funded PSA posts?

In response, it was confirmed that more information would be sought on communication between the School and Officers **with the reply then being published.*

**Reply to Mr Gunn as follows –*

‘During lockdown, although the ASL posts at Nairn Academy were still vacant, there was no immediate need to appoint staff as young people were not all in school. The school had a Hub for children of key workers and vulnerable young people and had sufficient staffing in place for this throughout to be able to provide the support required. Officers were then in contact with the Head Teacher on return from the Easter break at the end of March through April. This was to clarify and update any outstanding or new vacancies and it was confirmed that these could be filled on a temporary basis, as there was an increased pressure on the school once all of the students had returned.

Officers will continue to link in with the Head Teacher to ensure staffing is in place and the ASN allocations for 2021/22 will be finalised in October. Existing staffing allocations remain in place until then.’

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

(i) Mr A Graham

To the Chair of the Communities & Place Committee

"What is the current position with the re-opening of Council Service Points?"

The response had been circulated.

In terms of a supplementary question, it was queried as to whether the opening of the Service Points could be published when it happened?

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

(ii) Mr R Gale**To the Leader of the Council**

“At the September the 10th 2020 full Council meeting, the Council agreed the motion to write to the Minister of State (Minister for Business, Energy and Clean Growth) the Rt Hon [Kwasi Kwarteng MP](#) in support of the cross-party Early Day Motion EDM #552 that; “calls on the Government to replace the current electricity distribution system with one that replicates that of gas and telecoms and share the cost of energy distribution equally across the UK”. Can you provide a copy of that letter and the response received from the Minister please?”

The response had been circulated.

In terms of a supplementary question, it was queried as to whether, as part of the Council’s Poverty Strategy, it could be ensured that fuel poverty (which accounted for a significant amount of poverty issues in Highland) was added as one of the priorities within a robust response to the Minister’s reply with regard to distribution costs?

In response, it was acknowledged that the Minister’s answer had not been clear and confirmed that more clarity would be sought and published/sent to Members. In addition, further meetings would be arranged with OFGEM. There was a strand in the Poverty Strategy about making direct payments to people who were in desperate need because of fuel poverty but the problem needed to be solved at source.

(iii) Mr A Graham**To the Leader of the Council**

“Western Gateway to Inverness – with the West Link project nearly complete, the need for a Western Gateway to the City of Inverness is very evident. There should be an attractive and engaging entrance to the City at Torvean, taking full advantage of the beautiful setting of the Caledonian Canal, the unique twin swing-bridge structures, the enchanting Tomnahurich Hill and the fantastic local history of that area to provide a memorable welcome for visitors and local people alike. Will the Highland Council investigate the provision of such a Western Gateway?”

The response had been circulated.

In terms of a supplementary question, it was queried as to whether it would be possible to look at the two roundabouts at the entrance to Inverness on the western side and arrange for these to be tidied up as at the moment they were in a very poor condition?

In response, it was confirmed that this would be raised with Officers once Mr Graham had provided further information on the specific roundabouts concerned.

(iv) Mr A Jarvie**To the Chair of the Education Committee**

“Can you provide a table of the FTE of PSAs by ASG as agreed in October 2020 and a comparison of the FTE by ASG in post for each month since?”

The response had been circulated.

In terms of a supplementary question, it was queried as to whether the table in relation to PSA allocations which had been requested could be provided.

In response, it was confirmed that the table would be sent to Mr Jarvie and circulated to all Members and that he could then contact the Chair if he had any further queries.

(v) Mr A Jarvie

To the Chair of the Economy & Infrastructure Committee

“The Scottish Government has a presumption against new build developments of over 30 houses to be connected to the telephone exchange with copper cable, instead to use Fibre To The Premises (FTTP). However, Openreach reports that developers are only giving them a quarter of the required time to install the more complex fibre cable. This means that BT Openreach are increasingly forced to lay copper cable instead.

In the last four years, what proportion of developments over 30 houses have been installed with copper/FTTC versus the required FTTP and what effort has the Council taken to ensure the faster, future-proof FTTP is the default installation for new builds?”

The response had been circulated.

In terms of a supplementary question, it was queried if an assurance could be provided that from this point onwards it would be highlighted whether all new developments were connected by copper or fibre and that the Council would engage with developers to install what was needed to move the Highlands forward.

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

(vi) Mrs I MacKenzie

To the Chair of the Communities & Place Committee

“Residents who want to dispose of DIY generated building materials can do so if they use a private car but they are not allowed to do this using a van or a trailer. It recently took a resident far longer to load concrete blocks into his car and then carefully extract them at the recycling centre than it would take to make the same drop off using his trailer. Do you recognise that if we make it difficult for residents to dispose of building waste we will see an increase in fly-tipping?”

The response had been circulated.

In terms of a supplementary question, it was queried as to how much was saved in the waste budget as a result of changes whereby residents were not able to dispose of their DIY waste and how much more was spent collecting it via green bins or potentially clearing it up as fly tipping material.

In response, it was confirmed that this was an operational issue but these figures would be sought and circulated to all.

(vii) Mr D Macpherson**To the Chair of the Economy & Infrastructure Committee**

“When will you be in a position to produce a timetable for Members to see on the rollout of Hydrogen vehicles and Electric vehicles to replace the existing Highland Council fleet in order to meet the Council’s own commitment to greatly reduce its carbon emissions as it tackles the previously agreed Climate and Ecological Emergency?”

The response had been circulated.

In terms of a supplementary question, it was queried if a timetable could be provided, and not an aspiration, so that Highland Council could be on the same level as other Local Authorities in Scotland.

In response, it was confirmed that the electric vehicle rollout was progressing and, in relation to hydrogen, discussions were taking place with the Scottish Government and other public sector partners to undertake a study to assess contributions. This would include the rollout of fuelling stations for hydrogen vehicles but until there was a system for that it was not possible to say when the vehicles would be in place.

(viii) Mr D Macpherson**To the Chair of the Economy & Infrastructure Committee**

“What reassurance can you give to demonstrate that the Highland Council is currently on track with the publicly accessible electric vehicle infrastructure network across the Highlands and Islands to ensure it will become Carbon Neutral across the entire region by 2025 (which is now only 42 months away)?”

The response had been circulated.

In terms of a supplementary question, it was queried as to when the Council would be in a position to offer safe and secure storage areas, charging points and charging stations for electric bicycles as it tried to encourage as much active travel as possible and whether there was an aspiration to replicate the Forth Valley and have the largest bicycle recharging points in Scotland?

In response, it was confirmed that the Council aspired to have an adequate EV charging system throughout Highland and at the present the NC 500 were being asked to provide EV charging points on that route.

(ix) Mr D Macpherson**To the Chair of the Communities & Place Committee**

“During the recent Scottish Government Election campaign, the First Minister gave a commitment to communities and voters that once re-elected the SNP Government would create a £60 million outdoor community play fund available to renew every outdoor play park in Scotland so that local authorities could improve play parks for our children and teenagers, for them to enjoy safe active outdoor play and in so doing improve the Nation’s health and mental well-being by reducing childhood obesity and isolation indoors, as part of a number of policies designed to help families in the recovery from the COVID pandemic and national lockdown. The First

Minister said, “Backed by a £60 million fund, we’ll put in place a plan to renew every play park in Scotland, so that all children have access to a place to play in their own community.” Have you received a notification of the amount of money expected from this Scottish Government central fund which is to be allocated to the Highland Council towards refurbishing and enhancing the many play parks within its control?”

The response had been circulated.

In terms of a supplementary question, it was queried if the Council could bring its play parks up to an acceptable standard and recharge the Scottish Government in order to ensure that parks in Inverness were refurbished and brought up to a safe and acceptable standard?

In response, it was confirmed that the Council could get its play parks up to an acceptable standard but it would cost a significant amount of money and there was no mechanism in place to recharge the Scottish Government. However, there were ongoing consultations with CoSLA and hopefully from that there would be an allocation for Highland.

(x) Mr D Macpherson

To the Chair of the Communities & Place Committee

“With the summer holidays fast approaching, can you please give an update on the number of Highland & Island play parks that are still closed and awaiting the delivery of bark ground coverings and also for the play park areas currently cordoned off while they wait for the replacement of worn out and broken play equipment to arrive to ensure that this Council is delivering on its own commitments towards localism and improving the facilities for its families and young people of all ages?”

The response had been circulated.

In terms of a supplementary question, it was queried if the Council would do everything possible to make as many play parks as possible available to as high a standard as possible in view of funding not forthcoming from the Scottish Government and especially with the Summer school holidays approaching?

In response, it was confirmed that this was underway.

(xi) Mr B Boyd

To the Leader of the Council

“Increasingly, Elected Members are expected to take advantage of the financial opportunities provided by various UK Government grants and funds (such as the Levelling-Up Fund) with insufficient time and information to offer a meaningful and informed response. This can lead to unsuccessful or inappropriate bids and missed opportunities for much needed funding.

What human resources, processes, documentation, data-gathering and other resources are in place to support the quick turnaround required for preparation of funding bids?”

The response had been circulated.

In terms of a supplementary question, it was queried as to whether, in relation to the Levelling-Up Fund, steps would be taken by the Administration to ensure that a team would be in place in future in order to be able to react quickly to any future (and similar) opportunities and also involve Members in this regard?

In response, it was confirmed that, now that the process had been completed, the Leader would be meeting with Senior Officers to discuss how the Council might take forward preparations for future bids. In this respect, it was envisaged that the first step would be the recruitment of a Growth Investment Manager.

(xii) Mr A Baxter

To the Chair of the Education Committee

"What reassurance can you give to Highland parents that there are safeguards to prevent any cover up of violent incidences towards pupils in our schools as recent investigations have revealed occurred at Scottish Borders Council and what procedures are in place to ensure any such complaints are dealt with in an open and transparent manner?"

The response had been circulated.

In terms of a supplementary question, it was queried as to what discussions had been held with the Chief Executive in regard to what had been described as 'a cover-up' at Borders Council and what lessons could be learnt in a Highland context from that experience?

In response, it was confirmed that an assurance could be given that there were safeguards and robust and clear procedures in place in terms of the Child Protection Policy. All school staff undertook Child Protection training and at the beginning of the new school session all school staff were given upgrade training. In addition, Child Protection training was also planned for Members in September.

(xiii) Mr D Macpherson

To the Chair of the Economy & Infrastructure Committee

"The Highland Council's Economy and Infrastructure Committee met on 4 February 2021 and agreed the distribution of an additional £20M for road maintenance programme and also agreed to continue with the current distribution method for the £7.2M base allocation. With the Highland Council's commitment to invest these significant sums of taxpayers money on repairing and improving its ageing and crumbling road surfaces and filling the thousands of potholes throughout its vast network of 6,700 kilometres of town and rural roads, what additional steps and extended flexible working hours and new business practices, (including working at night and at weekends, as happens in other local authorities, in conjunction with quarries and suppliers and experienced subcontractors), are being explored and undertaken this year to ensure that the agreed budget allocated for essential road repairs and white lining etc. will all be met in the remaining weeks before the annual shutdown of Highland Council roadworks due to the autumn and winter temperature drops that the Council's own roads engineers have previously explained prevent them annually from the effective continuation of roadworks throughout the 7 coldest months of the year from the months of October to April inclusive?"

The response had been circulated.

(There was no supplementary question).

(xiv) Mr D Macpherson

To the Chair of the Economy & Infrastructure Committee

“Can you also please give an assurance that this Council will not simply spend the additional allocated roads improvement monies on new road signs and expensive shiny new machinery and equipment (that could be hired in as and when it’s required for use at multiple locations across the Highlands) for that equipment only to lay and gather dust in compounds for the seven dormant months of the year when it can only effectively be used for the five short months of good weather when ground temperatures are above the frost warning of 4oC across the Highland and Islands region that we serve?”

The response had been circulated.

In terms of a supplementary question, it was queried as to whether an assurance could be given that the agreed budget allocated for essential repairs to roads would all be spent (on roads) before the year ended as this was a very high priority for constituents and taxpayers?

In response, it was confirmed that extensive negotiations had taken place with contractors to ensure that as much work as was possible could be completed within the relevant timescales but this was also very dependent on weather conditions.

**8. Notices of Motion
Brathan Glusaid**

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

Declarations of Interest – the following Members declared interests in this item but, having applied the test outlined in Paragraphs 5.2 and 5.3 of the Councillors’ Code of Conduct, concluded that their interests did not preclude their involvement in the discussion –

**Mr B Lobban (Non-Financial) as an Adviser to the Board of Grantown Museum
Dr I Cockburn (Non-Financial) as a Director of Ullapool Museum
Mr D Rixson (Non-Financial) as the Secretary of the Mallaig Heritage Centre
Mr K Gowans (Financial) as an employee of the University of the Highlands & Islands (UHI)**

(i)The cultural heritage of the Highlands is hugely important both to Highlanders and all who visit. There are some areas where we are very successful. Highland Council supports the Gaelic language, traditional music and a fortnight of events celebrating Highland Archaeology. We don’t have a framework of this kind to pull together all the strands of Highland history and present them to the world. Arguably, we do not draw sufficient attention to the unique qualities of our culture and history – and the importance of preserving and promoting them. We also have a duty to explore the bad as well as the good. A starting point would be to sponsor a pan-Highland conference to embrace all areas and periods so we may debate the issues in open forum. Accordingly:

Council proposes a Conference to promote the range and depth of Highland history in order to present a rounded picture of our unique cultural landscape.

Council requests a report for its meeting on 9th September with an outline of proposals, themes, costings and timetable.

Signed: Mr D Rixson Mr G Adam

(Following discussion, this Notice of Motion was **WITHDRAWN** at the meeting).

(ii)Glasgow Food & Climate Declaration - Since declaring a Climate & Ecological Emergency in 2019, Highland Council has prepared policies and strategies to progress towards the declared date of 2025. Council is asked to sign the Glasgow Food & Climate Declaration.

In this year of COP26 hosted by Glasgow, there is opportunity to renew commitment to sustainable food policies. This declaration brings together Local Authorities to speak with one voice to develop sustainable food policies, act together and call on National Governments to put food and farming at the heart of the global response to the climate emergency.

Signed: Mrs T Robertson Mrs A Maclean Mr D Rixson Mr J Gray Mr D Louden

During discussion, it was stressed that food and farming had to be at the heart of the global response to the climate emergency and it was particularly important to shop locally and eat seasonally.

Scotland produced food in abundance in season and as such the need to develop integrated food policies and strategies which helped to reduce waste and also provide access to an affordable and sustainable diet had never been more important. As such, the involvement of national governments in providing a focus on dealing with the food chain in a common sense and holistic manner to enable these objectives to be achieved would be key to making change happen

Decision

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

(iii)Culloden Academy

Local Elected Members have been informed that the proposed Extension to Culloden Academy will not be completed on time, currently scheduled for 2023. It has been suggested that the 2023 completion date is no longer achievable due to a 'shortfall' or miscalculation of the necessary funds and allocated Budget.

However, at a recent Full Council Meeting, the Administration gave assurances that this Capital Project would be delivered 'on time and on Budget'

This revelation is a very real cause for concern for Local Elected Members, Culloden Academy Stakeholder Group, Parents and Staff.

Culloden Academy does not provide a suitable learning environment for the young people on the existing school role, and by 2023 the school role is projected significantly to exceed capacity.

It is anticipated that substantial additional funds will be required to mitigate this situation. We believe that these funds are available to the Council without having to adjust School Capital programmes in progress elsewhere in the Highlands.

Therefore, the Council undertakes and commits to identifying and providing all and any necessary funding to ensure that the Culloden Academy Extension Project is completed without delay, as per the original programme of works agreed within the current Capital Programme.

Signed: Mr K Gowans Mr A Jarvie Mr D Macpherson Ms E Knox
Mrs G Campbell-Sinclair Mr B Boyd

At this point in the meeting, and following the decision taken at Item 9(i) earlier in the meeting, it was confirmed that a Suspension of Standing Orders would be required in order to continue with discussion.

On that basis, Mrs G Campbell-Sinclair, seconded by Mr K Gowans, **MOVED** suspension in order to proceed.

As an **AMENDMENT**, Mrs M Davidson, seconded by Mr J Gray, moved that Standing Orders should not be suspended.

On a vote being taken, the **MOTION** received 22 votes and the **AMENDMENT** received 33 votes, with 5 abstentions, and the **AMENDMENT** was therefore **CARRIED**, the votes having been cast as follows:-

For the Motion

Mr R Balfour, Mr A Baxter, Mr B Boyd, Mr I Brown, Mrs G Campbell-Sinclair, Mr C Fraser, Mr D Fraser, Mr K Gowans, Mr A Jarvie, Mr D Louden, Mr A MacInnes, Mr W Mackay, Mr W Mackay, Mr D Mackay, Mr G Mackenzie, Mrs I MacKenzie, Mr S Mackie, Mr D Macpherson, Mr I Ramon, Mr K Rosie, Mr P Saggars and Mr C Smith.

For the Amendment

Mr G Adam, Mr B Allan, Mrs J Barclay, Mrs C Caddick, Miss J Campbell, Miss I Campbell, Mrs H Carmichael, Mr A Christie, Mrs M Cockburn, Mrs M Davidson, Mr J Finlayson, Mr M Finlayson, Mr L Fraser, Mr R Gale, Mr A Graham, Mr J Gray, Ms P Hadley, Mr T Heggie, Mr A Henderson, Mrs D Mackay, Mr A Mackinnon, Mrs A MacLean, Mr C MacLeod, Mrs B McAllister, Mr J McGillivray, Mr H Morrison, Mrs P Munro, Mrs L Munro, Mrs M Paterson, Mr D Rixson, Mrs T Robertson, Ms F Robertson and Ms M Smith.

Abstentions

Mr R Bremner, Dr I Cockburn, Mr B Lobban, Mr D MacLeod and Ms N Sinclair.

(On the basis that the threshold for the Suspension of Standing Orders had not been achieved, there was no further discussion on this item).

(iv) This Council welcomes the pledge by Nicola Sturgeon of 3rd April that “backed by a £60 million fund, we’ll put in place a plan to renew every play park in Scotland, so that all children have access to a place to play in their own community”. Council resolves to approach Scottish Government to urge early implementation so that

Highland children will have improved play parks as soon as possible, with a report back to the next Council on the outcome to all discussions held with the Government.

Signed: Mr A Graham Mr A Christie Mrs T Robertson

During discussion, Members raised the following issues:-

- this fund was very much welcomed as it was considered that it could make a real difference across the Highland area and there was therefore a need for implementation as soon as possible;
- whilst welcoming the announcement of the fund, there had been very little detail on it and it was understood that there might only be 5% weighted towards rurality in its allocation. As such, a small addition was suggested to the Motion to allow the Council to engage with CoSLA and the Scottish Government to ensure that the methodology reflected the needs and rurality of the Highlands;
- it would be imperative that the Council was ready with a plan when the funds were allocated and to that end it was suggested that the terms of the Motion should be amended accordingly with progress being reported to and monitored by the Communities and Place Committee; and
- it was noted that a private report on this issue had been circulated to Council Leaders and was due to be discussed on the following day. In that regard, the Leader confirmed that she would pass on any additional new information as and when she was able to for the benefit of all Members/Wards,

Thereafter, Mr A Graham, seconded by Mr A Christie, **MOVED** the terms of the Notice of Motion as detailed – with the addition that the Council should engage with CoSLA and the Scottish Government to ensure that the methodology reflected the needs and rurality of the Highlands.

As an **AMENDMENT**, Mr R Bremner, seconded by Mrs M Cockburn, moved that the terms of the Notice of Motion should be amended to read as follows – ‘The Council welcomes the pledge by Nicola Sturgeon of 3rd April that “backed by a £60 million fund, we’ll put in place a plan to renew every play park in Scotland so that all children will have access to a place to play in their own community. Council expects allocation to be announced in the next few weeks and will ensure a programme is in place so that Highland children will have improved play parks as soon as possible with progress reported to and monitored by the Communities & Place Committee’.

On a vote being taken, the **MOTION** received 39 votes and the **AMENDMENT** received 16 votes, with 3 abstentions, and the **MOTION** was therefore **CARRIED**, the votes having been cast as follows:-

For the Motion

Mr R Balfour, Mrs J Barclay, Mrs C Caddick, Miss J Campbell, Mrs I Campbell, Mrs H Carmichael, Mr A Christie, Mrs M Cockburn, Mrs M Davidson, Mr J Finlayson, Mr M Finlayson, Mr D Fraser, Mr L Fraser, Mr R Gale, Mr A Graham, Mr J Gray, Ms P Hadley, Mr T Heggie, Mr A Henderson, Mr A Jarvie, Mr B Lobban, Mrs D Mackay, Mr D Mackay, Miss I MacKenzie, Mr A Mackinnon, Mrs A MacLean, Mr D Macleod, Mr D Macpherson, Mrs B McAllister, Mrs L Munro, Mrs P Munro, Mrs M Paterson, Mr D Rixson, Mrs T Robertson, Mrs F Robertson, Mr P Saggars, Ms N Sinclair, Mr C Smith and Ms M Smith.

For the Amendment

Mr B Allan, Mr A Baxter, Mr B Boyd, Mr R Bremner, Mr I Brown, Mrs G Campbell-Sinclair, Dr I Cockburn, Mr K Gowans, Mr D Louden, Mr A MacInnes, Mr W Mackay, Mr G Mackenzie, Mr R MacWilliam, Mr H Morrison, Mr I Ramon and Mr K Rosie.

Abstentions

Mr C Fraser, Mr C MacLeod and Mr C Munro.

Decision

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

It was also **AGREED** to engage with CoSLA and the Scottish Government to ensure that the methodology reflected the needs and rurality of the Highlands.

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(At this point in the meeting, the Convener confirmed to Members that it was his intention to again review the current time limits for Notices of Motion at meetings in order to fully take account of whether current limits were appropriate for discussion as well as right of reply and votes where necessary).

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**9. Medium Term Financial Plan
Plana Ionmhais Meadhan-ùine**

Declarations of Interest – the following Members declared interests in this item but, having applied the test outlined in Paragraphs 5.2 and 5.3 of the Councillors' Code of Conduct, concluded that their interests did not preclude their involvement in the discussion -

Mr Christie (Financial) as a Non-Executive Director of NHS Highland

Mr A Christie (Non-Financial) as General Manager of Inverness, Badenoch and Strathspey Citizens Advice Bureau

Mr A Jarvie (Non-Financial) as a Director of both High Life Highland and the Inverness, Badenoch & Strathspey Citizens Advice Bureau

Mr G Adam, Miss J Campbell, Mrs I Campbell and Mrs M Paterson (all Non-Financial) as Council appointees on the Board of Eden Court

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

(i) Medium Term Financial Planning and Health & Prosperity Strategy Investment

There had been circulated Report No. HC/14/21 dated 15 June 2021 by the Chief Executive.

The Leader of the Council introduced the report and highlighted the significant risks facing the Council in the coming years. She also praised the exemplary financial management by the Chief Executive and Finance teams which had helped to achieve the current positive budget position.

The Depute Leader of the Council referred to the aims of the Health and Prosperity Strategy which had been agreed in March 2021 to stimulate the Highland economy and aid the recovery from the Covid-19 crisis. He also confirmed development of a five-year rolling Capital Programme and a further five-year indicative programme, with further detail on the projects to be brought to the Council in October 2021.

During discussion, Members raised the following issues:-

- in response to several queries about the ‘unfunded’ status of the five school projects shown at Paragraph 9.3 of the report (Culloden Academy, Beauly and Dunvegan Primaries, Park Primary and St Clement’s School), it was explained that these projects, including the £9m required for Culloden Academy, would be funded through borrowing, with detail on this and the loan charges which would be incurred to be brought back to the Council in September/October 2021. In this regard, support was voiced for all the school projects proposed and it was hoped other schools across the Highlands would also be considered in due course;
- it was disappointing that only £22m of extra roads funding was being proposed when it had previously been confirmed that £26-28m was required to simply maintain the current level of road maintenance;
- in response to a query, it was explained that discussions were ongoing with insurers in relation to the fire which had taken place at Park Primary School. In this respect, clarity was sought and provided that the statutory consultation referred to in the report would be started imminently;
- it was stressed that when long term plans were made, it was important that they were adhered to;
- it would be important to be honest with the public about what was realistically achievable, with particular reference to re-profiling budgets and loan charges;
- it was vital that the impact of the Capital strategy on the Revenue budget, particularly in relation to loan charges, was fully considered and explained;
- a means of benchmarking Capital performance internally and against other Local Authorities would be helpful;
- it was hoped that there would be flexibility in delivering the strands of the Highland Employment Recruitment Offer Scheme to provide as many opportunities as possible;
- in relation to the requirement for capital investment in the Waste Strategy, it would be important to consider all opportunities to reduce the capital required and free it up for other projects;
- there should be a commitment to working with communities to solve problems, with particular reference being made to applications to the Tourism Infrastructure Fund. In this regard, information was sought and provided on in-kind and possible match funding assistance which the Council could provide to communities and progress being made with the Tourism Infrastructure Fund;
- consideration should be given to investment in the latest infrared pothole-filling technology;
- it had to be highlighted that Eden Court could not be considered as a ‘cultural hub’ for western and remote areas of the Highlands but it was accepted as a pan-Highland cultural asset;
- the planned investment in the Corran Ferry infrastructure was welcomed and much needed and in this regard reference was made to the significant cost of road upgrades which would be required if the ferry was not replaced. It was also clarified that the Council was not currently considering a replacement bridge link;

- clarity was sought and received that the funds allocated to the programme to manage and deliver the City Region Deal would be for projects across the Highlands;
- consideration should be given to the establishment of a Sub-Group to robustly scrutinise potential future capital projects, including the possibility that the already established Budget Sub-Committee of the Corporate Resources Committee could fulfil this function, with a report being brought back to the Council meeting in September in this regard;
- concern was expressed that Local Members had not been adequately included in communication with the Parent Council and parents in relation to the upgrading of Culloden Academy. In this regard, the Chief Executive confirmed that this would be reviewed to ensure that future similar correspondence would be copied to Local Members. It was also clarified that the £9m funding required would be achieved through borrowing and it was hoped that the project, which was urgently required, would be started soon;
- with the next budget settlement still to be confirmed, it was queried whether the Scottish Government would permit the Council to increase Council Tax by a higher percentage than was currently being proposed;
- it would be important in the future to invest in 'spend to save' projects which could generate income;
- reference was made to the need for significant investment in the Strome Ferry By-Pass in Wester Ross; and
- in relation to the three commitments made at the last Council meeting in respect of roads, play parks and public toilets, it would be important to identify available reserves and in this respect five key requirements were suggested as follows – (i) a quicker understanding of available finance (ii) a more wide ranging discussion on the options available to the Council to realise increased affordable finance (iii) stronger engagement with Members on which areas the Council needed to focus on with available spend, (iv) highlighting the short, medium and long term demands which were likely to impact on the availability of funds and (v) ensuring the Council related the demands of communities to the investment programme.

Decision

The Council:-

- (i) **AGREED** the approach to medium term financial planning outlined at Section 5 of the report, noting an anticipated £15m annual budget savings requirement over the medium term;
- (ii) **NOTED** the progress made with the projects funded through Phase 1 investment set out at Section 6 and Appendices 1 & 2 of the report;
- (iii) **AGREED** the recommendations for Phase 2 investment set out at Section 7 and Appendices 3 and 4 of the report;
- (iv) **AGREED** the proposals for Phase 3 investment set out at Section 7 and summarised in Appendix 3 of the report;
- (v) confirmed the priorities for Schools capital investment set out at Section 9.3 of the report as follows:
 - Beauly Primary
 - Culloden Academy

- Dunvegan Primary
- Park Primary
- St Clement's School

and **NOTED** that a full scope, timescale, associated cost and funding options would be brought back to the September Council meeting;

- (vi) **NOTED** that there would be opportunities for Member engagement to look at affordability of the overall Capital Programme, including a review of the loans fund accounting review and any other flexibilities available, to inform the recommendations that would come forward in October as set out in (vii) below;
 - (vii) **NOTED** the development of the capital strategy, new 5 year fixed plus 5 year indicative Capital Programme and associated affordability considerations would be brought back to the Council in October and factored into future iterations of the medium term financial plan;
 - (viii) **AGREED** that the Chief Executive would review communication with parents and the Parent Council in relation to the Culloden Academy capital project and that future similar correspondence would be copied to Local Members; and
 - (ix) **AGREED** to consider the establishment of a Sub-Group to robustly scrutinise potential future capital projects, including the possibility that the already established Budget Sub-Committee of the Resources Committee could fulfil this function, with a report being brought back to the Council meeting in September in this regard.
- (ii) **Annual Accounts 2020/21 and Revenue & Capital Budget Out-Turn Figures**

There had been circulated Report No. HC/15/21 dated 14 June 2021 by the Executive Chief Officer Resources and Finance.

During discussion, Members raised the following issues:-

- it was noted that a Seminar had been arranged for the following Monday (28 June) in respect of the Annual Accounts and all Members were encouraged to attend if possible – on the basis that a further Seminar(s) would be arranged for those Members who could not attend;
- it was the case that the Council now had a significant surplus and it was queried as to whether there was now a need for a review to be undertaken in respect of the level of reserves being held which was considerably in excess of the previous targets which had been set;
- a decision had been previously taken to remove Head Teachers' reserves from DSM budgets due to the financial position at that time but it was queried as to whether these reserves could now be restored;
- thanks should be conveyed to the Chief Executive and the relevant Officers for the work which had been undertaken and also to the Scottish Government for the support which had been given to the Council;
- in relation to the Remuneration of Senior Employees for 2020/21, and specifically the position of Interim Executive Chief Officer for Education and Learning which had been filled on a consultancy basis from 24 April to 28 August 2020, it was noted that detailed information on this position was now being made available on a public basis within the Unaudited Accounts.

However, it was the case that Members of the Council had been previously instructed by Officers not to discuss any aspects of the post in public as the information was 'commercially sensitive'. It was therefore queried as to whether that instruction had been wrong and if so whether an apology was now due to the Members who had tried to raise this issue previously. In that regard, it was confirmed that a *response from Officers would be issued to all Members of the Council and *published in the Minutes of this meeting thereafter for transparency –*

**Response - There was a contractual obligation of confidence upon the Council at the time that Members were advised about the risks associated with sharing information without seeking advice on the appropriateness of doing so. Members were also reminded that information that is provided on the basis of elected member privilege should not be shared or disclosed publicly without first checking the status of that information. Members were also advised that public meetings are not a forum for discussing individuals, their performance or remuneration. These are exempt matters as defined by the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973.*

The key piece of legislation covering what should be included in the Accounts is finance circular 2011/8 which is linked here: <https://www.gov.scot/publications/local-government-finance-circular-82011-local-authority-accounts-remuneration-report/>

The finance circular points to the specific pieces of legislation around the remuneration report but the circular itself (as opposed to the legislation) includes the detail of what should be disclosed. Paragraphs 31 to 34 of the circular are most relevant in terms of the requirement to provide information relating to the Chief Executive's direct reports. The figures published in the Accounts relate to the total cost of the contract with the recruitment agency and not the fee paid to the individual.

- it was also queried as to whether any payment had been made to the External Auditors for work undertaken by them in relation to the situation surrounding the Interim Chief Officer(Education and Learning) post as it appeared from the Annual Accounts that no payment had been made in this regard;
- in terms of the General Disclosure by Pay Band, it was noted that there had been a significant increase in the number of Officers paid at the higher bands in contrast with previous years. As such, details of updated total expenditure in this respect were requested and it was confirmed that this information would be made available on a public level in due course;
- the Leader of the Council had been asked as to whether she considered that the payments made to the Interim Chief Officer (Education and Learning) between 24 April and 28 August 2020 had been value for money for taxpayers but a response was still awaited and it was hoped that this could be provided;
- in regard to Exit Disclosure, and specifically on exit package which had amounted to a figure of £475,529 as detailed in the Annual Accounts, it was queried as to whether full details of this package could now be provided on the grounds of public transparency;
- in relation to the Chronology of Reporting, the table at Paragraph 8.2 of the report was very helpful in confirming that the year-end position was incredibly positive given the outlook at the beginning of the year;
- in terms of the Monitoring of Capital Expenditure from 1 April 2020 to 31 March 2021 (General Fund) and specifically Housing (Non-HRA), further information was needed on why it appeared that no funding had been released in respect of Travelling People Sites; and

- it would be extremely important to prioritise 'spend to save' projects wherever possible in the future.

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

As an **AMENDMENT**, Mr A Jarvie, seconded by Mr S Mackie, moved the reversal of the decision taken by the Council on 25 June 2020 to use DSM balances held at the end of 2019/20 - and to return these amounts to DSM budgets before the beginning of the Summer term.

On a vote being taken, the **MOTION** received 48 votes and the **AMENDMENT** received 14 votes, with no abstentions, and the **MOTION** was therefore **CARRIED**, the votes having been cast as follows:-

For the Motion

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

For the Amendment

Mr R Balfour, Mr A Baxter, Mr R Gale, Mr A Jarvie, Mrs D Mackay, Mrs I MacKenzie, Mr S Mackie, Mr D Macleod, Mr D Macpherson, Mr J McGillivray, Mr J McGillivray, Mr I Ramon, Mr P Saggars and Mr C Smith.

Decision

The Council:-

- (i) **AGREED** to receive the unaudited Annual Accounts for the Highland Council, Highland Charities Trust, Highland Charitable Trust and the Highland Council Pension Fund for the year ended 31st March 2021 and **NOTED** that these would be presented to the appointed auditor by the prescribed date of the 30th June 2021; and
- (ii) **NOTED** the Revenue, Capital and Housing Revenue Account financial performance in the year 2020/21 as detailed.

10. Staff Survey Suirbhidh Luchd-obrach

There had been circulated Report No. HC/16/21 dated 10 June 2021 by the Chief Executive.

During discussion, Members raised the following issues:-

- it was clear from the survey results that a significant majority of staff wished to continue working from home and this provided additional impetus for the property/asset rationalisation project to be progressed/completed as quickly as

possible and before the current term of the Council ended if feasible. In this regard, the associated advantages of being able to address issues arising from the current and very large housing waiting list were also highlighted;

- Council staff across all Services had already responded/were continuing to respond with the highest levels of devotion and flexibility during this pandemic and the thanks of all Members of the Council had to be conveyed to them once again;
- it would be very important to continue dialogue with all staff in the coming months in terms of future working arrangements – this included those who had responded to the survey but also those who had not responded;
- despite the call to complete asset rationalisation as soon as possible, it was vitally important that this was undertaken correctly for all concerned;
- it was imperative that there was a focus on what was needed by all staff who wished to work from home (in terms of their specific requirements) in future and also on the needs of those staff who had highlighted that they wished to return to offices;
- the allocation of mobile phones in future for those Officers working from home would be advantageous in terms of making contact as and when necessary;
- guidance should be drawn up for home working in the coming weeks and months in order to address issues such as lack of engagement, social isolation and staff working routinely out with normal working hours, etc; and
- this was an issue which had been and would continue to be discussed extensively at meetings of the Redesign Board and as such all Members were welcome to attend and contribute in this regard.

Decision

The Council:-

- (i) **NOTED** the Survey results as highlighted in Section 5 of the report and detailed in full in the Appendix; and
- (ii) **AGREED** the proposed next steps as set out in Section 6 of the report.

11. Levelling Up Fund and Community Renewal Fund Maoin Dèanamh Co-ionann agus Maoin Ùrachadh Coimhearsnachd Aontachadh Cur a-steach Tagraidh

There had been circulated Report No. HC/17/21 dated 14 June 2021 by the Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure, Environment & Economy.

During discussion, Members raised the following issues:-

- the UK government had given an assurance that no community would be worse off as a result of Brexit but the Highlands was losing an approximate £90m per year of funding (ESF, ERDF, Maritime and Fisheries, Farmers' Grant support, development and LEADER funding). Being placed in Tier 3 for Levelling Up funding was disappointing and meant that the Highlands had a low chance of success for its bids. As such, the criteria used to assess Highland in this regard was queried and felt to be unfair;
- Officers were thanked for their work in preparing the bids, especially in view of the tight timescales;
- It was noted that the inclusion of the Skye, Lochaber and Wester Ross projects in the first round of Levelling Up Funding had not proved possible but it was hoped it would be included in the next round;

- the benefits to Lochaber of the NC500 and from the great trails in attracting visitors were highlighted;
- in addition to Inverness, it was pointed out that Fort William, Nairn and Aviemore could also be considered as gateways to the Highlands;
- the need for a running track and sports hub in Caithness was emphasised;
- it was important to concentrate on applications to the Shared Prosperity Fund, which would be vital to the economic wellbeing of the Highlands and would be the main replacement for European funding. As such, it was likely that a prospectus on this would be published to which the Council could respond and work to influence the metrics of the fund was vital. In this regard, the Leader was discussing this with MPs, MSPs and the Scottish Government;
- the need to have 'shovel ready' projects in place was emphasised and it was queried as to whether Members could seek support from Officers in this regard. It was also considered important that resources were targeted appropriately and not allocated to projects which were unlikely to succeed;
- concern was expressed that insufficient communication had taken place with Local Members in relation to the bids which had been submitted and possible future projects, although the tight timescales were acknowledged. In this respect, the commitment given earlier in the meeting by the Chief Executive to review/rectify communication was welcomed;
- the usefulness of the Caithness and Sutherland Regeneration Partnership in bringing forward projects was summarised and in relation to the need to review and prepare projects in advance of funding bids, it was proposed that a process should be established for bringing forward Highland projects for future rounds of the Levelling Up Fund and/or the Shared Prosperity Fund – with monitoring and Member scrutiny undertaken by the appropriate Strategic Committee;
- the impact of additional NC500 traffic on cyclists was pointed out and improved cycling infrastructure was suggested for a future funding bid;
- it was important that the Highlands were moved out of Tier 3 and it was suggested that the Council's Administration had not been sufficiently proactive in influencing this decision at UK Government level;
- information was sought on the current situation in relation to a second City-Region deal;
- it had to be noted that due to the tight timescales for Levelling Up funding, some Local Authorities had not submitted any bids;
- the Leader confirmed that Members' assistance with any of the funding and Tier 3 negotiations would be welcomed;
- thanks were conveyed specifically to Ms N Sinclair and Mr R Bremner for their work on the Wick Town Centre Regeneration Project; and
- it was suggested that levels of pre-Brexit European funding to the Highlands had been reducing, in part due to the economic success of Inverness, and that the Council required more effective lobbying tactics in this respect.

Decision

The Council **AGREED**:-

- (i) to homologate the bid submissions in respect of the Levelling Up Fund and the Community Renewal Fund as contained in Appendix 1 of the report;
- (ii) that work should continue on the Portree/Fort William bid for the next round of the Levelling Up Fund application; and
- (iii) that further lobbying on the Council's future share of the Shared Prosperity Fund remained a top priority for the Council.

It was also **AGREED** to establish a process for bringing forward Highland projects for future rounds of the Levelling Up Fund and/or the Shared Prosperity Fund – with monitoring and Member scrutiny undertaken by the appropriate Strategic Committee.

12. **Boundaries Scotland – Review of Electoral Arrangements for the Highland Council Area – Final Proposals**

There had been circulated Report No. HC/18/21 dated 18 June 2021 by the Executive Chief Officer Performance and Governance.

During discussion, Members raised the following issues:-

- it was understood that the Statutory Instrument which governed this matter could be either approved or rejected (but not amended) although the Scottish Government could also withdraw it if it chose to do so;
- it was also noted that this would be submitted to the Law & Reform Committee and as such it would be vital for the Council to approach that Committee and offer to provide evidence ahead of a final decision being taken;
- there was a clear case to be put forward for the Highland area and support had been received from Highland MSPs which was greatly appreciated;
- there was a need for all Members of the Council to be involved in this issue with their respective communities and it was hoped that this could be progressed in the coming weeks;
- it was widely felt that the Council should maintain its opposition to the final review and reject the methodology which had been used, namely rural weighting and electorate/Member ratio;
- it was also considered that the final proposals undermined the purpose of the Islands Act by reducing the representation of the Islands;
- there was concern about the lack of logic in the proposals and as such it was suggested that the Boundaries Scotland review had failed to listen to local communities and also to take account of their own guidance; and
- in order to get fairer representation for the areas which had been detrimentally affected, the Council had to reject all of the final proposals (and not just some of them) and also the methodology which had been used.

Decision

Members:-

NOTED the final report from Boundaries Scotland Review of Electoral Arrangements, The Highland Council Area Final Proposals.

AGREED that the Council should maintain its opposition to the final review and reject the methodology used, namely rural weighting and electorate/Member ratio. Also, that the final proposals undermined the purpose of the Islands Act by reducing the representation of the Islands.

AGREED to write to the Deputy First Minister, Highlands and Islands MSPs and the Chair of the Local Government and Communities Committee to express the concerns raised by the Review's proposals as set out in Paragraph 7 of the report.

**13. Deeds Executed
Sgrìobhainnean Lagha a Bhuilicheadh**

It was **NOTED** that a list of deeds and other documents executed on behalf of the Council since the meeting held on 13 May 2021 was available on the Council's Website.

**14. Recess Powers
Cumhachdan Fosaidh**

It was **AGREED** that, during the recess period, powers should be granted to the Chief Executive and Executive Chief Officers, in consultation with the Convener, Leader of the Council, Depute Leader of the Council, relevant Committee Chair and the Leader of the Opposition, to deal with issues arising during that time and that a report should be prepared for the first meeting of the Council or relevant Committee following the period where these powers had been exercised.

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

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

16. Extension of the Highland Council Re-Settlement Programme

There had been circulated to Members only Report No. HC/19/21 dated 14 June 2021 by the Chief Executive.

Decision

Following discussion, the Council **AGREED** the recommendation as detailed in the report – together with an element of delegation to Officers to take forward the addition to the recommendation which had been proposed at the meeting.

The meeting ended at 5.45pm.

The Highland Council

Minutes of Meeting of the **Nairnshire Committee** held remotely on Wednesday 23 June 2021 at 10.30 am.

Present:

Mr L Fraser
Mr T Heggie

Mrs L MacDonald
Mr P Saggars

In attendance:

Mrs K Lackie, Executive Chief Officer, Performance & Governance
Ms E Tayler, Acting Ward Manager, Communities and Place
Mr D Wood, Principal Housing Officer, Property & Housing Service
Ms A Clark, Head of Policy & Reform, Communities and Place
Mr S Dalgarno, Development Plans Manager, Infrastructure & Environment
Ms S Murdoch, Common Good Fund Officer, Performance & Governance Service
Ms F Shearer, Area Education & Learning Manager, Education & Learning Service
Mr A MacInnes, Administrative Assistant, Performance & Governance Service

Also in attendance:

Mr R Chapman, Local Senior Officer for Highland, Scottish Fire & Rescue Service (Item 3)

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

Mr T Heggie in the Chair

BUSINESS

1. Apologies for Absence Leisgeulan

There were no apologies for absence.

2. Declarations of Interest Foillseachaidhean Com-pàirt

Item 5: Mr L Fraser (financial)

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

There was circulated Report No NC/09/21 by the Local Senior Officer.

During discussion the following main points were raised:-

- There would be ongoing information and education to the public on the potential risk of wild fires during the summer period.
- The increase in domestic incidents in the last period may in part be due to people staying at home due to Covid, but some incidents could have

happened whether people were at home or not i.e. faulty electrical equipment. Any local trends in incidents would be addressed, but at present there were no causes for concern in Nairnshire.

- Nairnshire had always been fortunate with good station availability and it was advised that the Service was currently recruiting to fill some vacancies.
- Members expressed their gratitude to the professionalism of the local Fire Service in keeping communities safe.

The Committee **NOTED** the content of the report.

4. **Use of Ward Covid Response Funds Maointean Freagairt Covid Uàrd Inbhir Narann is Chaladair**

There was circulated Report No NC/**10**/21 by the Executive Chief Officer Communities and Place.

The Committee were invited to agree to allocate funding from Covid- 19 Ward Discretionary funds to support the provision of grass cutting on the (old) Nairn Farmer's Showfield in support of health and well-being activity.

It was highlighted that the Council ought to be providing the grass cutting of this recreational area. Local Members would continue to discuss with Officers to find a solution and funding from Covid-19 Ward Discretionary funds was a temporary solution.

Thereafter, the Committee **AGREED** to allocate £1,470 from Covid- 19 Ward Discretionary funds to support the provision of grass cutting on the (old) Nairn Farmer's Showfield in support of health and well-being activity.

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

Declaration of Interest: Mr L Fraser declared a financial interest in this item on the grounds that he undertook work for the Housing Service in Nairn but, having applied the test outlined in Paragraphs 5.2 and 5.3 of the Councillors' Code of Conduct, concluded that his interest did not preclude his involvement in the discussion.

There was circulated Report No NC/11/21 by the Executive Chief Officer Housing and Property.

During discussion, the following main points were raised:-

- It was noted that the number of house relets in was 64 and there were 450 people on the housing waiting list for Nairn and Cawdor. It was advised that there was not sufficient housing for the demand. Officers did not have difficulty allocating housing and there was a shortage of larger properties and limited choices of different types of property. Therefore more housing and a wider selection of types of property was needed.
- Staff were commended for their work in assisting tenants who were in rent arrears. In particular, the reintroduction of face to face interaction would bring positive results and that rent arrears figures should improve.

- There was an ongoing review of the points system used to allocate housing to try and make it fairer and more consistent. Officers did try hard to prioritise housing for local people and it was advised that in the Lochloy housing development all 29 properties went to local people or people associated with the area.
- Members expressed their appreciation to the work undertaken by the Housing team.

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

6. Nairn Common Good Fund: Consultation on proposal to dispose of Sandown Lands for development
Maoin Math Coitcheann Inbhir Narann: Co-chomhairle mu mholadh faighinn cuidhteas de Thalamh Sandown airson leasachadh

There was circulated Joint Report No NC/12/21 by the Executive Chief Officer Communities and Place and Executive Chief Officer Resources and Finance.

The report provided information on the outcome of public consultations relating to the proposal to dispose of Sandown Land, Nairn by sale for development. The Committee were invited to consider and agree the responses to the representations raised in connection with the disposal, and approve publication of same. A decision on the outcome of the consultation would then be made at the next meeting of the Committee.

Members highlighted that this was a very comprehensive consultation with a good extension of time to it that allowed as many people to participate in it as possible. Members were supportive of the responses to the comments received in the consultation.

Some of the negative tone of the comments from the public were disappointing as were inaccurate comments, personal attacks on Members and responses to these inaccuracies were welcomed. In particular, it was confirmed that the land at Kingsteps did have 29 Council houses on it and over 25% of the housing built at that site was affordable housing. Also, there was evidence that there was a significant housing need in Nairnshire, with 450 people currently on the housing waiting list for this area.

It was also highlighted that housing was not the reason for any disposal of Sandown land, but to realise an asset for the Common Good Fund. A view was expressed that the asset should not be disposed off, as it was not the right time to sell and perhaps a local referendum should be held on the issue.

In relation to the resource implications, it was stated in the report that any sale of Sandown land would represent a permanent reduction in the Nairn Common Good Asset portfolio. However, it was suggested that any sale would in fact be exchanging one asset for another asset of an equivalent value. This matter would be clarified in the next report to the Committee in September.

Also, in relation to Developer contributions it was felt they will increase in time, as the developer/landowner benefits, leaving the Local Authority to pick up most of the capital costs for services. However, any increase in developer contributions would likely reduce the value of the land. It was advised that the

likely costs of developer contributions had been factored into the value of the land and therefore considered as part of the responses to comments on the consultation.

Thereafter, the Committee:-

i. NOTED the outcome of the consultation process undertaken as contained in the analysis at Appendix 1.

ii. AGREED the responses to the representations raised in connection with the proposal as outlined in the table at paragraph 2 (b) of Appendix 1, with the addition that a comment to the response would reflect that the development at Kingsteps had over 25% affordable housing on it. Also, **APPROVED** publication of the same on the Council website and notifying those who have responded within the consultation.

iii. AGREED that to allow time for full reflection and assessment of all comments received, a decision on the outcome of the consultation will be considered at the next meeting of the Nairnshire Area Committee.

iv. NOTED that given the value of the asset, the decision on the outcome of the consultation will rest with Highland Council and Members of the Nairnshire Committee will be asked to make a recommendation to the Council.

7. Education Report Aithisg Foghlaim

There was circulated Report No NC/13/21 dated 24 May 2021 by the Executive Chief Officer Education and Learning.

During discussion, it was confirmed that Primary schools in the area were coping well in the current circumstances. Rosebank and Millbank Primaries still had capacity to take in more pupils and a new Nursery at Auldearn Primary School was opening. In addition, there was good early years provision in Nairnshire with details provided.

In respect of the replacement of the synthetic pitch at Nairn Academy it was confirmed that works were due to start in early July, 2021.

Continuing, with the new Academy to be built, upgrading of properties for Early years provision and good capacity in Primary schools, the education provision in Nairnshire was in a good state.

It was highlighted that the review of the school catchment areas across the Council required to be considered as part of the financial planning of the School estate.

Members extended their thanks to the Education Service for all their hard work during the period of lockdown. All staff had to be very flexible and adaptable in trying to ensure the best was done for young people and families. Some of the work undertaken in Highland had been recognised nationally and this was to be commended.

The Committee **NOTED** the contents of the report.

8. Minutes
Geàrr-chunntas

There had been circulated Minutes of Meeting of the Nairnshire Committee held on 10 March 2021 which were approved by the Council on 13 May 2021, the terms of which were **NOTED**.

The meeting was concluded at 12.20 p.m.

The Highland Council

Minutes of the special meeting of the **Economy and Infrastructure Committee** held remotely on **Thursday, 8 July 2021** at **9.30 am**.

Present:

Mr R Balfour	Mr D Louden
Mr B Boyd	Mr A MacInnes
Mr I Brown	Mr W MacKay
Mrs C Caddick	Mr D MacLeod
Mrs H Carmichael	Mr J Finlayson (substitute)
Dr I Cockburn (substitute)	Mr D Rixson
Mr J Gray	Mrs T Robertson
Mr A Henderson	

Non-Members also present:

Mr A Christie	Mrs E McAllister
Mrs M Davidson	Mr G MacKenzie
Mr B Lobban	

Officials in Attendance:

Mr M MacLeod, Executive Chief Officer - Infrastructure & Environment
 Ms K Lackie, Executive Chief Officer - Performance & Governance
 Mr E Foster, Head of Corporate Fin & Commercialism
 Mr C Howell, Head of Infrastructure
 Mr A MacIver, Principal Engineer Strategy and Testing
 Mr M Mitchell, Service Finance Manager
 Miss J MacLennan, Principal Administrator, Chief Executive's Office
 Ms Fiona MacBain, Committee Administrator, Chief Executive's Office

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

Mrs T Robertson in the Chair

1. Apologies for Absence Leisgeulan

Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of Mr P Saggars, Mr K Gowans and Mr C Munro.

2. Declarations of Interest Foillseachaidhean Com-pàirt

There were no declarations of interest.

Update

The Head of Infrastructure gave a presentation on the background to the harbour redevelopment, the proposals for the harbour and the benefits the redevelopment would bring, and the funding arrangements for the project.

3. 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 item on the grounds that it involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraphs 6 and 9 of Part 1 of Schedule 7A of the Act.

4. Uig Harbour Redevelopment

A presentation was given by the Head of Infrastructure on proposed changes to funding arrangements and the grant offer, risks to the Council, and a summary of the options for action.

There had been circulated to Members only Report No. ECI/30/21 dated 2 July 2021 from the Executive Chief Officer (Infrastructure and Environment).

Following the presentation the Committee **AGREED** to suspend Standing Order 35.

During discussion, Members considered various issues, including the following:-

- the increased costs and reputational damage that would be incurred if there was a further delay to the harbour redevelopment;
- the poor state of the existing facilities and the economic benefits of the redevelopment;
- the reasons for the changes to the usual grant offer for this type of project;
- the mechanics of how and when the additional capital required would be funded and repaid, and assurance that this project would not impact on the Council's capital programme;
- assurance was sought, and received, that all dredging undertaken was compliant with relevant legislation;
- the current harbour dues at Uig, not including the additional costs of the redevelopment, would continue to be amended in line with the usual annual negotiations to cover required maintenance;
- reference was made to the SSE plans to upgrade transmission lines from Uig to Fort Augustus;
- information was sought, and provided, on the funding arrangements for the Western Isles Council's element of the project; and
- assurance was sought, and provided, that there was no financial risk to the Council over those stated in the report – which were described as typical in such grant offers.

The Committee **AGREED** the recommendations as detailed in the report.

The meeting ended at 11am.

Highland Council

Minutes of Meeting of the **Black Isle Committee** held remotely via Microsoft Teams on 5 August 2021 at 10.30 am.

Present:

Mr G Adam
Mrs J Barclay
Mr C Fraser

In attendance:

Mrs D Ferguson, Senior Ward Manager, Communities and Place
Ms D Agnew, Ward Manager (Black Isle, Dingwall and Seaforth), Communities and Place
Mr I Moncrieff, Roads Operations Manager, Infrastructure, Environment and Economy
Ms S Murdoch, Common Goods Fund Officer, Performance and Governance
Mr A Coyle, Corporate Communications and Engagement Officer, Performance and Governance
Mrs A MacArthur, Administrative Assistant, Performance and Governance

Also in attendance:

Group Commander A McKinley, Scottish Fire and Rescue Service
Mr J Palmer, Black Isle Partnership

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

Business

1. Apologies for Absence Leisgeulans

There were no apologies for absence.

2. Declarations of Interest Foillseachaidhean Com-pàirt

Item 8: Councillor G Adam (non-financial).

3. Appointment of Chair Cur Cathraiche an Dreuchd

Councillor G Adam stated that as Chair of the previous Black Isle, Dingwall and Seaforth Committee he remained Chair of this Committee.

Councillor C Fraser was unanimously appointed as Vice Chair.

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

There had been circulated Report No BI/001/21 dated 20 July 2021 together with the Black Isle Performance Report by the Local Group Commander for the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service.

In relation to the ongoing incident, a serious fire between Tore and Muir of Ord at the Fettes Sawmill, two appliances had been in attendance and at this time there was no information on the cause of the fire but members would be updated when information became available.

In discussion, the following main points were addressed by the Local Group Commander:-

- on a question on papers the Group Commander confirmed that the information requested, namely the statistical summary, at the end of the appendix to the report, had been provided and would continue to be provided;
- the striking reduction in false alarms was likely due to many people working from home. The Fire Service were still engaging with the stakeholders in reducing this further as any incident was one too many;
- there had been concern in the likely wild fires in the area this year, however there had not been as many as had been reported in the previous year. Although it was early days the new Wild Fire Strategy and Wild Fire Forum was of particular benefit. The information given to key landowners and stakeholders and put on social media with warnings to the community and with landowners requested not to undertake burning in their fields at high-risk times had proved beneficial. Unfortunately, the Fire Service had no enforcing authority to prevent people creating fires for barbecuing or for campfires in the wild, however the fire service would continue to engage with social media.

The Committee **NOTED** the report.

5. **Winter Maintenance Plan 2021/22 Obair-glèidhidh Geamhraidh 2021/22**

There had been circulated Report No BI/002/21 dated 22 July 2021 by the Interim Chief Officer – Infrastructure, Environment and Economy.

In discussion, the following responses were given:-

- on a question on the pressures in the service, this year has been particularly stressful for many of the staff. There were three agency drivers available and these agency workers would be taken on to cover the two vacancies in Greenhill and one in Tain;
- the Committee would like to see enhanced engagement within the community and one area would be in the clearing of footpaths;

- the Council would be hesitant to give a footway tractor to communities of unqualified people for gritting the pavements, however the service could arrange for grit bins, salt, yellow vests and shovels to be provided; and
- any group in the community wanting to get in touch can register as a community helper and this would then cover them for insurance purposes.

The Committee **APPROVED** the Winter Maintenance Plans for the Black Isle.

6. Area Capital Programme 2021-2022 Prògram Calpa Sgìre 2021-2022

There is circulated Report No BI/003/21 dated 22 July 2021 by the Executive Chief Officer - Infrastructure, Environment and Economy.

In discussion, the following responses were given:-

- once a decision was made on the work to be undertaken at Braehead, the school bodies and councillors would be advised;
- the works carried out at Ordhill had been excellent, however further up the road the road was falling away and it was requested that this was investigated;
- the Bogallan junction was to be included in the minor capital improvement works – money had been earmarked for this work but unfortunately there was no timescale at present; and
- Members requested that an email be forwarded to the Head of Infrastructure to confirm the Bogallan junction works would be funded.

The Committee:-

- NOTED** the progress on the 2021/22 Road Maintenance Programme for the Black Isle Area;
- APPROVED** the proposed 2021/22 Roads Maintenance Programme schemes funded by the Roads Ward Discretionary Budget following confirmation from the Head of Infrastructure that the Bogallan junction would be funded from the minor capital improvement works; and
- APPROVED** additional capital schemes funded from Capital Budget.

7. Common Good Funds Maoin Maith Choitchinn

There had been circulated Report Nos BI/004/21 – BI/005/21 dated 26 July 2021 by the Executive Chief Officer Communities and Place and Executive Chief Officer Resources and Finance.

- Cromarty Common Good Fund BI/004/21
- Fortrose and Rosemarkie Common Good Fund BI/005/21

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

**8. Black Isle Partnership: Representative to report on activity and future plans
Com-pàirteachas an Eilein Duibh: Riochdaire ri aithris air gnìomhachd is
planaichean an ama ri teachd**

**Declaraton of Interest: Councillor G Adam declared a non-financial interest
as a Director of the Black Isle Partnership.**

Mr Jon Palmer of the Black Isle Partnership gave a presentation on the recent, past and resilient future of the Black Isle Partnership.

In discussion, the following main points were raised:-

- although a public debate at this Committee was not how the Highland Council Committees is allowed to operate, there were alternative methods of incorporating meaningful community engagement through community meetings or forums; and
- as Councillors there was a more rounded view of the pressures involved in the work of the Council officers.

Following discussion, Members thanked Mr Palmer for his presentation and all the volunteers for the excellent service they continue to give to the Black Isle. It was hoped there would be increased participation between the Highland Council, the Black Isle Community Councils and the Black Isle Partnership.

The Committee **NOTED** the presentation.

**9. Minutes
Geàrr-chunntas**

There was circulated and **NOTED** Minutes of Meeting of the Black Isle, Dingwall and Seaforth Committee held on 14 April 2021 which were approved by the Council on 13 May 2021.

The meeting closed at 12:05 pm.

The Highland Council

Minutes of Meeting of the **Lochaber Committee** held **REMOTELY** on **Monday, 9 August, 2021 at 10.30 a.m.**

Present:

Mr A Baxter
Mr N McLean
Mr I Ramon

Mr D Rixson
Mr B Thompson

In attendance:

Mrs C McDiarmid, Executive Chief Officer, Communities and Place
Mr M MacLeod, Executive Chief Officer, Infrastructure and Environment
Mrs D Ferguson, Senior Ward Manager (Ross, Skye and Lochaber), Communities and Place
Ms M Cameron, Principal Housing Officer, Housing and Property
Mr L Macdonald, Repairs Manager, Housing and Property
Mr D Esson, Interim Area Education & Learning Manager (West), Education & Learning
Mr R Porteous, Roads Operations Manager, Infrastructure and Environment
Mr M Bain, Project Manager, Corran Ferry, Communities and Place
Mr S Dalgarno, Development Plans Manager, Infrastructure and Environment
Mr A MacInnes, Administrative Assistant, Performance and Governance Service

Also in attendance:-

Inspector Nick Hough, Police Scotland (Item 3)

Item 4 – Fort William 2040 Board Members:-

Mr A Nicolson, HIE; Mr N MacRae, HITRANS; Ms L Bussell, NHS; Mr F Coupland, Lochaber Chamber of Commerce; Ms P Coles, Crown Estate Scotland; Ms A Phillips and Mr D Devine, Transport Scotland

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Items 11 & 12 – Corran Ferry Steering Group

Dr M Foxley, Ms G Calver, Mr J Jones, Ms P Kennedy, Mr D Dixson, Mr M Jones

Items 11 & 12 - Mr S Reid, Project Manager, Mr S Canning, Project Director, Stantec

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

Business

Interim Chairman

The Chairman was temporarily unable to join the meeting remotely due to technical difficulties. The Committee were invited to appoint an Interim Chairman until the Chairman was able to join the meeting.

Mr B Thompson was unanimously appointed as Interim Chairman.

1. Apologies for Absence Leisgeulan

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

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

Items 4,5,8 – Mr D Rixson (non financial)

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

There was circulated Report No LA/14/21 by the Lochaber Area Inspector which provided an update on the progress with reference to the objectives outlined in the Highland Policing Plan 2020-2023.

During discussion, the following main points were raised:-

- Reference was made to Operation Close Pass where Police Scotland who would deploy plain-clothes officers on bikes and drivers who overtake cyclists to closely may be pulled over and cautioned for dangerous driving. This operation had been carried out in the past in Lochaber and it would be great to see it carried out again. An undertaking was given to do this.
- In relation to the ongoing investigations into electronic fraud on local businesses and charities, it was very easy for elderly and trusting members of the community to be targeted by electronic fraud. It was requested that consideration be given to a local public relations campaign with specific advice to combat electronic fraud. It was highlighted that the origin of these crimes were unfortunately mostly non local and often outwith the UK. These crimes were investigated and reported to Action Fraud, the UK's national reporting centre for fraud and cyber crime and CID would investigate where large frauds occurred. An undertaking was given to offer specific advice to vulnerable people in the community.

Having scrutinised the report, the Committee **NOTED**:-

- i progress made against the objectives set within the Highland Local Policing Plan 2020 – 2023 Year 1, attached as Annex A to the report, for the period covering 1 April 2020 to 31 March 2021;
- ii the intention to implement Operation Close Pass in the Lochaber Area, given the increase in number of cyclists in the area; and
- iii that Police Scotland would engage with Community Councils with a view to communicating specific advice to combat online fraud, in particular to vulnerable members of the Community.

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

**4. Update on Fort William 2040 - Presentation
Fios às Ùr mu Ghearasdan 2040**

Declaration of Interest - Mr D Rixson declared a non-financial interest in this item as the Council's representative to Lochaber Housing Association and the Lochaber Environmental Group but, having applied the test outlined in Paragraphs 5.2 and 5.3 of the Councillors' Code of Conduct, concluded that his interest; did not preclude his involvement in discussion.

There was a presentation by Members of the Fort William 2040 Board providing an update on the work of the Board. The Board coordinated activity and investment across Board member organisations, sought and developed new opportunities and developed ongoing community involvement. The presentation highlighted achievements since the last update to the Committee, a briefing on hospital reprovisioning, a transport update, a summary of current issues and opportunities and an update on the bid to the UK Government's Levelling up Fund.

In discussion, the following main points were raised:-

- In relation to the issue of the road link between the Health centre and the new Hospital, this was a matter of significant local concern. It was understood that there was space within the development site for this road link and there was a need for this to be covered moving forward with the project. It was confirmed that the Director of Estates and Facilities, NHS would take this on board.
- It was welcomed that a District Heating Scheme was being considered for Lochaber and Members would like to see the results of the feasibility study on this. There were good environmental reasons for such a scheme and also the Scottish Government's challenge fund could cover up to 50% of the District Heating scheme costs which would be ideally suited for the Blar Mor site.
- There was a need to regenerate the Transport Hub, bus and railway stations in Fort William and improve links with the town centre. If there were improvements that could be made that could be funded through the Bus Improvement Fund these would be considered. Also, in terms of the Strategic Transport Project review, the Transport Hub, improvements to Fort William interchange, cycle routes, improved ticketing and information facilities could all potentially be considered for funding as part of the review.
- Given the disappointment of the traffic signal trial at the Nevis roundabout which failed to increase the flow of traffic, it was queried what further interventions were planned, such as a realignment of the A82 and future timescales in order to resolve problems at the roundabout. It was explained that given the trial had just been completed, there would be a reflection on it and the next steps would have to be considered. It was a very difficult junction and the problems challenging to resolve. Transport Scotland would continue to work with the Council and provide updates on any progress.
- There was a rapid changeover in car technology with electric vehicles and there was a need to be prepared to increase substantially the number of charging points available.
- The Coire Glass hydro scheme was likely to be one of the biggest civil engineering projects in the area for some time and the significant rock extraction would impact on the A830 which was already in a fragile state. Therefore in terms of FW2040 this scheme along with the increase demands on roads with tourism meant the fragility of the road network should be considered.
- The need to link the FW2040 Board with Community Planning Partnerships and for CPPs to be properly resourced was highlighted;
- Members requested they be updated on progress with UK Government Levelling up Fund bids.
- There were pressures on housing, through more houses being used for short term letting and businesses were having difficulty in attracting and retaining people through lack of housing. It was queried if the demand on the local housing market was being monitored in order to plan ahead for future Council housing build programmes. It was explained that a housing need and demand

assessment was undertaken annually and also intelligence gathered from partners on housing needs. In particular, there was a need to consider business needs for housing and consideration was being given to different types of housing models to meet this need.

Officers were thanked for their comprehensive presentation and Members welcomed the update and progress made to date on FW2040, following which the Committee **NOTED** the presentation and that the following matters would be progressed:-

- i the need for a Road link between the new Hospital and Health Centre;
- ii the Blar Mor feasibility study into a District Heating Scheme for Lochaber be shared with Members;
- iii that work would continue to try and identify improvements to the Nevis Roundabout and Members would be informed of progress;
- iv improvements to the transport hub and links to the town centre were being considered;
- v the need for the right connections between the Community Planning Partnerships and the FW2040 Board;
- vi the Head of Development & Regeneration would attend a future Ward Business Meeting to brief Members on UK Government Levelling up Fund bids.

**5. Housing Performance Report – 1 April 2021 to 30 June 2021
Aithisg Coileanaidh Taigheadais – 1 Giblean 2021 gu 30 Ògmhios 2021**

Declaration of Interest - Mr D Rixson declared a non-financial interest in this item as the Council's representative to Lochaber Housing Association but, having applied the test outlined in Paragraphs 5.2 and 5.3 of the Councillors' Code of Conduct, concluded that his interest did not preclude his involvement in discussion.

There was circulated Report No LA/15/21 by the Executive Chief Officer Housing and Property which provided information on how the Housing Service performed in relation to the Scottish Social Housing Charter and other performance indicators up to 30 June, 2021.

Reference was made to a housing satisfaction survey undertaken of new tenants and it was requested that the satisfaction levels of new tenants in Lochaber entering homes compared to the rest of the Council was requested. It was advised that a Tenant Satisfaction Survey for Lochaber compared to other Council areas would be submitted to the next meeting.

The Committee **NOTED**:-

- i the information provided on housing performance for the period 1 April 2021 to 30 June 2021; and
- ii that a Tenant Satisfaction Survey report would be submitted to the next meeting.

At this point there was a short comfort break and the meeting resumed at 12.35 p.m.

In accordance with Standing Order 9, with the consent of the meeting, items 11 and 12 on the agenda were taken at this point.

**11. Corran Ferry Project (Outline Business Case) Update
Fios às Ùr mu Phròiseact Aiseag a' Chorrain (Dreachd Cùis Gnothachais)**

There was circulated Report No. LA/20/21 by the Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure, Environment & Economy which provided an update on the progress of the Corran Ferry Project (Outline Business Case).

During discussion, the following main points were raised:-

- Although the Corran Ferry Steering Group were disappointed that the Scottish Government were not going to provide funding for the next stage of the project, it was welcomed that the Council approved funding of £1.6m to enable the project to commence work on the feasibility and project design. This was great support for this project.
- The Corran ferry had been exceptionally busy recently and therefore the two new vessels should be the largest capacity and capability possible.
- Lessons had to be learned from recent problems with building ferries for the Calmac fleet. Transport Scotland/CMAL and the Naval Architects had to learn from this when designing the new Corran ferries. In terms of the propulsion system on the new ferries, there had been concerns about the current state of electric engines and there may be a form of hybrid system to address this.
- The Council was committed to an ambitious environmental target in relation to climate change. It was queried at what stage would decisions be made on the propulsion system of the new ferries. It was explained that the project team were looking at the fuel/propulsion technology for the ferries. Safety and reliability were key factors in this assessment and in light of changing technologies the statement of requirements would include the option to retrofit the propulsion system to hydrogen technology when it becomes available. Decisions on the technology to be used would be made by Members.
- It was requested that the specification for the new ferries includes that the propulsion system be easily accessible for retrofitting and repairing faults. In the past there had been difficulty accessing parts of the vessel when there were breakdowns.
- The project team had joined the Future Maritime Fuels Group. A point was made that technology changed very quickly and there should be continuous feedback from the Group to the public, so that the public were engaged in the process of the choice of fuel/propulsion technology for the new ferries.

Thereafter, having heard Members commend the work of Officers and the progress made on this project, the Committee **NOTED** the recommendations below: -

- i. that The Highland Council (as opposed to the Scottish Government) must find the capital cost for the replacement vessels and slipways prior to any potential future transfer of responsibility discussion;
- ii. that a meeting took place between Kate Forbes MSP and a Corran Ferry lobbying group (12 March 2021) which led to a further meeting between Kate Forbes and Paul Wheelhouse regarding the Council's request for financial support to bridge the funding gap by covering half (£0.8M) of the feasibility and preliminary design costs (£1.6M);
- iii. that unfortunately Transport Scotland did not sign off the requested £0.8M but they have agreed that synergies between the Council's Corran Ferry project and Transport Scotland's Small Vessels Replacement Programme (SVRP) should be explored, with consideration given to examining what Transport Scotland can do to maximise support in kind. A copy of the letter from Transport Scotland was attached as a separate report Appendix B;

iv. that a key milestone was reached when the Council approved the funding of £1.6M (Highland Council 24 June 21) to enable the project to commence work on the feasibility and preliminary design of:-

- 2 new vessels (in conjunction with Transport Scotland /CMAL's SVRP); and
- 2 new slipways and supporting infrastructure;

v. that CMAL are in the process of appointing a naval architect and the SVRP is currently on course to move to procurement of the first tranche of vessels in the next 12 months, subject to the completion and approval of an outline business case;

vi. that the Council's Project Design Unit is currently progressing a public service contract through the Scotland Excel framework to procure an external source to commence feasibility and preliminary design work for the Corran Ferry slipways / infrastructure;

vii. the high-level review (attached as a separate document Appendix C) for the slipways / infrastructure proposals;

viii. a suggested Corran Ferry - High Level Preliminary Programme (attached as a separate document Appendix D);

ix. that Stantec will deliver a presentation on the Corran Narrows Socio-economic Study to members following this report; and

x the statement of requirements for the new ferries would include that the propulsion system for the new ferries should be easily accessible for retrofitting and repairing faults and that ferries with the largest capacity possible for the route should be built.

12. Corran Narrows Socio-economic Study

There was a presentation by Mr S Reid and Mr S Canning, Stantec on the Corran Narrows Socio-economic study. The purpose of the study was to analyse the economic, social and community value of the Corran ferry service to the residents and businesses around the Ardnamurchan peninsula and the Isle of Mull. The outcome of the study would feed into the outline business case on the Corran ferry. The importance of the study was to try and determine the value of the ferries to the communities and one way of doing this was testing the hypothetical scenario where the ferry no longer runs. The approach to the study was explained and key areas highlighted in relation to why was the Corran ferry so well used and what were the implications of a no ferry scenario for businesses and visitors.

Another area highlighted in the study was an alternative to investing in the Corran ferry. This was to upgrade the A861 but the study suggested this would cost £190m, far higher than the cost of a fixed link. The study determined that the Corran ferry was of significant importance for communities in the area, businesses and tourists and that a no ferry service scenario was likely to have a significant impact to ferry users, loss of jobs and tourist income and would increase supply chain costs. Therefore, the viability and sustainability of the peninsula could reduce significantly over time.

During discussion, the following main points were raised:-

- Members welcomed the presentation and the work carried out on the study. This was a significant piece of work and vital when proceeding with the outline business case

for the Corran ferry and trying to secure funding for replacement ferries. The study highlighted why a crossing at the Corran narrows, whether a ferry service in the short term or a fixed link in the longer term, was so vital for the future of the communities of the peninsula. The alternative, upgrading the A861 at a cost of £190m and the impact of the extra journey times was in no way a viable option.

- In terms of the study findings that in a no ferry service scenario the average journey times from Morven to Fort William would increase by 16 minutes, local views were that this was on the low side and from experience it was more like 30 minutes in the best circumstances as when the ferry was not running the impact of extra traffic should be taken into consideration. A request was made for the journey times to be reconsidered and local views on this being expressed in the final study report.
- The Corran ferry service also served the Isle of Mull, as when the Mull ferry service is disrupted the ferry traffic is re routed via Corran and this should be amplified in the study report.
- In the modelling data there was a period when the Corran ferry broke down for a number of weeks and it was queried if data was accessed for this period.
- the wider impact of the Corran ferry service on communities outwith the peninsula i.e. the Isle of Mull, Arisaig and Isle of Skye was highlighted.
- That the final report should have explanations for technical terms for the public to understand.
- In terms of how the study was used, given the significance of it, it was requested that the Council's Administration team be briefed on it.
- The Corran ferry outline business case update report and Socio-economic study presentation would also be submitted to the Economy and Infrastructure Committee meeting in September.

Thereafter, the Committee **NOTED** the presentation; that the Administration Leadership team would also be briefed on the study as a matter of priority and that further consideration be given to local views that the additional journey time of 16 minutes if there was no ferry operating was on the low side.

6. Place Based Investment Funds – Proposed Funding Allocations Maointean Tasgaidh Stèidhichte air Àite – Riarachaidhean Maoineachaidh a Thathar a' Moladh

There was circulated Report No. LA/16/21 by the Executive Chief Officer Communities and Place.

It was noted that Highland Council had allocated a £100,000 Place Based Investment Fund to each Ward for 2021/22 financial year to enable a flexible response to address four harms of Covid. Discussions with Local Members identified a range of opportunities for spend and the Committee were invited to agree the budget allocations detailed in the report.

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

- i. Ward 21 – Fort William and Ardnamurchan
 - a. Investment in play provision in Kinlochleven - £50,000
 - b. Investment in feasibility study for Upper Achintore Community Hub - £20,000
 - c. Investment in mental well-being projects - £30,000
 - d. Total = £100,000

- ii. Ward 11 – Caol and Mallaig – projects under the themes of play provision, youth facilities and physical and mental well-being are currently being developed. These will be reported to a future Area Committee.

7. **Commando Memorial – Garden Extension** **Carragh-cuimhne nan Commando – Leudachadh Gàrraidh**

There was circulated Report No. LA/17/21 by the Executive Chief Officer Communities and Place which highlighted that following discussion with the Commando Association and the Royal Marines, it had been agreed to carry out works to the Commando Memorial Garden to provide a better environment for tributes. The design had been agreed with Partners and funding was sought for completion of the project.

It was advised that there were issues with the supply of materials for the project, with the consequence that the project could not be completed prior to Remembrance Day 2021. Therefore, the timetable of works would require to be rescheduled once the funding package was in place. Also, there was potential for the second phase (cleaning of the Memorial and works to the base and paved surrounds) to be completed at the same time, subject to funding being made available.

The Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the proposed works to the site which have been agreed with the Commando Association and the Royal Marines;
- ii **AGREED** to allocate up to £65,000 from the Commando Memorial Garden Fund; and
- iii. **NOTED** the intention to carry out further works to the Memorial which will be the subject of a future report.

8. **Mallaig Associated School Group Overview** **Foir-shealladh Buidheann Sgoiltean Co-cheangailte Mhalaig**

Declaration of Interest – Mr D Rixson declared a non-financial interest in this item as the Council’s representative to the Isle of Rum Community Trust but, having applied the test outlined in Paragraphs 5.2 and 5.3 of the Councillors’ Code of Conduct, concluded that his interest did not preclude his involvement in discussion.

There was circulated Report No. LA/18/21 by the Executive Chief Officer Education and Learning which provided an update of key information in relation to the schools within the Mallaig Associated School Group, and provided useful updated links to further information in relation to these schools.

In discussion, reference was made to the building condition report and Mallaig High School was classed as poor. This was concerning as the building was only 32 years old. Further information on the building condition of Mallaig High School would be provided to Councillor D Rixson.

It was noted that pupils would commence in the nursery on the Isle of Rum next year. Also the school house was currently deemed uninhabitable with the school teacher living in private rented accommodation. In future, should there be another teacher at the school, there was a need to ensure there was accommodation for them. Currently supply teachers were housed in a four berth residential caravan provided by the Council. It was advised that the Estates team were currently reviewing the situation with regards to the schoolhouse. The plan was that the schoolhouse would be demolished and in future there would be a new schoolhouse and possibly an annex to

it that could accommodate other Council employees. It was requested that that this build be completed as soon as possible.

In relation to the school boat serving the small isles that returned pupils who boarded at Mallaig High School hostel, there were varying views amongst parents as to what the frequency of the school boat should be. The plan was to run fortnightly school boat runs. However, communities were being consulted on this and Members would be kept informed on the local community consultation on the Rum school boat.

An update was also provided in respect of staffing at Isle of Rum school given the long term sickness absence of the Head Teacher.

In relation to staffing levels at Mallaig High School, it was advised that while individual staffing details were not at hand, information at the end of session suggested that two appointments had fallen through due to the lack of accommodation. Ongoing concerns had been raised in terms of lack of housing for staff and it was known that finding housing locally was very challenging.

The Committee **NOTED** the content of the report.

**9. Lochaber Area Roads Winter Maintenance Plan 2021/22
Plana Cumail Suas Rathaidean Geamhraidh Sgìre Loch Abar 2021/22**

There was circulated Report No. LA/19/21 by the Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure and Environment which provided information on winter maintenance preparations and arrangements for the 2021/22 winter period and invited the Committee to approve the Winter Maintenance Plans for the Lochaber area.

In particular, it was requested that Mamore Crescent, Fort William be included in the Secondary route category and it was confirmed this could be done.

The Committee **APPROVED** the Winter Maintenance Plan for the Lochaber Area in reference to Appendix A of the report, with the addition that Mamore Crescent, Fort William would be included in the Secondary route category.

**10. Minutes
Geàrr-chunntas**

There were circulated for information Minutes of Meeting of the Lochaber Committee held on 19 April, 2021, which were approved by the Council on 13 May, 2021, the terms of which were **NOTED**.

The meeting ended at 2.10 p.m.

The Highland Council

Minutes of Meeting of the **Badenoch and Strathspey Area Committee** held remotely on Monday 9 August 2021 at 10.30 am.

Present:

Mr J Bruce
Mrs M Cockburn

Ms P Hadley
Mr B Lobban

In attendance:

Ms K Lackie, Executive Chief Officer Performance and Governance
Ms L Cowie, Ward Manager, Communities and Place
Mr R Porteous, Roads Operations Manager, Infrastructure, Environment and Economy
Mr D Wood, Principal Housing Officer, Housing and Property
Mr E McIntosh, Localism and Engagement Coordinator, Communities and Place
Ms S Murdoch, Common Good Fund Officer, Resources and Finance
Miss M Murray, Committee Administrator, Performance and Governance

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

1. Apologies for Absence Leisgeulan

There were no apologies for absence.

2. Declarations of Interest Foillseachaidhean Com-pàirt

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

Item 4 – Ms P Hadley (financial)

In terms of Standing Order 9, the Committee **AGREED** to consider item 5 at this stage.

5. Area Roads Winter Maintenance Plan 2021/22 Plana Obair-gleidhidh Geamhraidh Rathaidean Sgìreil 2021/22

There had been circulated Report No BSAC/12/21 dated 19 July 2021 by the Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure, Environment and Economy.

During discussion, the following comments were made:-

- reference having been made to national delays in obtaining spare parts and materials, information was sought, and provided, on current stocks in Highland and whether a contingency plan was in place;
- information was sought, and provided, on what summer works, such as drain inspections, had not been completed as a result of the challenges the team had

faced, and, given the vagaries of the climate, whether such works would be able to be maintained alongside winter maintenance works;

- on the point being raised, it was confirmed that gully clearances were fairly up to date. The Roads Operations Manager added that it was intended to present a roads programme update to the November meeting of the Committee and he could include an update on cyclical works; and
- Members commended the service for its fantastic work in the face of the various challenges associated with extreme weather and Covid.

The Committee otherwise **APPROVED** the Winter Maintenance Plan for the Badenoch and Strathspey Area in reference to Appendix A of the report.

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

There had been circulated Report No BSAC/10/21 dated 11 July 2021 by the Local Senior Officer for Highland, Scottish Fire and Rescue Service.

The Ward Manager explained that, due to the change of meeting date, the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service representatives were unavailable and had given their apologies. Questions on the report had been sought from Members in advance of the meeting and the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service had responded as follows:

Question - How have staff found dealing with Glenmore/Loch Morlich over the summer season?

Response - Since the beginning of May, Aviemore and Kingussie units have attended Glenmore six times for reports of camp fires and Aviemore/Grantown and Kingussie to the big wildfire above Loch Morlich that was well reported in the press. This has been a massive reduction from the previous year, despite the number of visitors to the area remaining high. Crews from Aviemore, Grantown and Kingussie Fire Stations have also attended Glenmore in partnership working with Forestry and Land Scotland to educate visitors on the no fire/no barbecue rules within the Glenmore Park. This engagement has been well received by the public and combined with the new signage at the sled dog centre and the presence of Forestry and Land Scotland's rangers seems to have heavily contributed to the reduction.

Question - Is there an update on recruitment of fire fighters for the Badenoch and Strathspey Area – what is the position? And are you finding that housing is proving an impediment to recruitment – or is your pool of firefighters generally coming from people who already live and work in the area?

Response - We still have vacancies in all fire stations within the area. However, we currently have a number of applicants going through the recruitment process and our recruitment engagement on both our Twitter and Facebook pages have been well received and widely shared. We have also had a number of new potential applicants come forward in the last few weeks with three for Aviemore alone. We have one new firefighter in Grantown and three in Carrbridge. Our pool is coming from people who already live and work in the area. However, high housing prices mean a high proportion of our younger firefighters are finding it difficult to purchase

a property which has the potential for them to look outwith the area in the future in order to get on the property ladder.

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

**4. Housing Performance Report – 1 April 2021 to 30 June 2021
Aithisg Coileanaidh Taigheadais – 1 Giblean 2021 gu 30 Ògmhios 2021**

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

There had been circulated Report No BSAC/11/21 dated 19 July 2021 by the Executive Chief Officer Housing and Property.

During discussion, the following comments were made:-

- Members welcomed the substantial improvement in rent arrears and emphasised the importance of getting maintenance back on line;
- thanks were expressed to staff for their diligence in managing services remotely and the number of calls made to clients. In particular, reference was made to the hard work and positive communication in respect of rent arrears;
- attention was drawn to the amber score in respect of the percentage of lettable houses becoming vacant and, on the point being raised, it was confirmed that demand was monitored;
- the pressure on staff dealing with people facing eviction was recognised, and Members were keen to support officers and their teams in whatever way they could;
- reference was made to a recent meeting at which it had been reported that there was a shortage of healthcare workers this summer due to either a lack of availability of accommodation or the cost of property in the area, and information was sought, and provided, as to what Members could do to support officers and ensure their voice was heard;
- information was sought, and provided, as to how well the new arrangements in respect of homeless accommodation provision were working; and
- the need for the Scottish Government to rapidly progress legislation in respect of short-term lets was emphasised and it was suggested that, as soon as the legislation was finalised, the Council should adopt it to its fullest extent, particularly in Badenoch and Strathspey where there was a significant issue in terms of the number of properties that were being converted from permanent homes to holiday accommodation.

The Committee otherwise **NOTED** the information provided on housing performance in the period 1 April 2021 to 30 June 2021.

**6. Badenoch & Strathspey Ward Place Based Funds – Proposed Funding Allocations
Maointean Stèidhichte air Àite Uàrd Bhàideanach is Shrath Spè – Riarachaidhean Maoineachaidh a Thathar a' Moladh**

There had been circulated Report No BSAC/13/21 dated 19 July 2021 by the Executive Chief Officer Communities and Place.

During discussion, the following comments were made:-

- Members welcomed the report and hoped that the proposals would bear fruit sooner rather than later;
- it was not just businesses that were being affected by the housing problem in the area, and it was important to consider the needs of all public sector partners, not only those that were members of the Community Planning Partnership;
- it having been queried how the costs of £15,000 for a Housing Needs Feasibility Study and £20,000 for scoping for a Housing for Businesses project had been arrived at, it was confirmed that a response would be provided direct to Councillor Bruce;
- whilst recognising the costs involved in the proposed feasibility study and scoping exercise, the opportunity to take action to begin to address the housing issue was welcomed and long overdue. It was added that the total cost to the population in terms of young people leaving the area and other young people being unable to afford to leave home was significant.

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

- i. Up to £15,000 for a Housing Needs feasibility study. Funding to be delegated to the Head of Development and Regeneration to progress;
- ii. Up to £20,000 for scoping for a Housing for Businesses Project. Funding to be delegated to the Head of Development and Regeneration to progress; and
- iii. Commissioning an independent audit of empty commercial units and bringing forward proposals for potential solutions – up to £10,000;

and **NOTED** that reports would be brought back to this Committee as required for future budget allocation in terms of the additional priorities identified and outlined at section 8 of the report.

**7. Community Asset Transfer Request: Kingussie Market Stance Pitch
Iarrtas Gluasad So-mhaoin Coimhearsnachd: Làrach Margaidh Cheann a’
Ghiùthsaidh**

There had been circulated Report No BSAC/14/21 dated 19 July 2021 by the Executive Chief Officer Communities and Place.

During discussion, unanimous support was expressed for the proposal which would benefit the community, Kingussie Camanachd Club having both the resources and skills to develop the pitch. Members also commended the officers involved for their efforts in developing the proposal, which was an exemplar of how to progress Community Asset Transfer requests going forward.

The Committee **AGREED** the lease of Kingussie Market Stance Pitch for £1 per annum to Kingussie Camanachd Club subject to the consideration of the findings of a public consultation and the terms set out in section 2.1 of the report.

**8. Kingussie and Grantown on Spey Common Good Funds
Maointean Math Coitcheann Cheann a’ Ghiùthsaidh is Bhaile nan Grandach**

There had been circulated Report No BSAC/15/21 dated 19 July 2021 by the Executive Chief Officer Communities and Place and the Executive Chief Officer Resources and Finance.

In introducing the report, the Common Good Fund Officer explained that the Committee would require to decide whether to extend the duration of the proposed consultations, as had been the case for the Kingussie Common Good Asset Register consultation, or, given that Covid restrictions were easing, revert back to the statutory consultation periods - ie 12 weeks for the Grantown on Spey Common Good Asset Register and 8 weeks for the disposal of the Market Stance Pitch, Kingussie.

During discussion, the following comments were made:-

- in response to a question, it was explained that Grantown Burgh Council, at its final meeting in 1975, had donated the Provost's chain and robes to the museum therefore they were not considered to be a Common Good asset; and
- the Chair having sought views on the duration of the proposed consultations, the majority of Members supported extending both consultations by two weeks given that it was still the holiday period and Covid restrictions were only just beginning to ease.

The Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the contents of the Kingussie Common Good Asset Register in the format for publication (Appendix 1 of the report);
- ii. **NOTED** the content of the document titled "Kingussie Common Good property consultation representations and responses" (Appendix 2 of the report);
- iii. **AGREED** to the publication of the Common Good Asset Register for Kingussie and the representations and responses document on the Council website;
- * iv. **AGREED TO RECOMMEND** to the Council the reclassification of the property included in the Asset Register and reactivation of Kingussie Common Good Fund;
- * v. **AGREED TO RECOMMEND** to the Council that, due to the financial position of the fund, Kingussie Common Good property would continue to be maintained by Highland Council until such time as the fund recovered sufficiently to sustain Kingussie Common Good assets;
- vi. **NOTED** the contents of the list of property proposed to be included in the Common Good Asset Register for Grantown on Spey (Appendix 3 of the report);
- vii. **AGREED** the commencement of the public consultation on the list of proposed property for Grantown on Spey in accordance with section 102 of the 2015 Act, and that the consultation period be extended by two weeks to fourteen weeks;
- viii. **NOTED** the position regarding the Community Asset Transfer request in respect of the Market Stance Pitch by Kingussie Camanachd which had been detailed in the report elsewhere on the Committee agenda and the requirement to conduct a consultation under section 104 of the 2015 Act as this would constitute a proposal to dispose of a Common Good Asset; and
- ix. **AGREED** the commencement of the public consultation in respect of the proposed disposal by Community Asset Transfer of the Market Stance Pitch,

Kingussie, and that the consultation period be extended by two weeks to ten weeks.

9. Use of Ward Covid Response Funds Cleachdadh Mhaointean Freagairt Covid Uàird

There had been circulated Report No BSAC/16/21 dated 19 July 2021 by the Executive Chief Officer Communities and Place.

In introducing the report, the Ward Manager explained that, the Chair having queried how the additional patrols had been going, the Area Inspector, Police Scotland, had reported that the view from the partners was essentially that the additional patrols were going well and had been a timely addition to the visitor management pressures in the Glenmore area. Two individuals had been charged with lighting fires in dangerous circumstances and dedicated patrols were able to be provided at peak times when otherwise officers on standard shift would be pulled away to deal with other matters. The extra patrols were taking place on Friday and Saturday evenings until 11.00 pm and were due to end with the termination of the local school holidays.

During discussion, the following comments were made:-

- in response to a question, it was confirmed that the report was seeking formal approval of the funding that Members had lent their support to in principle during the recess;
- it was queried whether there was a degree of flexibility and the situation could be monitored in case there was not a reduction in visitors at the end of the local school holidays. The Ward Manager confirmed that she would feed this back to the Area Inspector;
- the additional patrols were not a perfect solution but had taken the pressure off the rangers. It was suggested that some of the rangers working later in the evening would be a better solution. However, a police presence had made a significant difference.

The Committee **AGREED** to allocate up to £3,000 of funding from Covid-19 Ward Discretionary Funds to support the partnership approach to additional policing for the Glenmore area as outlined at paragraph 6.1 of the report.

10. Minutes Geàrr-chunntas

The Committee **NOTED** the Minutes of the Badenoch and Strathspey Area Committee held on 25 May 2021 which had been approved by the Council on 24 June 2021.

The meeting concluded at 11.30 am.

The Highland Council

Minutes of Meeting of the **Health, Social Care and Wellbeing Committee** held **remotely** on Wednesday 11 August 2021 at 10.30am.

Present:

Mrs J Barclay	Mr D Louden
Mr B Boyd	Mrs D Mackay
Mrs I Campbell	Mr W Mackay
Mrs M Cockburn	Mrs I Mackenzie
Mrs M Davidson	Mrs L Munro
Mr J Finlayson	Mr K Rosie
Mr D Fraser	Mr D Rixson
Mr A Jarvie	Mr C Smith

Non Members also present:

Mrs G Campbell-Sinclair	Mr A Henderson
Mr A Christie	Mrs E McAllister
Mr K Gowans	

Participating Officials:

Mrs D Manson, Chief Executive
 Ms F Duncan, Executive Chief Officer Health and Social Care and Chief Social Work Officer
 Ms K Lackie, Executive Chief Officer Performance and Governance
 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 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
 Miss J Maclennan, Principal Administrator, Performance and Governance
 Ms F MacBain, Committee Administrator, Performance and Governance
 Ms M Zavarella, Committee Administrator, Performance and Governance

Also in Attendance:

Ms L Bussell, Chief Officer, NHS Highland
 Ms R Connolly, Connecting Carers
 Ms B Brown, Connecting Carers
 Ms K Blowers, Caithness and Sutherland Women's Aid
 Ms A Newlands, Ross-shire, Skye and Lochalsh Women's Aid
 Ms E Fetherston, Inverness, Nairn, Badenoch & Strathspey Women's Aid
 Ms L Revitt, Lochaber Women's Aid

**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

**1. Apologies for Absence
Leisgeulan**

Apologies for absence were received from Mrs M Paterson and Ms E Roddick.

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

Ms L Munro declared a general financial interest as a Specialist SDS Advisor with Carr Gomm Community Contacts Team 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.

Item 5 – Mrs I Mackenzie (non-financial)

Additional Item – National Care Service for Scotland Consultation

With the agreement of the Chair, under Standing Order 8, there had been circulated Report No HCW/20/21 dated 10 August 2021 by the Executive Chief Officer - Performance and Governance, as an item of urgent business, due to the significant impact the consultation could have on the Council and the timescales involved.

At this stage, the consultation was being brought to the Committee's attention and, given the complexity of the issues, a more detailed report would be taken to the Council for debate in September 2021. Consideration would be given to holding a seminar in the meantime.

The Committee **AGREED**:

- i. the approach outlined in section 5 of the report;
- ii. that the proposals were of such significance that the consultation response should be remitted to Council, with an update report provided to the next meeting on 9 September 2021; and
- iii. to approach COSLA to seek an extension on behalf of all Scottish local authorities to the Scottish Government's deadline of 18 October 2021.

**3. Good News
Deagh Naidheachdan**

Detail was provided on the success of the Placement Service Change Programme and efforts that were being made to ensure as many children and young people could remain at home in future.

The Committee **NOTED** the Good News and **AGREED** a letter be sent on behalf of the Committee to all staff involved on the Placement Service Change Programme to thank them for their valued work.

4. Appointments Cur an Dreuchd

NHS-HC Project Management Board Bòrd Stiùireadh Pròiseict NHS-CnG

Mr David Fraser, the new Vice Chair of the Committee, introduced himself and summarised his background and aims.

The Committee **AGREED** his appointment to the NHS-HC Project Management Board to replace Nicola Sinclair.

5. Presentation: Women's Aid in Highland Taisbeanadh: Cobhair Bhoireannach sa Ghàidhealtachd

Mrs I Mackenzie declared a non-financial interest as Council-nominated Board member of Inverness Women's Aid 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.

A presentation was provided by representatives from Women's Aid, who outlined the structure of the organisation across the Highlands, the services they provided to women and children, and the partner organisations and education services they worked with. They gave an overview of domestic abuse statistics, explained the impact of domestic violence on people's lives and summarised the impact of Covid on their activities.

During discussion, the following issues were considered:-

- information was sought, and provided, on the healthy relationship message that was delivered to school pupils, with contact being made at S2 and S4 levels, through a variety of age-appropriate programmes, including the established YPI programme;
- the support offered in remote areas was summarised, with two domestic abuse specialists currently covering Sutherland, and 3 more further north. Meetings with women seeking support could be held in a women's home, a local café, in a place of safety, or in a different area, as part of a blended support mechanism. The impact of lockdown was highlighted, as were the awareness-raising campaigns being run, including on social media, on radio and in public buildings;
- a refuge in Caithness had closed in 2012 for economic reasons. However, since 2013, strong links had been developed with Housing services. There was also a national network of refuges;
- an effective working relationship had been developed with the police in recent years, as part of a multi-agency approach to supporting victims and dealing with perpetrators;
- it was disappointing the incidents of domestic abuse remained high, and clarification was sought, and provided, about out of hours arrangements, which included Women's Aid staff being on call, national helplines and police for those in the most vulnerable positions;
- the importance of preventative work was emphasised and information was provided on activities being undertaken, including community engagement, social media campaigns and Own My Life courses;

- it was important to continue raising awareness and for connections with this Committee to be maintained; and
- support for male victims of abuse was provided by Abused Men in Scotland, which had a national helpline (03300 949 395). Consideration would be given to local activities for men.

The Committee **NOTED** the presentation and **AGREED** the presentation and information on Domestic Abuse services for men be sent to the Committee after the meeting.

6. **Presentation: Young Carers Strategy** **Taisbeanadh: Ro-innleachd Luchd-cùraim Òga**

A presentation was provided by representatives from Connecting Carers who summarised the structure and work of the organisation across the Highlands. Information was provided on the wide range of activities undertaken by young carers including emotional support, looking after siblings, social support, and practical, physical, personal, medical and communication assistance. The impact on their own lives was significant and included detriment to their physical health, especially from disrupted sleep, emotional wellbeing, social inclusion, their home environment and, notably, their education.

The impact of the Carers (Scotland) Act 2016 was summarised, including the requirement for Local Authorities to have a Young Carer Statement (YCS), and further detail on this was provided, along with the results of a survey that was undertaken in 15 secondary schools and 15 primary schools to establish awareness of YCSs, and measures required to address lack of awareness. The importance of identifying young carers was highlighted.

During discussion, the following issues were considered:-

- the presentation was welcomed as it highlighted the challenge for us all to ensure that all young carers were aware of the YCS and the support that could be given to them. With this in mind, the Chair asked that an urgent meeting be convened with key partners within the coming month to consider what action was required. Information was provided on work currently being undertaken in schools, and outwith them, to support young carers;
- whilst it was vital all schools were aware of the importance of the YCS and the need to provide support and a safety net where required, it was stressed that this process should not solely lie with education. Partners needed to work together to ensure YCS could be completed in a variety of settings. Rural and urban areas might require different approaches and these needed to be considered;
- the timely identification of young carers was vital and schools had an important role to play in this regard, as did Members with their local knowledge and as corporate parents. Reference was made to a recent staff training day, attended by 200, at which a young carer had given a moving presentation;
- attention was drawn to the numbers of young carers who were well supported and to the wide variety of family situations which could involve a young carer; and
- other issues highlighted included the importance of liaising with guidance teachers and the possible role of the community planning partnerships and community development trusts.

The Committee **NOTED** the presentation and **AGREED**:-

- i. the presentation be circulated to the Committee after the meeting; and
- ii. a meeting be convened with key partners, within the coming month, to discuss access issues about young carers and the Young Carers Statement.

**7. Revenue Budget Monitoring – Out-turn for 2020/21 and Quarter 1 for 2021/22
Sgrùdadh Buidseat Teachd-a-steach – Shuidheachadh airson 2020/21 agus Cairteal 1 airson 2021/22**

There had been circulated Report No HCW/16/21 dated 29 July 2021 by the Executive Chief Officer Health and Social Care.

During discussion, the following issues were considered:-

- the report was welcomed, with particular reference to the success of the Placement Service Change Programme, which had reduced the number of out of authority placements, and to the recruitment of additional social workers;
- more detail on underspends and overspends would be beneficial for decision-making for the Committee, and this would be discussed further outwith the meeting. It was highlighted that the format of statement had been improved and expanded during the previous financial year and into this, and in terms of the basis of the statement, there might be timing issues which were allowed for in the statement and forecasts presented to members. It was explained that there was no specific budget for temporary agency nursing staff as this was covered from vacancy savings from the permanent staff budget. Other specific issues raised, including the residential care budget, foster care fees, the APTC staff underspend, Self-Directed payment underspends, and the impact of government grants would be addressed outwith the meeting;
- it was suggested that more detail could be included into future reports for residential expenditure, to provide detail on repair, staff and emergency stay costs;
- in relation to the cost avoidance of around £11m as a result of the Placement Service Change Programme, the basis of calculating avoided costs were summarised;
- the vacancies in nursing and Allied Health Professional posts were of concern to Members and, noting the national recruitment challenges, support for recruitment to those posts was urged;
- the increased hourly rate for personal assistants was welcomed;
- in relation to vacancies, assurance was sought that services were adequately staffed;
- information was sought, outwith the meeting if necessary, on absence statistics and numbers of staff referred to occupational health as a result of Covid-19, and the cost of employing agency staff to cover;
- while detailed scrutiny was welcomed, it was suggested the Chair and Vice Chair should decide what was reasonable in relation to Members' requests for additional information, some of which was covered in the appendices to the report, and taking into account the staff time required to compile additional information;
- in response to a query about a children's unit in south Loch Ness, this had been opened for a specific reason, and Local Members could be briefed outwith the meeting, if this was requested;
- there was only a single line in the report on Adult Social Care, and more detailed scrutiny would be appropriate going forward; and

- it was clarified that the 14 children who had been returned to residential units had been returned to the Highlands from out of authority placements.

The Committee **NOTED**:-

- i. the revenue out-turn position for the 2020/21 financial year;
- ii. the forecast revenue position for the 2021/22 financial year, including the management action being taken and the risks and uncertainties set out within the report;
- iii. the progress update provided in relation to budget savings delivery; and
- iv. the progress update provided in relation to the Placement Services Change Programme.

8. Children's Champions Gaisgich Chloinne

There had been circulated Report No HCW/17/21 dated 29 July 2021 by the Executive Chief Officer Health and Social Care.

During a verbal update, the Chair of the Committee highlighted that the role of Children's Champions would be expanded to include children and families with a focus on strengthening communities, families and the services that were provided to them. The roles would also include an additional responsibility of Looked After Children. The three Children's Champions were identified as Councillor Margaret Paterson, Councillor Muriel Cockburn and Councillor Isabelle Mackenzie. It was emphasised that these roles did not lessen the duty of Corporate Parents, the Champions' primary obligation was to raise awareness and ensure that the voices of children were heard throughout Highland.

The Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the contents of the report; and
- ii. formally **AGREED** the appointment of Councillor Margaret Paterson, Councillor Muriel Cockburn and Councillor Isabelle Mackenzie, into the Children's Champions posts – as part of the year pilot.

9. Revised Highland Partnership Integration Scheme Sgeama Amalachaidh Ath-sgrùdaichte Com-pàirteachas na Gàidhealtachd

There had been circulated Report No HCW/18/21 dated 22 July 2021 by the Executive Chief Officer Health and Social Care. It was confirmed that the revised scheme had been submitted to the Scottish Govt on 27th July and receipt had been acknowledged. Any comment were expected within the next 6 – 8 weeks.

During discussion, the following comments were made:

- appreciation was expressed to the Interim Head of Integration Adult Social Care on the vast amount of work completed on the Scheme;
- clarification was sought, and provided, on the amount of overspend the Council could be responsible for at year end;
- in response to a comment, it was confirmed that there was a typographical error at Paragraph 6.1 of the report in the fourth paragraph that should have read "this group has now been re-established" and would be corrected in the report;

- due to an increase of visitors to the area and high costs, housing had been identified as a risk that was interfering with the recruitment of staff and it was agreed to recommend to the Council that this risk would be added at Section 3.5 of the report and highlighted that this concern would be further developed in a report to the next meeting of the Committee;
- in response to a query, it was confirmed that the work of the Joint Officer Group (JOG) would be overseen by the Joint Monitoring Committee (JMC) in terms of the action plan appended to the report and the Committee would be privy to the minutes of those meetings where appropriate as well as any points raised by the Chair;
- it would be important to work closely with the Redesign Board of the Highland Council due to shared transformation objectives;
- it was important to recognise recovery and hidden costs associated with Covid-19 and post-Covid-19 to avoid any surprises that had the potential to stifle progress; and
- in response to a question about user, carer and community involvement in the JMC it was highlighted that there was legislation that ensured Third Sector Participation in the governance of the partnership

The Committee **NOTED** the contents of the report.

- i. **NOTED** the contents of the report;
- ii. **NOTED** a typographical change in Paragraph 6.1 of the report on the fourth paragraph should read “This group has not been re-established to ensure the necessary attention and rigour to the required Integration Scheme actions”; and
- * iii. **AGREED to RECOMMEND** to the Council that housing for staff be added to the risk section at Section 3.5 of the report.

10. **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/19/21 dated 28 July 2021 by the Executive Chief Officer Health and Social Care.

During discussion, the following comments were made:

- in response to a request, it was agreed that a report on the Shared Lives approach would be taken to the next meeting of the Committee;
- concern was expressed by Members that the risk and RAG rating system outlined in the report did not accurately reflect the work being completed and, as a result, it was agreed that the rating system would be made more clear and consistent to allow for better scrutiny in future reporting;
- clarification was sought, and provided, on the risk adjusted pipeline total being inconsistent throughout the report;
- the Leader of the Council expressed that inadequate feedback was provided to Members about the work of the Programme Board. As a result at the last meeting, the Leader expressed concern to members of the Board about slow progress and emphasis on savings rather than improved services and consequently a workshop was agreed to that had positive success;
- clarification was sought, and provided, on the uptake of Self-Directed Support (SDS);

- early intervention support and prevention for families was everyone's responsibility and it was important that the Council was not left solely responsible; and
- it was highlighted that the Council should be taking the lead on early intervention and prevention as many communities did not have effective Community Partnerships.

The Committee **NOTED** the contents of the report.

11. Minutes Geàrr-chunntas

The following Minutes are circulated and were **NOTED**:-

- i. Highland Violence Against Women Partnership Group held on 15 February and 19 May 2021.

The meeting ended at 3.27pm.

**The Highland Council
Caithness Committee**

Minutes of Meeting of the Caithness Committee held REMOTELY on Thursday, 12 August 2021 at 10.00am.

Present:

Mr R Bremner
Mr D Mackay
Mr W Mackay

Mr S Mackie
Mr M Reiss
Mr K Rosie

Officials in attendance:

Ms N Grant, Executive Chief Officer, Education and Learning
Ms A Clark, Head of Policy and Reform, Communities and Place
Ms C Gordon, Quality Development Officer, Education and Learning
Mr R Bamfield, Area Additional Support Needs Manager, Education and Learning
Mr A Puls, Planning Team Leader, Infrastructure and Environment
Ms A Macrae, Committee Administrator, Performance and Governance

Also in Attendance:

Inspector A Goskirk, Police Scotland

Mr W Mackay, Vice Chair, in the Chair

1.	<p>Apologies for Absence Leisgeulan</p> <p>An apology for absence was intimated on behalf of Mr A Sinclair.</p>
2.	<p>Declarations of Interest Foillseachaidhean Com-pàirt</p> <p>There were no declarations of interest.</p>
3.	<p>Minutes Geàrr-chunntas</p> <p>There were circulated for noting Minutes of the Caithness Committee held on 22 April 2021, which were approved by the Council on 13 May 2021, the terms of which were NOTED.</p>
4.	<p>Matters Arising – Action Tracker Gnothaichean Ag Èirigh – Tracair Ghnìomhan</p> <p>There had been circulated an Action Tracker which detailed the actions arising from previous meetings.</p>

	<p>Item 6 - Mr S Mackie advised that he contacted the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service in relation to the refurbishment of Thurso Fire Station and would circulate the response once received.</p> <p>Item 8 (Thurso High School) and Item 10 (Roads Structural Maintenance) had been actioned.</p> <p>Item 12 (Wick Common Good) was ongoing. In addition, it was confirmed that a meeting between Members and the Common Good Fund Officer was to be held in the near future.</p> <p>The Committee AGREED the updates to the action tracker.</p>
5.	<p>Police – Area Performance Summary Poileas – Geàrr-chunntas air Coileanadh Sgìreil</p> <p>There had been circulated Report No CC/16/20 by the North Area Commander.</p> <p>The Area Inspector extended an invitation to Members to attend a meeting with colleagues in the Service who were reviewing how to support the Police locally and specifically perceptions within the community.</p> <p>In discussion, Members raised the following main issues:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • concern at the increase in assaults on emergency services staff and the importance of the courts taking a firm approach to these offences; • clarification was sought and provided that anti-social behaviour orders continued to be regarded by the Police as a powerful tool in tackling this issue; • frustration that efforts to have road safety measures introduced on the Forss straight had to date been unsuccessful, particularly given the need to safeguard local residents and respond to their concerns; • more flexibility was required in relation to the matrix by which the camera van was deployed to allow it to be located in areas where the Police, local Members and community councils considered there was an issue, such as the Forss straight; • the potential for design improvements and visual speed displays to be implemented as relatively low cost effective deterrents to speeding; • the need to continue to campaign for a small roads policing unit to be based in the area to reduce the need for officers based outwith the area having to travel significant distances to support local officers; • the support of the Civil Nuclear Constabulary and local community initiatives in tackling speeding in the area be recognised; • the length of time it took to progress speed limit orders due to the extensive consultation process and tendency for objections to be received; • the importance of educating drivers in relation to speeding and the potential to use Driver Engagement North in workplace settings for this purpose; • concern in relation to non-compliance with 20mph zones in Wick and Thurso and the potential for a local campaign to reinforce the reasoning and rationale for these zones;

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to complement the action being taken by the Police, the local community had asked the Council to undertake traffic surveys to provide real data and allow for a more planned strategy going forward; • the potential for the Council to undertake white lining, for example at junctions where it was considered there was a road safety issue; • licenced premises in the area be commended on their impressive response to the Covid regulations; and • the involvement of the Police in the partnership work being undertaken in relation to Caithness Cares was highlighted and welcomed. <p>The Committee NOTED progress made against the objectives set within the Highland and Islands Local Policing Plan 2020 – 23.</p>
6.	<p>Thurso and North West Caithness & Wick and East Caithness (Wards 2 and 3) Place Based Investment Funds – Proposed Funding Allocations Maoin Tasgaidh Stèidhichte air Àite</p> <p>There had been circulated Report No. CC/17/21 by the Executive Chief Officer Communities and Place.</p> <p>In discussion, Members raised the following main issues:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • clarifying that the remaining allocation of £25k for Ward 3 was intended to be used to complement other works being undertaken to improve the appearance of the town centre for example painting of lamp posts, railings, and bollards; • the need to identify an adequate core budget for the repair/replacement of bus shelter infrastructure rather than having to use the Fund for this purpose; • whilst the one-off funding in local play parks was welcome, it did not satisfy the long-term demand for a sustainable strategy and investment in play parks in the Council area; • the need for a Council wide playground strategy that considered the needs and expectations of communities and supported the active play, well-being and social activity of children and their families; • as part of the above strategy there was the need to consider ongoing maintenance requirements and therefore the long term financial implications of the type of equipment being installed in play parks; • there was an excellent opportunity for a broader approach to be taken to play parks, in terms of creating community spaces for all age groups; • it was important to engage with local communities in regard to investment in sustainable play areas and to give careful consideration to the most effective means of undertaking that consultation; • the proposed investment in sports pitches in Ward 2 was welcomed, reference being made to the fact these facilities had been well used by young people over the summer. However, there was a need to consider the provision of all weather facilities that all ages could access over the winter months and opportunities to attract match funding in this regard; • the difficulties being experienced by communities in securing funding to have brown visitor signs in a poor state of repair replaced for example at Dunnett and Reay, located on the NC500, and it was hoped that place-

based investment funds could be used for this purpose if the funding was recurring in future; and

- confirmation was sought and provided that discussions had taken place with Services to ensure they had the capacity to take forward the works identified to ensure the funds were spent timeously.

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

i. **Ward 2**

Up to £60,000 towards the infrastructure projects to carry out drainage works at Sir Georges Park, Thurso (aka The Dammies) along with pitch improvements at Ormlie Park. Both these areas had been identified by local stakeholders and members as key projects in the Ward.

Up to £40,000 towards play park refurbishment/repairs/improvements with an emphasis on those parks in a rural setting. It was noted that match funding would be sought from local grant providers and local groups to complement this allocation.

ii. **Ward 3**

Up to £35,000 towards an infrastructure project to replace/relocate bus shelters around the Ward. This had been identified by a number of local communities as a priority and in discussion with Ward Members.

Up to £40,000 towards play park refurbishment/repairs/improvements. It was noted that match funding would be sought from local grant providers and local groups to complement this allocation.

The Committee **NOTED** that further work would be undertaken to develop the Wick town centre project and a report brought to a future meeting in relation to this item.

* Thereafter, the Committee welcomed the place-based investment funds which had allowed local Members to allocate one-off funding that would support long awaited investment in local play parks. Whilst this was very welcome it did not satisfy the long-term demand for a sustainable strategy and investment in play parks in the Council area and therefore, the Committee **AGREED** to request that the Council creates and implements a Council wide playground strategy that considers the needs and expectations of communities and supports the active play, well-being and social activity of children and their families.

**7. Wick Associated School Group Overview
Foir-shealladh Buidheann Sgoiltean Co-cheangailte Sgìre Inbhir Ùige**

There had been circulated Report No CC/18/21 by the Executive Chief Officer Education and Learning.

	<p>The Quality Development Officer and Area Additional Needs Support Manager provided an update to the report.</p> <p>The ECO Education and Learning provided an update on the excellent SQA examinations results achieved at Wick and Thurso High Schools.</p> <p>Members commended pupils and staff on their outstanding achievement in relation to the SQA examination results, recognising this had been a difficult period for schools due to the pandemic.</p> <p>In discussion, it was suggested that the format of the report was essentially not fit for purpose, this matter having been raised by Members previously. The data provided was out of date and therefore a material change in reporting was required so that Members were provided with relevant 'live' information in a narrative form.</p> <p>The ECO Education and Learning advised that officers been working with Members in relation to how attainment was reported and it was intended to roll out plans in this regard in November 2021 in respect of the Thurso ASG. In addition, interviews for two Heads of Service posts would be held early in September and those recruits would be working with Area Managers on a new format of report.</p> <p>Thereafter, concern was expressed at potential future trends in relation to positive destinations and whether this had been recognised and interventions were being put in place. The ECO Education and Learning provided an update on the range interventions that had been put in place by the Directorate over the past year in relation to positive destinations.</p> <p>Members then raised the following issues:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • clarification was sought and provided on progress with the disposal of the site for the former Wick High School, and it was confirmed the Executive Chief Officer Housing and Property would be asked to provide an update; and • the need to actively consider the disposal of former school sites and their use once sold in terms of whether they enhanced the environment. It was confirmed that the input of the Executive Chief Officer Housing and Property would be sought on this issue and a response provided to Mr R Bremner. <p>The Committee following scrutiny, NOTED the content of the report.</p>
8.	<p>Draft Wick Pulteneytown Conservation Area Appraisal and Conservation Area Management Plan Inbhir Ùige Sgìre Glèidhteachais Pulteneytown Measadh is Plana Stiùiridh</p> <p>There had been circulated Report No CC/19/21 by the Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure, Environment and Economy.</p> <p>In discussion, Members welcomed the report and raised the following issues:-</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the summary of discussions with Wick Harbour Authority as part of the consultation set out at section 6 of the report was highlighted and welcomed; • concern that the Conservation Area should not be restrictive in terms of individual development proposals given the challenges the town faced in being able to diversify and improve both its appearance and the wellbeing of its residents. It was confirmed the intention was to revitalise Pulteneytown through sensitive and appropriate development, including reviving redundant and derelict buildings, to attract people and businesses back into the area; • Wick Heritage Centre be commended on their key role in the development of the Conservation Area appraisal and management plan; • an update was sought on the timeline for a report on Thurso conservation area to be brought forward to Members. It was confirmed that Thurso would be the first priority of the new part-time conservation area projects officer once in post, and it was hoped to bring a report to the Committee early in 2022. <p>The Committee:-</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. NOTED the public comments and the Council response; and ii. AGREED to RECOMMEND that the Infrastructure, Environment & Economy Committee formally approve and adopt the Wick Pulteneytown Conservation Area Appraisal (Appendix 1) and Management Plan (Appendix 2), including the amended conservation area boundary, at a forthcoming meeting.
	<p>The meeting ended at 12.30pm.</p>

The Highland Council

Minutes of Meeting of the **Easter Ross Area Committee** held remotely on Thursday, 12 August, 2021, at 10 am.

Present:

Mr M Finlayson
Mr D Louden

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

Officials in Attendance:

Helen Ross Senior Ward Manager, CSER
Rory MacLeod, Housing Manager
Colin Sharp, Repairs Manager
Keith Mackenzie, Principal Repairs Manager
Iain Moncreiff, Roads Operation Manager
Fiona MacBain, Committee Administrator

Also in Attendance:

Inspector Richard Ross, Police Scotland

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

1. Apologies for Absence Leisgeulan

Apologies were submitted on behalf of Ms P Munro, Ms M Smith and Mrs C Wilson.

2. Declarations of Interest Foillseachaidhean Com-pàirt

Mr D Louden – Item 7 (non-financial).

3. Good News Deagh Naidheachdan

The Committee **NOTED** that Cllrs Fiona Robertson and Maxine Smith had met with and presented brothers Tom and Luke Stoltman with an inscribed quaich each in recognition of their outstanding achievements in the Scottish, UK and World Strongman competitions. Tom Stoltman had won the 2021 World's Strongest Man in Sacramento in June this year, becoming the first competitor from Scotland to win the competition whilst his brother Luke has also been recognised for his successes, having been crowned Scotland's Strongest Man five times. Cllr Robertson noted that the brothers' achievements were inspirational and had very much put Invergordon 'on the map'.

4. Police – Area Performance Summary Report Poileas – Geàrr Aithisg Coileanadh Sgìreil

There had been circulated Report No ERA/15/21 dated 28 July 2021 by Chief Inspector Jamie Wilson, Area Commander (North Highland Area Command).

Following a summary of the report, the following issues were considered:-

- feedback was sought, and would be provided by local officers outwith the meeting, on the impact of the 50mph zone that was implemented near the Asda junction in Tain;
- the increase in drink-drug driving detections was at least in part due to recent legislation giving police powers to demand saliva samples from suspected drug users, rather than having to request a blood test; and
- information was sought on whether there were plans to return to the traditional 'beat officers' patrolling on foot and reference was made to resource issues and the benefits of using vehicles.

The Committee **NOTED** progress made against the objectives set within the Highland Local Policing Plan 2020-2023 Year 1, attached as Annex A to the report, for the period covering 01 April 2020 - 31 March 2021.

5. Housing Performance Report – 1 April 2021 to 30 June 2021 Aithisg Coileanadh Taigheadais – 1 Giblean 2021 gu 30 Ògmhios 2021

There had been circulated Report No ERA/16/21 dated 26 July 2021 by the Executive Chief Officer Housing and Property.

During discussion the following issues were considered:-

- the new tenant participation officer was welcomed and her work to date was praised;
- information was sought and provided on measures being put in place to catch up with maintenance and capital projects after Covid-related delays. Many sub-contractors and tradespeople were fully occupied with private sector work which created challenges and further delays;
- the increase in the housing waiting list was of concern and was likely to be exacerbated by the disappearance of furlough and the loss of the uplift in Universal Credit. A private sector engagement officer was being recruited to help with some key issues; and
- information was sought and provided on support that could be offered to vulnerable clients, including homeless young people, and looked after young people who were transitioning to adulthood. This included support with anti-social neighbours. Housing support was an essential service that would benefit from increased resources.

The Committee **NOTED** the information provided on housing performance in the period 1 April 2021 to 30 June 2021.

6. Winter Maintenance Plan for 2021-22 Plana Obair-gleidhidh Geamhraidh airson 2021-22

There had been circulated Report No ERA/017/21 dated 27 July 2021 by the Executive Chief Officer, Infrastructure, Environment & Economy.

Attention was drawn to an error in the report at paragraph 8.1 where it stated that there were 19 gritters in Ross & Cromarty. This should read 29.

The Committee **APPROVED** the Winter Maintenance Plans for Easter Ross.

**7. Area Capital Programme 2021 – 2022 Progress Report and Approval of Ward Discretionary and Additional Schemes
Prògram Calpa Sgìreil 2021 – Aithisg Adhartais 2022 agus Ao**

Mr D Loudon declared a non-financial interest in this item as a resident of Tower Street 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 his involvement

There had been circulated Report No ERA/018/21 dated 26 July 2021 by the Executive Chief Officer, Infrastructure, Environment & Economy.

It was explained that some of the schemes to be funded by the Ward Discretionary Budget had already been started, based on Members' recommendations, as they had been time critical. A comprehensive update on progress since the report was written was provided by the Roads Operation Manager.

During discussion, the following issues were considered:-

- the amount of capital work completed in Ward 6 was welcomed but disappointment was expressed by Ward 7 Members, on behalf of their constituents, about progress with projects in their ward, with various examples provided of urgent potholes that required to be filled, and concern being expressed at the length of time the work was taking. In response it was explained that many of the projects in Ward 7 were more complex than in Ward 6, and some of the tenders for the work had been returned at significantly higher costs than anticipated, partly because many contractors were fully occupied with private sector projects. Members raised a concern that the longer the delays, the worse the potholes became, and the higher the costs to repair them, and that it was likely that severe winter weather would cause further damage. However, the Area Roads Manager explained that the cost was driven up by the volume of work not because of delays;
- an increased number of heavy vehicles as a result of the Glenmorangie planning application could cause detriment to the road network and verges, and this would be investigated by the Area Roads Manager;
- information was sought and provided on responsibilities for tackling damage to road surfaces near utilities and manholes;
- it was requested that consideration be given to the imposition of a 50mph speed limit on the back road from Evanton to Dingwall;
- Mr Finlayson gave an example of a recently filled pothole which had already suffered damage, and this would be investigated by the Area Roads Manager; and

- Members emphasised the danger and cost to local people of poor road surfaces.

In response to comments from Members, the Area Roads Manager summarised some of the unexpectedly high costs and other challenges involved in tackling the backlog of road maintenance in Ward 7, and he outlined plans to facilitate additional work being undertaken by Nuphalt Ltd.

The Committee:-

- NOTED** the progress on the 2021/22 Road Maintenance Programme for the Easter Ross area;
- APPROVED** the proposed 2021/22 Roads Maintenance Programme schemes funded by the Ward Discretionary Budget;
- APPROVED** the additional capital schemes funded from Capital Budget; and
- AGREED** the imposition of 50mph speed limit on the back road from Evanton to Dingwall be investigated.

8. Invergordon Common Good Fund Maoin Math Coitcheann Inbhir Ghòrdain

There had been circulated Report No ERA/19/21 dated 28 July 2021 by the Executive Chief Officer, Resources and Finance and Executive Chief Officer, Policy and Reform.

The Committee **NOTED**:-

- the Quarter 1 monitoring statement for the Invergordon Common Good Fund; and
- the current position in relation to the Invergordon Town Hall.

9. Tain Common Good Fund Maoin Math Coitcheann Bhaile Dhubhthaich

There had been circulated Report No ERA/20/21 dated 26 July 2021 by the Executive Chief Officer, Resources and Finance and Executive Chief Officer, Community and Place.

During discussion, the following issues were considered:-

- it was suggested that some assets which had been transferred to the Common Good Fund were more accurately liabilities due to the expenses likely to be incurred by them. Noting there had been various assets transferred from the Common Good Fund to the Council in the past, to the possible detriment of the Common Good Fund, it was suggested this be investigated further to identify if any income earning assets were Common Good assets, starting with properties on the Blairlath Industrial Estate; and
- an update was requested at a ward business meeting on progress with the report on a comparative inter tidal and a sub tidal survey of the mussel beds in order to assess the potential lease value of the fishing rights.

The Committee **NOTED** the Quarter 1 monitoring statement for the Tain Common Good Fund and **AGREED:-**

- i. to invite the Common Good Fund Officer to a ward business meeting to discuss sourcing information on assets which had been transferred from the Tain Common Good Fund to the Council, with reference to the Blarliath Industrial Estate as a starting point; and
- ii. an update be provided to a future ward business meeting on progress with the report on a comparative inter tidal and a sub tidal survey of the mussel beds in order to assess the potential lease value of the fishing rights.

10. Minutes **Geàrr-chunntas**

There had been circulated and were **NOTED** Minutes of Meeting of the Easter Ross Area Committee held on 25 May 2021.

The meeting ended at 11.40am

**The Highland Council
Sutherland County Committee**

Minutes of Meeting of the Sutherland County Committee held remotely on Monday 16 August 2021 at 10.30am.

Present:

Mr R Gale

Mrs D Mackay

Mr J McGillivray

Mr H Morrison

Ms L Munro

Officials in attendance:

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

Mr P Tomalin, Ward Manager, Communities and Place

Ms A Donald, Area Care and Learning Manager, Education & Learning

Ms J Sutherland, Roads Operation Manager, Infrastructure and Environment

Ms A Macrae, Committee Administrator, Performance & Governance

Also in Attendance:

Station Commander J Gardiner, Scottish Fire and Rescue Service

Divisional Commander P Farrell, Scottish Fire and Rescue Service

Mr L MacAskill, Assynt Foundation

Ms S Edwards, NW2045 Interviewer

Mr R Gale in the Chair

**1. Apologies for Absence
Leisgeulan**

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

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

There were no declarations of interest.

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

There had been circulated Report No SCC/11/21 by the Local Senior Officer for Highland.

In discussion, Members raised the following issues:-

- clarification was sought and provided that the Service's recording system was being revised to ensure domestic garage fires were reflected in the statistics;
- concern the station availability at Tongue was below the minimum requirement required to deploy the fire appliance and the potential to merge Tongue and Bettyhill Fire Stations as a measure to address the availability issues;

- concern that availability had reduced in most of the stations in Sutherland, the main issues being the demographic in some areas and the national standards applicants had to attain. There was a need for innovative solutions to address the recruitment challenges across the area;
- a specific issue in relation to the lack of advance notice a recruit in Durness had been given to attend an initial training course. The Station Commander confirmed he would investigate this matter and respond directly to Mr H Morrison;
- it would be helpful if information could be provided on the number of the Service's personnel in the area at development stages;
- the success of the vaccination programme at Dornoch Fire Station and the potential for this to be repeated in future;
- the Service be commended on the consistent support it provided to partner agencies; and
- the potential for a joint service with the Police in remote and rural areas.

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

**4. North West 2045 Our Future Our Choice
Gabhail ri Lèirsinn 2045 an Iar-Thuath**

There had been circulated Report No SCC/12/21 by the Executive Chief Officer Communities and Place.

Mr L MacAskill, Assynt Foundation, Ms S Edwards, NW2045 Interviewer and the Ward Manager gave a presentation on this item.

In discussion, Members expressed support for the NW2045 Vision and raised the following issues:-

- the need for a strategy to take forward the six priorities areas for action and particularly to identify a lead organisation/group to drive these priorities forward;
- while there were benefits with the range of organisations involved in the Vision working in partnership, there were also potential areas of conflict, for example between environmental interests and economic development;
- the Sutherland Community Partnership's Food Group would welcome the opportunity to share its food strategy and action plan for Sutherland with NW2045;
- the opportunities to learn from the Scandanavian NOMAD project, in terms of working digitally from any location, recognising that Sutherland was ideally placed in terms of an excellent work/life balance;
- concern at the injustice of the Islands Bill given that in terms of the relevant comparators Sutherland was significantly worse than the islands at all levels;
- Sutherland had not benefited from the same level of political support and representation at a national level as the islands and the need for more political lobbying on this issue; and
- concern at the Boundary Commission's proposal to reduce the number councillors for Ward 01: North, West and Central Sutherland and the

impact this would have on the democracy and representation of the area.

The Committee:-

- i. **AGREED** to adopt the NW2045 Vision “North West 2045 Our Future Our Choice”; and
- ii. **NOTED** the development of a Regional Land Use Partnership pilot in NW Sutherland

**5. North West Sutherland Schools Group Overview
Foir-shealladh Buidheann Sgoiltean Co-cheangailte Iar-Thuath Ghallaibh**

There had been circulated Report No SCC/13/21 by the Executive Chief Officer Education and Learning.

In discussion, Members raised the following issues:-

- in relation to its Care Inspectorate report, confirmation was sought and provided that the Kinlochbervie Childcare Centre had successfully transferred to the Council;
- the condition of Scourie Primary School was listed as category ‘C’ and a query in relation to the action required to address this matter. The Area Manager advised this was due the age of the building and that she would liaise with the Head Teacher to check if there were any specific requirements;
- clarification was sought and provided in relation to the exclusion rates at Durness Primary School, while acknowledging that small numbers could skew the figures. The Executive Chief Officer Health and Social Care advised that she would be content to have further discussions with the Area Manager and others outwith the meeting on the issues around exclusions;
- the Headteacher and staff be commended on a positive report overall and on the success and forward movement of the Group and positive approach in overcoming any issues; and
- the reduction in the projected school roll at Kinlochbervie High School over the next few years highlighted the depopulation issues in North and West Sutherland and the need for all agencies to work together to tackle this issue and prevent school closures in the area.

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

**6. Review of Speed Limit between Ardgay and Bonar Bridge
Ath-sgrùdadh air Crìoch-astair eadar Àird Ghaoithe agus Drochaid a’ Bhanna**

There had been circulated Report No SCC/14/21 by the Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure, Environment and Economy.

In discussion, Members raised the following issues:-

- the Ardgay/Bonar Bridge community were of the view that the speed of the traffic was excessive and this was reflected in the number of representations received from the local community on this matter;
- it was clear going forward the precedence of traffic over people was not in line with current policy to encourage more walking and cycling;
- the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 legislation was not fit for purpose and the need to be proactive in lobbying to have this legislation reviewed and to approach the Highland MSPs in this regard;
- this item should be deferred for further review and legal advice in relation to the introduction of a 30mph along the entire length of the road and on the basis a report be brought back to the Committee in November 2021. This would also allow Members to have further discussions with the local community;
- confirmation was sought and provided that in the event of a deferral the proposal outlined in the report would remain on the table as an option to be progressed;
- the proposal to extend the 30mph limit as outlined on the report be welcomed particularly as it encompassed the Kyle of Sutherland Development Trust's hub; and
- clarification was sought and provided that it would be preferable to progress one traffic order for a 30mph speed limit along the whole stretch rather progressing in whole or in part the recommendations in the report and then seeking a reduction in the 50mph speed limit at a later date.

The Committee **AGREED** to defer this item for further review and legal advice in relation to the introduction of a 30mph along the entire length of the road and on the basis a report be brought back to the Committee in November 2021.

7. **Poverty in Sutherland Bochdainn ann an Cataibh**

The Chair gave a verbal update on this item during which he advised of the importance of maintaining awareness of the issues of poverty across Sutherland. He had been active in seeking a reduction in the distribution costs for electricity given the high percentage of households in Sutherland experiencing fuel poverty. He understood there was a Government fund to help alleviate fuel poverty and there was need to consider how the most communities could gain access to these funds.

The Chair continued that there was a need for an update on the ongoing work being undertaken across the area to tackle poverty and to ensure this work was aligned and to avoid duplication of effort. The intention was that a report on this item would be submitted to the Committee at its next meeting in November 2021.

In discussion, it was confirmed that the Sutherland Community Partnership's Fuel Poverty Summit which had been postponed due to the pandemic was being held on 8 October 2021, details of which would be circulated to Members. Poverty in the round was at unprecedented levels and the effects on the mental health and life chances of children and families was well documented. The work ongoing locally was addressing the symptoms and the root causes could only be addressed by the UK and Scottish Governments.

Thereafter, concern was expressed that the Covid resilience monies to support food and fuel poverty available the previous winter would not be available this year and that further clarification was required on the level of funding that would be available.

The Committee **NOTED** the verbal update and the intention to bring a report on this item back to the Committee in November 2021

8. Place Based Investment Funds - Sutherland
Maoin Tasgaidh Stèidhichte air Àite

There had been circulated Report No SCC/15/21 by the Executive Chief Officer Communities and Place.

The Committee **AGREED** the proposed allocations of the Place Based Investment Fund for Ward 4 as follows:

- Support for playparks £80,000
- Support for mental wellbeing initiatives £20,000.

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

There had been circulated Report No SCC/16/21 by the Executive Chief Officer Communities and Place and Executive Chief Officer Finance and Resources.

The Committee **NOTED** the:-

- i. position of Dornoch Common Good fund at the end of the first quarter; and
- ii. update on current Dornoch Common Good issues.

10. Minutes
Geàrr-chunntas

There had been circulated and **NOTED** Minutes of the Sutherland County Committee held on 17 May 2021 which were approved by the Council on 24 June 2021.

The meeting closed at 12.05pm.

The Highland Council

Minutes of Meeting of the **Dingwall and Seaforth Area Committee** held remotely via Microsoft Teams on 16 August 2021 at 10.30 pm.

Present:

Mr A MacKinnon
Mrs A MacLean

Mr G Mackenzie
Mrs M Paterson

In attendance:

Mr M Rodgers, ECO Property and Housing
Ms D Ferguson, Senior Ward Manager, Communities and Place
Ms D Agnew, Ward Manager (Black Isle, Dingwall and Seaforth), Communities and Place
Miss J MacLennan, Democratic Services Manager, Performance and Governance
Ms L MacKellaich, Road Safety Officer, Infrastructure, Environment and Economy
Mr R Bartlett, Technician, Roads and Transport, Infrastructure, Environment and Economy
Mr R MacLeod, Area Housing Manager, Property and Housing
Mr C Sutherland, Repairs Manager, Property and Housing
Mr K MacKenzie, Principal Repairs Officer, Property and Housing
Mr J Henderson, Housing Investment Officer, Property and Housing
Mr I Moncrieff, Roads Operations Manager, Infrastructure, Environment and Economy
Mr A Coyle, Corporate Communications and Engagement Officer, Performance and Governance
Mrs A MacArthur, Administrative Assistant, Performance and Governance

Also in attendance:

Group Commander A 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 the Committee.

Business

1. Apologies for Absence Leisgeulans

There were no apologies for absence.

2. Declarations of Interest Foillseachaidhean Com-pàirt

Item 7 – Mrs A MacLean (non-financial).

3. Appointment of Chair Cur Cathraiche an Dreuchd

Nominations were invited for the post of Chair of the Dingwall and Seaforth Area Committee.

Mrs M Paterson, seconded by Mr A MacKinnon nominated Mr G Mackenzie.

Mr Graham Mackenzie thanked members for the nomination and accepted the appointment.

Mrs M Paterson was to continue in her role as Vice Chair.

4. Scottish Fire and Rescue Service Seirbheis Smàlaidh is Teasairginn

There had been circulated Report No DSA/001/21 dated 29 July 2021 together with the Dingwall and Seaforth Performance Report by the Local Group Commander for the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service.

The Committee asked that their appreciation for the work undertaken be passed to all fire station staff. The Group commander responded to comments as follows:

- the Group Manager gave appreciation for the commitment of his staff and to the full-time employers of the retained fire station staff and the time given to attend incidents;
- the fire service and retained fire fighters have all been key workers undertaking a tremendous amount of work during the pandemic;
- the Dingwall station currently had a full complement of staff. When a recruitment campaign was carried out there was always a push for diversity and inclusivity in the staff employed. Separate recruitment evenings were also organised to promote female firefighters;
- Covid vaccinations had not unfortunately been made a priority for either firefighters or police officers, although most firefighters had now been vaccinated. Fire stations however had the best PPE supplied, stations were made Covid secure, firefighters worked in bubbles and had various measures in place to make the stations and firefighters safe.
- although they had been unable to undertake home safety visits safely during the pandemic, visits had been prioritised to areas with no smoke detection or at risk of crime. The fire service was now back to normal working and supporting the fire safety campaign;
- where wild camping was accepted where campers camped responsibly, dirty camping where people light fires and leave rubbish was not accepted. Unfortunately the Fire Service had no authority to stop fires unless the fires were at risk of getting out of control. The Fire Service used social media sites to put out information and engaged with landowners and farmers not to burn fields at certain times of high risk;
- antisocial fires are predominantly unattended barbecues and malicious lighting of fires predominantly outdoors; and
- generally false alarm signals are from poorly sited smoke detectors and Members were urged to complete the online survey for the consultation on Unwanted Fire Alarm Signals.

The Group Commander thanked members for their support.

The Committee **NOTED** the report.

5. Dingwall Temporary 20 mph Speed Limit and associated Traffic Calming Casg Astair Sealach 20 msu Inbhir Pheofharain agus Socrachadh Trafaig co-cheangailte

There had been circulated Report No DSA/002/21 dated 30 July 2021 by the Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure, Environment and Economy.

In discussion, the following main points were raised:-

- the majority of people in Dingwall wanted the 20 mph speed restriction in the town and with climate change in mind we had to look to encouraging people to walk and cycle and not take their cars;
- when you look at the Conon and Maryburgh school traffic calming which was not initially popular, people now accepted the traffic calming and it kept the speeds down at the school;
- the traffic calming provides a safer environment for pedestrians;
- respect the view of the Community Council, the Burn Place traffic calming; caused a considerable amount of delay to traffic;
- in order to bring in 20 mph without traffic calming, existing mean average speeds prior to installation of a 20 mph limit are required to be below 24 mph;
- the petition had been signed by almost 400 people and with the Community Council, it illustrated the extent of concern by a large number of people in Dingwall;
- although concerns had been raised at Old Evanton Road for years, it had not been included in the 20 mph speed limit, due to the level of traffic calming required;
- we have to go through a statutory process to make permanent the 20 mph speed limit;
- the existing schemes in residential areas involving signing and lining could be made permanent;
- no concerns had been raised by Statutory Consultees (excluding the Community Council) in relation to the proposed bus stop lay-by removal and traffic calming at the school crossing at the top of Back Road; and
- Scottish Safety Camera Programme are responsible for the management of speed cameras in Scotland and have specific site assessment criteria. These sites do not meet the criteria.

Following lengthy discussion, Mr G MacKenzie, seconded by Mrs M Paterson moved refusal of the traffic calming.

Mr A MacKinnon, seconded by Mrs A MacLean moved as an amendment the approval of the traffic calming.

There being an equality of votes, the Chair used his casting vote to vote for the refusal of the traffic calming and omitting of the 20 mph speed limit on Burn Place,

Mill Street, Back Road, Bridgend Avenue, Slaughter House Road and Strathpeffer Road in the permanent RTRO.

The Members thanked the Road Safety Team and gave their appreciation of the work undertaken on traffic calming.

The Committee:

- i. **NOTED** the background to the proposed 20 mph speed limit order and associated traffic calming for Dingwall and the representations received;
- ii. **APPROVED** the making of the Road Traffic Regulation Order omitting Burn Place, Mill Street, Back Road, Bridgend Avenue, Slaughter House Road and Strathpeffer Road;
- iii. **REFUSED** the construction of the associated traffic calming at Burn Place, Old Evanton Road and Back Road and **AGREED** that these should be looked at again; and
- iv. **NOTED** the intention to carry out speed counts to determine effectiveness of the new reduced speed limit.

6. Housing Performance Report Aithisg Dèanadais a thaobh Taigheadais

There had been circulated Report No DSA/003/21 dated 26 July 2021 by the Executive Chief Officer – Housing and Property which provides Members with information on how the Housing Section performed in relation to the Scottish Social Housing Charter and other performance indicators during the period 1 April 2021 to 30 June 2021.

In discussion, the following responses were given:-

- visits had been reduced due to the Covid restrictions, it was hoped this would be alleviated once restrictions reduced but in essence properties are coming back in a poorer condition;
- voids had been experienced where delays had been encountered with works to properties where only one trade would enter the house at a time;
- changes to the methods of communication had seen some improvements in rent arrears;
- conscious of the need to understand the condition of the properties and of the support our tenants might need to maintain their homes and report repairs;
- there had been 48 homeless presentations in Ross and Cromarty and approximately half of these would have been in the Dingwall and Seaforth area, there had been 271 homeless presentations in Highland, the bulk of which were in Inverness;
- there was an advantage in carrying out house inspections and there would be a focus on checking the Council's vulnerable tenant's houses coming out of lockdown; and
- trade staff, contractors and housing staff would be encouraged to flag any tenant concerns when they visit a property.

Mr M Rodgers advised that the service visited properties for a range of reasons each year and that this presented opportunities to look at the condition of the property and see how the tenants were managing. In other authorities Housing staff were trained to spot any home safety issues and any other vulnerabilities that tenants may have, and we would look at the opportunity to further develop that in our service. There may be a way to interrogate our existing database to glean how many visits had been made to a property and for what purpose, and how many properties had been visited within a year.

The Committee praised the Housing Team staff for their efforts during the covid restrictions.

The Committee **NOTED** the report.

7. Dingwall and Seaforth Housing Revenue Account Capital Programme 2021-2022
Prògram Calpa Cunntas Teachd-a-steach Taigheadais Inbhir Pheofharain is Shiophoir 2021-2022

Declaration of Interest: Mrs A MacLean declared a non-financial interest as her sister was receiving improvements to her Council house but, having applied the test outlined in Paragraphs 5.2 and 5.3 of the Councillors' Code of Conduct, concluded that their interests did not preclude their involvement in the discussion.

There had been circulated Report No DSA/004/21 dated 26 July 2021 by the Executive Chief Officer – Housing and Property.

In discussion, the following responses were given:-

- there were approximately 48 houses to receive replacement windows and doors in Deas Avenue and MacIntyre Place;
- one off budgets related to items that had not been planned, the figure was for a number of installations not just one;
- in relation to the previous item where we look for more visits and highlighting of concerns it would also be helpful to have early warnings of any house issues or deterioration in properties.

Mr M Rodgers stated that there was an expected asset life of items in a building. Stock condition surveys would be undertaken across the whole Council estate to enable us to form a view on the capital programme for future years.

The Committee:

- i. **NOTED** the allocation of resources to Dingwall and Seaforth Area as set out at 5.5;
- ii. **NOTED** the guideline investment priorities as set out in sections 5.2 of the report;
- iii. **AGREED** the proposed one-year HRA Capital Programme for Dingwall and Seaforth Area 2021-22 as set out in **Appendix 1**;

- iv. **NOTED** the position relating the current year HRA Capital Programme.
- v. **NOTED** that updates on the Housing Revenue Account Capital Programme will continue to be provided through ward briefings and at future Local Committees as requested by local Members, in addition to reporting to Housing and Property Committee.

**8. Winter Maintenance Plan 2021/22
Obair-glèidhidh Geamhraidh 2021/22**

There had been circulated Report No DSA/005/21 dated 3 August 2021 by the Interim Chief Officer – Infrastructure, Environment and Economy.

In discussion, the following responses were given:-

- having just lost the foreman at Greenhill, an Acting foreman position will be advertised this week thus maintaining establishment levels;
- the six gritters at Greenhill are for Dingwall and Seaforth area. The other gritters at Greenhill cover the Black Isle routes. There are spare gritters across Highland Council but that doesn't mean we will have one at any one depot at any particular time;
- in relation to the maintenance of gritters, all our fleet are checked prior to the winter and the spinners for the gritters are all calibrated; and
- in relation to grit bins and winter resilience no date has yet been set for sending out the communication but we would be working with community groups to provide grit bins, snow shovels and manual grit spreaders;

Thanks were given for the years of excellent service by the foreman, Mr A Macivor, at Greenhill.

The Committee **APPROVED** the Winter Maintenance Plans for Dingwall and Seaforth.

**9. Area Capital Programme 2021 – 2022 Progress Report and approval of Ward Discretionary Budget and additional schemes
Aithisg Adhartais Prògram Calpa Sgìreil 2021–2022 agus aonta Buidseat fo Ùghdarras Uàird agus sgeamaichean a bharrachd**

There had been circulated Report No DSA/006/21 dated 22 July 2021 by the Interim Chief Officer – Infrastructure, Environment and Economy.

In discussion, the following responses were given:-

- an update would be provided on the pavements in Woodlands Road, Dingwall and the road at Seaforth Road, Muir of Ord;
- reassurance was given that MacDonald Road was on the priority list and as soon as the surface dressing had been completed MacDonald Road would be undertaken; and
- one of our Roads Team will be given refresher training on the paver.

The Committee thanked the Roads Team for their hard work and:

- i. **NOTED** the progress on the 2021/22 Road Maintenance Programme for the Dingwall and Seaforth area;
- ii. **APPROVED** the proposed 2021/22 Roads Maintenance Programme schemes funded by the Additional Roads Ward allocation; and
- iii. **APPROVED** the additional capital schemes funded from Capital Budget.

10. Dingwall Common Good Fund Maoin Math Coitcheann Inbhir Pheofharain

There had been circulated Report No DSA/007/21 dated 2 August 2021 by the Executive Chief Officer – Communities and Place and the Executive Chief Officer – Resources and Finance.

The Committee **NOTED** the updated information provided in relation to the Dingwall Common Good Fund.

11. Minutes Geàrr-chunntas

There was circulated and **NOTED** Minutes of Meeting of the Black Isle, Dingwall and Seaforth Committee held on 14 April 2021 which were approved by the Council on 13 May 2021.

In discussion, the Committee:

- i. **AGREED** that a report on St Clements School be brought to each meeting of Dingwall and Seaforth Area Committee;
- ii. **AGREED** that a report on Garages – Strategic Overview be presented to November 2021 Dingwall and Seaforth Area Committee; and
- iii. **AGREED** that Members would like to see a report on Young People on Agenda for future Dingwall and Seaforth Area Committee.

The meeting closed at 12.50 pm.

The Highland Council

Minutes of Meeting of the **Wester Ross, Strathpeffer and Lochalsh Committee** held remotely via Microsoft Teams on 19 August 2021 at 10.30 am.

Present:

Mrs I Campbell
Dr I Cockburn

Mr A MacInnes
Mr D MacLeod

In attendance:

Mrs D Ferguson, Senior Ward Manager, Communities and Place
Mr D Esson, Area Care and Learning Manager – West Area, Education and Learning
Mr R MacLeod, Housing Manager (North), Property and Housing
Mr I Moncrieff, Roads Operations Manager, Infrastructure, Environment and Economy
Mr C Simpson, Tourism Co-ordinator, Development and Infrastructure
Miss S Tarrant, Corporate Communications and Engagement Officer, Chief Executive's Office
Mrs A MacArthur, Administrative Assistant, Performance and Governance

Also in attendance:

Group Commander A 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 the Committee.

Business

1. Apologies for Absence Leisgeulan

There were no apologies for absence.

2. Declarations of Interest Foillseachaidhean Com-pàirt

There were no declarations of interest.

3. Scottish Fire and Rescue Service Seirbheis Smàlaidh is Teasairginn

There had been circulated Report No WRSL/011/21 dated 29 July 2021 together with the Wester Ross, Strathpeffer and Lochalsh Performance Report by the Local Group Commander for the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service.

The Group Commander requested that Members complete a survey on the HIFRS website on reducing Unwanted Fire Alarm Signals.

During discussion, the following responses had been given:-

- Although the formal strategy for supporting the Scottish Ambulance Survey had not been ratified HIFRS currently support the Scottish Ambulance Service in various roles supporting vulnerable people in the community and carrying defibrillators to respond to cardiac arrests where necessary;
- in relation to retained fire fighters, at the moment the guidance states you should be able to respond to a call within eight minutes. In very remote areas if we are struggling to recruit firefighters we can extend this to 15 minutes as we would rather the late arrival of an appliance than no appliance at all;
- there are currently five members of staff in Achiltibuie and we will and are always looking for staff. Banners advertising recruitment have recently been purchased for displaying in communities and there is an active social media campaign; and
- four firefighters per appliance was the bare minimum permitted to respond to a call for safety reasons.

The Group Commander welcomed Members continued support for raising the awareness of the work of the RDS Team and for raising their profile. The Group Commander also thanked the full-time employers of the retained fire station staff and appreciated the time given to the retained firefighters to attend incidents.

The Committee **NOTED** the report.

4. Housing Performance Report Aithisg Dèanadais a thaobh Taigheadais

There had been circulated Report No WRSL/012/21 dated 19 August 2021 by the Executive Chief Officer – Property and Housing.

The Committee **NOTED** the report.

5. Visitor Management in Wester Ross, Strathpeffer and Lochalsh Stiùireadh Luchd-tadhail ann an Ros an Iar, Srath Pheofhair agus Loch Aillse

An overview was provided of the current Visitor Management arrangements in Ward 5 including improvements funded from the additional £1.5 million budget made available in the current financial year.

An outline was given on Road and Parking Improvements; Car Parks, Seasonal Access Rangers; Public Conveniences; Enhanced Waste Services; Motorhome facilities; Engagement and the Rural Tourism Infrastructure Fund.

During discussion, the following responses had been given:-

- an update was sought and would be provided to Members on the sign for Shiel Bridge to advise motorists not to go to Letterfearn to see the Castle;
- the counter at Dornie toilets was simply to gauge how often toilets are used so the counter is merely to count the number of people entering the toilets;
- in terms of cemetery car parks there is an intention to restrict the use of overnight parking in these car parks and we are looking into options including enforceable traffic orders;

- in relation to the query on the Tornapress challenges, an update would be provided to Members;
- although there was no indication of a change to legislation, there was a willingness at a national level to look at the guidance in relation to the Outdoor Access Code;
- the intention behind the Ullapool waste facility was to provide a template that could be used in other locations; and
- although there was appreciation for the rangers, Members had to keep fighting for infrastructure improvements and the associated facilities.

The Committee fully supported the ranger service and were appreciative of the reduction in complaints and the reduction in wild fires attributable to the rangers.

The Committee thanked Mr C Simpson for a very helpful report.

The Committee **NOTED** the report.

6. Winter Maintenance Plan 2021/22 Obair-glèidhidh Geamhraidh 2021/22

There had been circulated Report No WRSL/013/21 dated 3 August 2021 by the Interim Chief Officer – Infrastructure and Environment and Economy.

During discussion, the following responses had been given:-

- gritting from Silverbridge to Lochcarron had previously been operated from Silverbridge, the only difference is that this instruction now comes under Mr M Sutherland's control rather than the control of the Dingwall office;
- these squads only now come down as far as Achnasheen;
- there were footpath tractors, previously there had been one footpath tractor covering Ullapool, Gairloch and Lochcarron, three footpath tractors for these areas would be required and this would be looked at;
- weed killer is still being utilised on the Japanese Knotweed growing in roadside verges and footpaths, it is understood the legislation is changing during 2022/2023 when the chemical glyphosphate will no longer be permitted. At present there is not a comparable solution; and
- if anyone wants to be involved in gritting in their community they should form a group and get in touch with Mr M Sutherland. We require people's names and points of contact to enable them to be covered by Council insurance.

The Committee **APPROVED** the Winter Maintenance Plans.

7. Area Capital Programme 2021-2022 Progress Report and approval of Ward Discretionary Budget and additional schemes Aithisg Adhartais Prògram Calpa Sgìreil 2021–2022 agus aonta Buidseat fo Ùghdarras Uàird agus sgeamaichean a bharrachd

There had been circulated Report No WRSL/014/21 dated 28 July 2021 by the Interim Chief Officer – Infrastructure, Environment and Economy. An update was given on the report.

During discussion, the following responses had been given:-

- Glenelg STTS funding had not yet been approved, the deadline for works was February. An update would be provided to Members;
- in relation to the concrete barriers at Ardnarff, the Highland Fencing and Barrier Contractors had been contracted and had visited the site. As this area bounded onto Network Rail land, Network Rail had to be consulted. It was intended that this be completed in October but there are supply problems. As a road closure would be required, collaboration would be required to find the best time for undertaking this work and for notification, it was likely to be undertaken during night time working;
- an update on the second phase of the Strome ferry road would be sent to Members;
- the South Erradale road, will look for confirmation but believe this has been completed;
- the Ardnarff project would include the collapsed verges; and
- the capital budget is split between Ross and Cromarty areas dependent on the road length, the budget had not been disaggregated.

The Committee thanked Mr Sutherland and the Roads Team for the extent of the work they had been able to undertake, it had been transformational and appreciated by the local communities.

The Committee further stated the benefits of a separate Area Committee where the road budgets were set fairly, it was a huge benefit to the roads in the Wester Ross, Strathpeffer and Lochalsh area.

The Committee:

- i. **NOTED** the progress on the 2021/22 Road Maintenance Programme for the Wester Ross, Strathpeffer and Lochalsh area;
- ii. **APPROVED** the proposed 2021/22 Roads Maintenance Programme schemes funded by the Additional Roads Ward allocation; and
- iii. **APPROVED** the additional capital schemes funded from Capital Budget.

8. **Place-based Investment Funds** **Maointean Tasgaidh Stèidhichte Air Àite**

There had been circulated Report No WRSL/015/21 dated 2 August 2021 by the Interim Chief Officer – Communities and Place.

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

- a. Investment in footpaths - £40,000
- b. Investment in community-led projects which offset the harms of Covid - £60,000
- c. Total = £100,000

9. Gairloch Associated School Group Overview Foir-shealladh Buidheann Sgoiltean Co-cheangailte Gheàrrloch

There had been circulated Report No WRSL/016/21 dated 21 July 2021 by the Interim Director of Care and Learning which provides details in relation to the schools within the Gairloch Associated School Group.

During discussion, the following responses had been given:-

- in relation to the new building at Gairloch Primary School – the English Medium nursery had now been completed and children are now attending the nursery;
- Highland Council follow Scottish Government guidelines regarding the assessment of school buildings, as we move forward we move on a rolling programme and there can be further building work done; the details on line are the current details that are on file, in line with the national standards;
- Shieldaig Primary School and nursery works began at the start of the summer term and the building works for both will provisionally be completed in November. The nursery children are currently decanted into the Church Hall, where Highland Council had undertaken works to ensure compliance with the Care Inspectorate guidelines;
- in relation to the Gairloch Primary, the Gaelic nursery, at times there may be no demand for the Gaelic nursery. The Gaelic medium nursery will re-open in January for one pupil.
- in relation to issues at Kyle Nursery, following further detail, Mr D Esson would liaise with the Estate Service;
- the numbers at the school were small but Highland Council would support the continued opening of the school. This would have to be reviewed carefully. There would require to be Statutory Consultation if there was to be a closure. There were no plans at present to close the school; and
- in relation to school pick up points at Inverasdale, these were dependent on the location of the children and this was determined by the transport provider. Transport would be provided locally to the new school.

The Committee **NOTED** the report.

10. Minutes Geàrr-chunntas

There was circulated and **NOTED** Minutes of Meeting of the Wester Ross, Strathpeffer and Lochalsh Committee held on 26 April 2021 which were approved by the Council on 13 May 2021.

The meeting closed at 12:30 pm.

The Highland Council

Minutes of Meeting of the **Corporate Resources Committee** held REMOTELY on Wednesday, 25 August 2021 at 10.30 am.

Present:

Mr A Baxter (substitute)
Mr B Boyd
Mr R Bremner
Mrs C Caddick
Mrs H Carmichael
Dr I Cockburn
Mrs M Davidson
Mr R Gale
Mr J Gray

Mr A Henderson (substitute)
Mr B Lobban
Mr D Louden
Mr G MacKenzie
Mr D Macpherson
Mr C Munro (substitute)
Mr D Rixson
Mr P Saggars

Non-Members also present:

Mr A Jarvie
Mrs A MacLean
Mrs M Paterson

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 M Mitchell, Service Finance Manager
Miss J MacLennan, Democratic Services Manager, Performance and Governance
Ms A Macrae, Committee Administrator, Performance and Governance
Ms M Zavarella, Committee Officer, Performance and Governance

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

The Chair expressed sadness over the passing of Bryan Longmore, a long-time resident of Inverness who had great interest in local environment and was a big part of the local community.

Congratulations were given to Dougie Melville who had successfully completed the NEBOSH General Certificate in Occupational Health and Safety and Suzanne Reid who was able to secure a permanent role as a Welfare Support Officer. The Chair highlighted that both Mr Melville and Ms Reid would be a great addition to their respective teams.

BUSINESS

1. Apologies for Absence Leisgeulan

Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of Mr J Bruce, Mr A Mackinnon, Mr S Mackie and Mr M Reiss.

2. Declarations of Interest Foillseachaidhean Com-pàirt

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

Item 3 & 4: Mr A Jarvie (non-financial)

Item 12: Mr P Saggars and Mr A Jarvie (non-financial)

Item 12 – Mr A Christie (Financial)

3. Corporate Revenue Monitoring Report to 30 June 2021 Aithisg Sgrùdaidh Teachd-a-steach Corporra

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/**21**/21 dated 11 August 2021 by the Executive Chief Officer Resources and Finance.

During discussion, the following issues were raised:-

- clarification was sought, and provided, on the High Life Highland figures in relation to the overall deficit position as it was thought that the 'worst case scenario' might have been used in the report and that this might not be the case in the coming months;
- regarding the staff cost savings which had been identified in the report, it was suggested that this might increase the pressure on remaining staff;
- it was noted that temporary workers were not included in the underspend on staff resources as these costs were allocated to a different budget line; and
- it was confirmed that further information would be provided in due

course in relation to a specific query relating to business grants.

Thereafter, the Committee **NOTED**:-

- i. the financial position of the General Fund and HRA Revenue budgets as at 30 June 2021 and the estimated year end forecast; and
- ii. the status of budgeted savings in the year.

4. Corporate Capital Monitoring Report to 30 June 2021 Aithisg Sgrùdadh Teachd-a-steach Corporra

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/**22**/21 dated 11 August 2021 by the Executive Chief Officer Resources and Finance.

During discussion, the following issues were raised:-

- in response to several specific questions, it was highlighted that the breakdown of spend by Service would be provided in more detail in reports to the respective Strategic Committees;
- re-assurance was sought, and provided, on year to date spend on the Roads budget and whether this spend would be met by the year end;
- it would be important to take a long-term strategic view on the issue of debt liabilities exceeding the lifetime of assets and in this regard concerns were expressed in relation to the burden on future Revenue Budgets;
- it was crucial that assets were properly maintained in order to ensure that they would last over time;
- in response to queries, it was confirmed that there was a piece of work underway to realign budgets and once this had been completed they would be examined and profiled accordingly.; and
- in response to a specific query on budget and spend in relation to the Roads budget, it was confirmed that the relevant Service would provide a direct response to Mr A Jarvie following the meeting.

Thereafter, the Committee otherwise **NOTED** the financial position of the General Fund and HRA Capital Programme as at 30 June 2021 and the estimated year end forecast.

5. Resources and Finance – Revenue and Performance Monitoring to 30 June 2021 Sgrùdadh Teachd-a-steach agus Coileanadh Seirbheis nan Goireasan agus an Ionmhais

There had been circulated Report No RES/**23**/21 dated 6 August 2021 by the Executive Chief Officer Resources and Finance.

- During discussion, the following issues were raised:-
- clarification was sought, and provided, on the collection of Non-Domestic Rates;
- the Milton Holiday Hub had been a great success and thanks were conveyed to High Life Highland in this regard;
- the commitment and effort towards benchmarking in the report was appreciated by Members; and
- it was positive that the Quarter 1 invoice payments performance was exceeding the target.

Thereafter, the Committee **NOTED:-**

- i. the Revenue Near Final Monitoring position for 2020/21 and the Quarter 1 period to 30 June 2021;
- ii. the Statutory Performance Indicators, Local Key Performance Measures and, where available, comparisons to Scottish averages;
- iii. the effectiveness of the standard and level of services provided by the Resources and Finance Directorate and alignment with the Council's commitment to Best Value and continuous improvement;
- iv. the actions for the Directorate on the Recovery Action Plan, the slippage and the remarks provided; and
- v. the update on the Procurement & Contract Management Transformation Project.

6. Performance and Governance – Revenue and Performance Monitoring Q1 – 1 April 2021 to 30 June 2021 and Near Final Revenue Out-turn for 2020-2021

Seirbheis a' Choileanaidh agus an Riaghlachais – Sgrùdadh Teachd-a-steach

There had been circulated Report No RES/**24**/21 dated 8 August 2021 by the Executive Chief Officer Performance and Governance.

- During discussion, it was suggested that when graphs and charts were being used to illustrate data, it was important that they were as intuitive as possible.

Thereafter, the Committee **NOTED:-**

- i. the financial out-turn position of the Performance and Governance Revenue budget for the period 1 April 2020 to 31 March 2021;
- ii. the revenue monitoring position for the period 31 March 2021 to 30 June 2021;
- iii. that the Directorate was on track to deliver all approved savings by the end of the financial year;
- iv. the Directorate's performance information; and
- v. the actions for the Directorate on the Recovery Action Plan.

7. Transformation Service – Revenue and Performance Monitoring to 30 June 2021

Seirbheis Cruth-atharrachaidh – Aithisg Sgrùdaidh Teachd-a-steach is

Coileanaidh

There had been circulated Report No RES/**25**/21 dated 10 August 2021 by the Executive Chief Officer Transformation.

The Committee **NOTED**:-

- i. the revenue outturn position for the 20/21 financial year;
- ii. the 21/22 revenue monitoring position for the period to 30 June 2021;
- iii. the progress update provided in relation to budget savings delivery; and
- iv. the performance information.

8. Corporate Resources Capital Monitoring – Out-turn for 2020/21 and Quarter 1 2021/22

Seirbheis Ghoireasan is Ionmhais, Seirbheis Coileanaidh is Riaghlachais agus Seirbheis Cruth-atharrachaidh – Sgrùdadh Calpa

There had been circulated Report No. RES/**26**/21 dated 12 August 2021 by the Executive Chief Officer Resources and Finance.

The Committee **NOTED**:-

- i. the capital outturn position for the 2020/21 financial year; and
- ii. the financial position as at 30 June 2021 and the estimated year end forecast.

9. Treasury Management Rianachd Ionmhais

a. Summary of Transactions Quarter ended 30 June 2021 Geàrr-chunntas Ghnothaichean

There had been circulated Report No RES/**27**/21 dated 11 August 2021 by the Executive Chief Officer Resources and Finance.

Thereafter, the Committee **NOTED** the Treasury Management Summary of Transactions report for the period from 1 April 2021 to 30 June 2021.

b. Annual Treasury Management Report 2020/21 Aithisg Stiùiridh Bhliadhnail an Ionmhais 2020/21

There had been circulated Report No RES/**28**/21 dated 10 August 2021 by the Executive Chief Officer Resources and Finance.

During discussion, the following main points were raised:-

- further information be provided on the trends in relation to the ratio of financing costs to net revenue stream for the general fund from 2012/13. It was confirmed that Members would be circulated with this information;
- the need to have a strategic discussion at full Council on the significant opportunities though capital borrowing, taking advantage of current lower interest rates, to meet the challenges the Council

faced in the future and its aspirations in terms of future capital investment;

- the potential to re-profile the debt over next five years would be reported to Council in September 2021 and it was confirmed that in advance of that meeting further information would be provided to Members on the difference between Capital Finance Requirements and external borrowing; and
- capital borrowing could not meet all of the Council's ambitions and need in Highland and there was therefore a requirement to explore alternatives to deliver capital investment schemes in partnership with Government and wider public and private partners through capital grants and funding.

Thereafter, the Committee **NOTED** the Annual Treasury Management report for 2020/21.

10. Transformation Programme: Digital Transformation Project Prògram Cruth-atharrachaidh: Pròiseact Cruth-atharrachadh Didseatach

There had been circulated Report No RES/**29**/21 dated 10 August 2021 by the Executive Chief Officer Transformation.

During discussion, the following main points were raised:-

- the resources and costs involved in digitising records should not be underestimated given this was potentially a major and complex task;
- in moving towards a hybrid way of working, there was a need to establish at a relatively early stage, the cost to the Council of working from home in terms of equipment, IT and health and safety requirements, and also to accommodate staff who were unable or preferred not to work from home;
- there was also a need (through the project) to enable staff to work remotely without having to return to hubs; and
- this was critical work and there was a need for urgency in moving the project forward on the basis that the investment required would achieve a more flexible and agile Council workforce in future.

Thereafter, the Committee **NOTED**:-

- i. the overall progress to date, including that the project status was being delivered on-time and within budget;
- ii. the 3 key projects and 7 key products as detailed in Section 5 of the report; and
- iii. the activity planned for the next reporting period.

11. Project Dòchas Progress Report Pròiseact Dòchais – Aithisg Ùrachaidh

There had been circulated Report No. RES/**30**/21 dated 9 August 2021 by the Executive Chief Officer Transformation.

The Committee, having thanked the relevant Officers for the work undertaken

to date, otherwise **NOTED** the terms of the report as circulated, including the project status and that reports would continue to be provided to the Committee to deliver governance.

12. Welfare Support Taic Sochaire

Declarations of Interest: Mr P Saggars and Mr A Jarvie declared non-financial interests as Directors of the Nairn and the Inverness, Badenoch & Strathspey Citizens Advice Bureaux 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.

Mr A Christie declared a financial interest as the Manager of the Inverness, Badenoch & Strathspey Citizens Advice Bureau but confirmed, having applied the test, that he would remain in the meeting and take part in the discussion.

There had been circulated Report No RES/**31**/21 dated 4 August 2021 by the Executive Chief Officer Resources and Finance.

During discussion, the following issues were raised:-

- there was widespread concern about the impact of the loss of the Universal Credit uplift in the coming months, specifically on the most vulnerable across the Highlands who could find themselves more reliant on services offered by Council Officers. In this respect, there was an urgent need to ensure that the relevant Services across the Council were adequately resourced in order to cope with this level of increased demand and a further report on this issue should therefore be submitted to the next meeting of this Committee;
- the ending of the Furlough Scheme was also likely to further impact on this situation and as such it was vital that the situation was closely monitored and the Committee updated accordingly;
- homelessness was also an issue which was likely to increase in the next few months and was therefore of equal concern;
- it would be important to take account of the geographical nature of these issues as it was the case that some parts of the Highlands were currently experiencing higher levels of poverty than others and this had to be addressed;
- the inclusion of case studies in the report had been very helpful and informative and was welcomed;
- the issue of surplus food was very worrying, both in terms of the current tactical approach being taken but also at a strategic level in terms of how this would be addressed in the long term;
- the level of joint working between Council teams and Citizens Advice Bureaux was unprecedented and highly commended;
- it was imperative that it was acknowledged that the Covid-19 pandemic was far from over and would continue to impact the Highlands in the coming months;
- an additional recommendation should be added to the report in order to convey the thanks of the Committee to the numerous unpaid volunteers

across the Highlands for their time and effort in helping to address issues within their local communities; and

- it was also suggested that a further report should be submitted to the next meeting to map out data (in line with the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation) to highlight the main issues associated with significant deprivation within the Highlands and not least to illustrate the differences with other parts of the country. In this respect, it was pointed out that the SIMD might not be as appropriate in terms of data when focusing on the more remote and rural parts of the Highlands and that other options might have to be considered in that regard.

Thereafter, the Committee **NOTED** the undernoted performance:-

- i. in excess of 20,600 residents were supported by the Council's Welfare Team and Citizens Advice during 2020/21 with welfare, debt and housing services, resulting in excess of 61,600 contacts (on average, 3 contacts per resident). Measuring the number of contacts provided workload and throughput provided important context when reflecting upon the overall effectiveness of welfare services being provided;
- ii. financial gains for clients exceeded £21.6 million. This represented a £1 for every £1 allocated to these welfare services;
- iii. a total of £7.4 million of debt (including £1.5m relating to mortgage/other loans) was presented by households seeking support to prioritise their debts and manage their debts, and wherever possible to lower the interest charges were due to pay;
- iv. support was provided for 3,106 clients (including social rented, private homeowners) seeking housing-related advice, thus highlighting the consistent accessible support on these issues; and
- v. FareShare provided in excess of 570 tonnes of quality food to the Highlands which was estimated to be equivalent to over 1.36m meals with an estimated value around £765,000.

It was also **AGREED** that:-

- a further report should be submitted to the next meeting to provide assurance that the relevant Services across the Council were adequately resourced to cope with the anticipated increase in demand which follow the loss of the Credit uplift and the ending of the Furlough Scheme (amongst other issues);
- the thanks of the Committee should be conveyed to the numerous volunteers across the Highlands for their time and effort in helping to address issues within their local communities; and
- a further report should be submitted to the next meeting.

13. Minutes of Meetings Geàrr-chunntasan Choinneamhan

The Committee **NOTED** the following Minutes of Meetings as circulated:-

- i. Central Safety Committee held on 3 June 2021;
- ii. Staff Partnership Forum held on 3 June 2021 and 12 August 2021.

14. 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 should 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.

15. 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/**32**/21 dated 27 July 2021 by the Executive Chief Officer Resources and Finance.

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

16. Staff Pay Negotiations
Duais Pàighidh Riaghaltais Ionadail

There had been circulated to Members only Report No. RES/**33**/21 dated 13 August 2021 by the Executive Chief Officer. Resources and Finance

Following discussion, the Committee **NOTED** the terms of the report as circulated.

The meeting ended at 1.35pm.

The Highland Council

Minutes of Meeting of the **City of Inverness Area Committee** held REMOTELY on **Thursday, 26 August 2021** at 10.00 am.

Present:

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

Officials in Attendance:

Mr A Gunn, Executive Chief Officer - Transformation
 Mr M MacLeod, Executive Chief Officer – Infrastructure, Economy & Environment
 Mr C Howell, Head of Infrastructure
 Mr C Baxter, Planner, Planning & Environment
 Mr S Manning, Principal Traffic Officer, Roads & Transport
 Mr J Taylor, Roads Operation Manager, Roads & Transport
 Ms A Clark, Head of Policy & Reform
 Mr D Haas, Inverness City Area Manager
 Miss J MacLennan, Democratic Services Manager
 Miss M Murray, Committee Administrator
 Ms F MacBain, Committee Administrator

Also in attendance:

Mr P Strachan, Chair, Inverness Business Improvement District
 Mr M Smith, Manager, Inverness Business Improvement District
 Mr M Goulding, Chief Executive Officer, Visit Inverness Loch Ness

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 congratulated Mr Colin Aitken on his election as a Councillor for Ward 13 (Inverness West) and welcomed him to the meeting.

Thereafter, both the Provost and the Leader of the Council paid tribute to former Councillor Jack Shiels who had recently passed away and conveyed their condolences to his family.

Business

1. Apologies for Absence Leisgeulan

Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of Mr I Brown and Mrs T Robertson.

2. Declarations of Interest Foillseachaidhean Com-pàirt

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

Item 4: Mr A Christie (financial and non-financial) and Mrs H Carmichael (non-financial)

Item 5: Mrs H Carmichael (non-financial)

Item 6: Mrs I Mackenzie (non-financial)

Item 8: Mr A Jarvie (non-financial)

Item 8.4: Mr K Gowans (financial)

Item 10: Mr A Jarvie (non-financial)

Item10e: Miss J Campbell (non-financial)

In terms of Standing Order 9, the Committee **AGREED** to consider Item 13v at this point in the meeting.

13v. Minutes of City and Area Recovery Group held on 17 May and 1 July 2021

The Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure, Environment and Economy provided an update on the work of the City Area Recovery Group and the plan to bring together workstreams. In this regard, it was noted that a Member Workshop was being arranged and would be held in September.

The Committee **NOTED** the position and **APPROVED** the Minutes of the City and Area Recovery Group held on 17 May and 1 July 2021 as circulated.

3. Appointment of the Depute Provost and Depute Leader of Inverness and Area

Mrs M Davidson, seconded by Mr A Christie, moved the appointment of Mrs C Caddick as Depute Provost and Depute Leader of Inverness and Area.

There being no other nominations, it was **AGREED** to appoint Mrs C Caddick to the position which she accepted.

4. Annual Report on Inverness Business Improvement District

Declarations of Interest –

Mr A Christie declared a financial interest in this item as a Non-Executive Director of NHS Highland and a non-financial interest as General Manager of Inverness, Badenoch and Strathspey Citizens Advice Bureau but, having applied the test outlined in Paragraphs 5.2 and 5.3 of the

Councillors' Code of Conduct, concluded that his interests did not preclude his involvement in the discussion.

Mrs H Carmichael declared a non-financial Interest as a Board Member of Inverness Business Improvement District 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 Joint Report No. CIA/22/21 dated 12 August 2021 by the Executive Chief Officer (Communities and Place) and the Inverness City Area Manager.

In that regard, Mr P Strachan, Chair of Inverness Business Improvement District (BID), undertook a presentation on the current work being undertaken by BID, including proposals for future projects.

During discussion, Members raised the following issues:-

- the Inverness BID Manager and Team should be commended on the support they had provided to businesses over what had been a very difficult period, including their work in profiling businesses online;
- the potential to expand the boundaries of the Inverness BID to involve and support more businesses was highlighted;
- opportunities to work closely with High Life Highland and other partners on events and festivals over the Autumn/Winter period in order to attract more visitors to the City Centre should be pursued;
- the current challenges with the food supply chain and the potential shortage of some goods had to be acknowledged and it would be important for the Council to be ready to help to mitigate any issues if/when they arose; and
- the proposals for Inverness Bid, Eastgate Centre and the Council to work in partnership on a range of potential projects to promote the City Centre, including over the festive period, were welcomed.

Thereafter, and having thanked Mr Strachan for his presentation, the Committee otherwise **NOTED**:-

- i. the work detailed in the report; and
- ii. the ongoing development of partnership working.

5. Visit Inverness Loch Ness Annual Report Roinn Leasachadh Gnothachais Turasachd Inbhir Nis Loch Nis

Declaration of Interest – Mrs H Carmichael declared a non-financial Interest in this item as a Board member of Inverness Business Improvement District 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 Joint Report No CIA/23/21 dated 12 August 2021 by the Executive Chief Officer Communities and Place and the Inverness City Area Manager.

In that regard, Mr M Goulding, Chief Executive Officer, Visit Inverness Loch Ness, undertook a presentation in respect of the Visit Inverness Loch Ness Annual Report.

During discussion, Members raised the following issues:-

- the Annual Report and update which had been provided for the Committee was encouraging and there was cause for optimism going forward;
- there was a need for more information on where the new Highland Tourism Group would be placed in relation to Visit Inverness Loch Ness. As such, there was a need to explore all opportunities to work collaboratively with other partners and high profile figures from the area to promote the Highlands to the widest possible audience;
- the level of funding which had been secured from VisitScotland's Sector and Destination Organisation Marketing Fund was welcomed in view of the range of activity this could deliver; and
- there was a need to acknowledge the additional support which would be required for businesses who had experienced loss of income due to the pandemic in order to ensure that they were sustainable going forward over the short and medium term.

Thereafter, and having thanked Mr Goulding for his presentation, the Committee otherwise **NOTED** the Annual Report of Visit Inverness Loch Ness as circulated.

6. Spaces for People – Update and Next Steps
Àiteachan do Dhaoine – Roghainnean airson Atharrachaidhean Maireannach

Declaration of Interest - Mrs I Mackenzie declared a non-financial interest in this item on the grounds that a family member had organised a petition 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. CIA/24/21 dated 9 August 2021 by the Executive Chief Officer (Infrastructure, Environment and Economy).

There had also been circulated Additional Spaces for People Data Sheets.

Following detailed presentations in relation to all 4 of the undernoted interventions, and during discussion, Members raised the following issues:-

Academy Street

- there had been considerable public interest in this issue, with mixed views having been put forward, but this was an opportunity to now improve for the future and as such there was a need to highlight the long term issues and in particular the significant advantages which could be gained;

- it would be a concern if funding was lost through not agreeing the recommendation to retain a Spaces for People intervention;
- it was imperative that the needs of people with disabilities (who often struggled to use Academy Street safely) were taken into account in making this decision and it was therefore suggested that the temporary measures currently in place should be replaced with more accessible and safer measures, It was also proposed that, before installing permanent measures, a full accessibility assessment should be undertaken;
- it was felt by some that the current intervention was not effective as it was not being used by members of the public and that it should now be removed and Academy Street returned to the pre-existing road layout;
- it was important to ensure that funding from the Scottish Government was spent wisely and whilst many people supported the principle of what had been undertaken, it had also been suggested that it could be done differently;
- it was imperative that a strategic approach, with 'joined up thinking', was adopted during debate and in taking account of the views of the general public;
- whilst the temporary measures were not perfect, it had to be acknowledged that returning to the 'status quo' would be extremely difficult for many and as such it was vital to identify and implement improvements, not least in order to address climate change issues for the future;
- the measures currently in place had been necessary in order to deal with issues in relation to Covid-19 and it had to be highlighted that this pandemic was most definitely not over and that cases were currently rising sharply in the Highland area;
- Academy Street had previously been identified as being one of the most polluted streets in Scotland and this was now an opportunity to take a holistic approach in working with partners whilst listening to the needs and concerns of local businesses and residents;
- there was concern about the current width of the road whilst the current measures were in place, not least in terms of access for emergency services and larger/wider vehicles;
- there had been a number of complaints that the current bollards were in fact dangerous for motorists, cyclist and pedestrians;
- it was also the case that in terms of considering options for the future, account should be taken of the fact that not everyone was able to cycle or walk;
- a full impact assessment across all sectors of society to seek views, perhaps led by a Stakeholder Group, would be welcomed;
- from research which had been undertaken, it appeared that many other Councils were currently dismantling their Spaces for People interventions, particularly around shopping areas;
- it had to be highlighted that public transport had to be of a sufficient standard if people were to be encouraged not to use cars and this was currently not the case in Inverness;
- a full public consultation on this issue was needed and should be progressed by the Council, with a further report to the City Committee thereafter; and

- discussion had been undertaken around various issues pertaining to Academy Street for over thirty years but the current situation now necessitated the need to show leadership and take a firm decision on how to proceed for the future.

Thereafter, Ms E Knox, seconded by Ms E Roddick, **MOVED** that recommendation 2(ii) within the report should be amended to read as follows – ‘Agree to retain a Spaces for People intervention in Academy Street’. Also, that the following sub paragraph should be added – ‘Replace the temporary Spaces for People measures currently in place with more accessible and safer measures, Before installing permanent measures, agree to undertake a full accessibility assessment’.

As an **AMENDMENT**, Mr A Jarvie, seconded by Mr C Smith, moved the removal of the measures and to revert to road.

On a vote being taken, the **MOTION** received 14 votes and the **AMENDMENT** received 6 votes and the **MOTION** was therefore **CARRIED**, the votes having been cast as follows:-

For the Motion:

E Knox, E Roddick, C Aitken, R Balfour, B Boyd, C Caddick, J Campbell, H Carmichael, M Davidson, D Fraser, K Gowans, J Gray, R MacWilliam and B McAllister.

For the Amendment:

A Jarvie, C Smith, A Christie, A Graham, I MacKenzie and D Macpherson.

Riverside Way

- it was suggested that, in addition to the recommendation within the report to retain the Spaces for People intervention and promote a permanent Traffic Regulation Order, there should be a report submitted to the next meeting of the Committee to provide more detail on the specifics of the proposals;
- whilst recognising the good intentions behind the proposals which dealt with a complex set of issues in this area, it was felt that the proposed scheme would cause too much detriment to existing users and a significant level of disruption to very busy part of Inverness. As such, it was a feeling amongst many local residents that the current measures should be removed and revert to a 2-way road;
- only about one third of the traffic on Riverside Way was motorised so on that basis it was not considered appropriate to remove the Active Travel infrastructure;
- this was one of the most attractive walkways in the City and there should therefore be a focus on all alternatives to the current proposals. In this regard, there was anecdotal evidence that changing from 2-way traffic to 1-way traffic often led to an increase in the speed of vehicles and for that reason the former would be the preferred option in this instance;
- any agreed proposal should take account of previous problems with traffic in this area and lead to future improvements;

- it was imperative that account was taken of public opinion and particularly local residents who lived and worked in the area as they would have to deal with any changes on a daily basis;
- this was a real opportunity to work in partnership with the local community and as such improved community consultation was the correct way to now proceed;
- it was especially important to find a solution for the specific area outside the Cathedral which then led along to the Bridge;
- it had to be acknowledged that making changes to the traffic flow on any of the sections within this proposal could have an impact on the whole of the area and also have unintended consequences through the diversion of traffic to other roads/streets in the vicinity.

Thereafter, the Provost, seconded by Mr J Gray, **MOVED** to retain the Spaces for People intervention and promote a permanent Traffic Regulation Order and to bring a report to the next meeting with more detail on the proposals.

As an **AMENDMENT**, Mr A Graham, seconded by Mr B Boyd, moved the removal of the measures and to revert to a 2-way road.

On a vote being taken, the **MOTION** received 10 votes and the **AMENDMENT** received 9 votes, with 1 abstention, and the **MOTION** was therefore **CARRIED**, the votes having been cast as follows:-

For the Motion:

H Carmichael, J Gray, C Aitken, C Caddick, M Davidson, D Fraser, K Gowans, D Macpherson, B McAllister and E Roddick.

For the Amendment:

A Graham, B Boyd, R Balfour, J Campbell, A Christie, A Jarvie, I MacKenzie, R MacWilliam and C Smith.

Abstention: E Knox

Castle 1-way system

- it was felt that removing the current measures and reverting to a 2-way road would address the current level of complaints from members of the public and the dangerous traffic issues currently being experienced;
- the current arrangements had proved to be very controversial with the public and their retention appeared to offer the least benefit in terms of the options which had been presented within the report;
- it had been pointed out that the pollution from idling vehicles in the area outweighed the modest decline in the level of traffic;
- there had been many complaints received and it had been suggested that this scheme had been fundamentally flawed from the outset;
- whilst acknowledging the level of complaints, it was also important to recognise that the situation with traffic in Castle Street had not been perfect previously and there was now an opportunity to make improvements. As such, it was suggested that the current measure should be retained until a consultation led scheme had been delivered;

- it was imperative that discussion was undertaken with local businesses and residents on the way forward for this particular location;
- it had to be accepted that the current arrangements were confusing and therefore not safe;
- a very high level of representations on the current situation in Castle Street had now been received and it was therefore clear that this was causing considerable chaos and stress for many which was not of any benefit;
- it should be highlighted that the diversion of traffic was having a detrimental effect on the surrounding streets and causing serious problems in that regard;
- the development of alternatives to the current measures, in consultation with users and the local community, should be pursued;
- the severe effect on local businesses in Castle Street and the surrounding areas had to be recognised;
- a further report on the City Vision should be submitted to a future meeting of the Committee and in this regard it was noted that there were plans for a Members Workshop in this respect in the following month;
- there were serious concerns about the delays which had been witnessed for emergency vehicles on Castle Street;
- whilst accepting the concerns which had been raised, it had to be acknowledged that removing the present scheme would not solve all of the historic and current issues pertaining to Castle Street. As such, it was the responsibility of all Elected Members to review what was happening and put forward proposals for redesign/improvements for the future;
- it was suggested that Officers should be asked to review the current traffic management arrangements which circumvented the Castle and bring a report back to the Committee at a later date whilst taking account of the potential impact of the Castle becoming a major visitor attraction; and
- there was serious concern amongst Members in relation to late information from Officers at the meeting in terms of the potential timescale for the removal of the current measures/restoration of 2-way road (if that was the Committee decision after a vote) and also in regard to new information being provided on the need for replacement of traffic signals/reconstruction of the View Place junction and associated timescales for this work.

Thereafter, Mr A Jarvie, seconded by Mrs I MacKenzie, **MOVED** removal of the measures and restore to 2-way road.

As an **AMENDMENT**, Ms E Knox, seconded by the Provost, moved removal of the measures and restore to 2-way road whilst alternatives were developed in pursuance of the Spaces for People project in consultation with users and the local community. Also, to ask Officers to review the traffic management arrangements that circumvented the Castle with a report back to the City Committee at a later date, taking account of the potential impact of the Castle becoming a major visitor attraction.

On a vote being taken, the **MOTION** received 12 votes and the **AMENDMENT** received 8 votes and the **MOTION** was therefore **CARRIED**, the votes having been cast as follows:-

For the Motion:

A Jarvie, I MacKenzie, R Balfour, J Campbell, G Campbell-Sinclair, A Christie, K Gowans, A Graham, D Macpherson, R MacWilliam, B McAllister and C Smith.

For the Amendment:

E Knox, H Carmichael, C Aitken, B Boyd, C Caddick, D Fraser, J Gray and E Roddick.

Millburn Road

- it was suggested that there was a need for removal of the current interventions and also, in recognising the need to shift the balance of travel, the establishment of a balanced stakeholder group of business representatives and owners, walking, cycling, disabled and motorist groups, local residents, Community Councillors and Elected Members. This would help in the production of an active travel masterplan with route specifics which would enable future measures to be rolled out in an informed manner, taking into account the needs of all;
- there was a need for the installation of a pedestrian crossing, not least to protect the numbers of school pupils attempting to cross a very busy road and to slow down the traffic. In this regard, it was acknowledged that the provision of such crossings could be very expensive but it was suggested that this was outweighed by the fact that this was a serious health & safety issue and that it could perhaps be provided through Safer Routes to Schools work;
- it would be helpful if Sustrans could provide an update for the Committee on proposals previously considered for this location;
- it was felt that the cycle lanes were very wide and it was queried as to whether the proportions were able to be amended in any way;
- in view of its status as a gateway to the City, there was a need to improve the surface of Millburn Road; and
- it would be important for all opportunities to be taken to improve/redesign/develop Millburn Road for current and future users.

Thereafter, Mr A Jarvie, seconded by Mrs I MacKenzie, **MOVED** the removal of all Millburn interventions and a return to the previous state. Also, to bring forward proposals to a future meeting to show the potential of developing an active travel route, without removing carriageway lanes, and the options for a crossing at the eastern end of Millburn Road.

As an **AMENDMENT**, Mr K Gowans, seconded by Ms E Knox, moved to alter the Spaces for People intervention to retain the lane from the Morrison's junction to the Eastgate underpass and revert the rest to road – with a pedestrian crossing north of Millburn Academy on Millburn Road to connect the bus stops on either side of the road to be factored in.

On a vote being taken, the **MOTION** received 8 votes and the **AMENDMENT** received 11 votes and the **AMENDMENT** was therefore **CARRIED**, the votes having been cast as follows:-

For the Motion:

A Jarvie, I MacKenzie, C Caddick, J Campbell, A Christie, A Graham, D Macpherson and C Smith.

For the Amendment:

K Gowans, E Knox, C Aitken, B Boyd, G Campbell-Sinclair, H Carmichael, M Davidson, D Fraser, J Gray, R MacWilliam and B McAllister.

The Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the progress in implementing the project and the legacy the interventions had provided for transforming the City Centre;
- ii. **AGREED** to retain a Spaces for People intervention in Academy Street and replace the temporary Spaces for People measures currently in place with more accessible and safer measures. Before installing permanent measures, it was also agreed to undertake a full accessibility assessment;
- iii. **AGREED** to retain the Spaces for People intervention for Riverside Way and promote a permanent Traffic Regulation Order and to bring a report to the next meeting with more detail on the proposals;
- iv. **AGREED** to remove all measures in relation to the Castle 1-way system and restore to 2--way road; and
- v. **AGREED** to alter the Spaces for People intervention for Millburn Road to retain the lane from the Morrison's junction to the Eastgate underpass and revert the rest to road. It was also agreed that a pedestrian crossing north of Millburn Academy on Millburn Road to connect the bus stops on either side of the road should be factored in.

7. Winter Maintenance Plan 2021/22
Prògram Obair-glèidhidh Geamhraidh airson 2021/22

There had been circulated Report No. CIA/25/21 dated 16 August 2021 by the Executive Chief Office Infrastructure, Environment and Economy.

The Committee **AGREED** the Winter Maintenance Plan for the Inverness Area in reference to the Briefing Note at Appendix A of the report.

8. Inverness Wards Place Based Investment Funds – Proposed Funding Allocations

Declarations of Interest –

Mr K Gowans declared a financial interest in this item as an employee of Inverness College, UHI and, despite having no direct financial benefit, did not participate in the item.

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, concluded that his interest did not preclude his involvement in the discussion.

There had been circulated Report No CIA/26/21 dated 26 July 2021 by the Executive Chief Officer, Communities and Place.

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

- i. Ward 12
 - a. Investment in Play Parks - £20,000
 - b. Investment in paths/trails - £30,000
 - c. Investment in cycle networks - £15,000
 - d. Community led proposals - £35,000
 - e. Total = £100,000
- ii. Ward 13
 - a. Investment in Play Parks - £50,000
 - b. Investment in residential path improvement - £20,000
 - c. Investment in secondary school growing projects - £20,000
 - d. Investment in primary school well-being projects - £10,000
 - e. Total = £100,000
- iii. Ward 15
 - a. Investment in Befriending Scheme (jointly with Ward 16) - £30,000
 - b. Castle Heather Park improvements - £22,000
 - c. MacDonald Park improvements - £20,000
 - d. Culduthel Woods improvements - £5,000
 - e. Promotion of environmental awareness in 4 Primary Schools - £8,000
 - f. Holm Path improvements - £10,000
 - g. Holm Grown grant support - £5,000
 - h. Total = £100,000
- iv. Ward 16
 - a. Investment in Play Parks - £55,000
 - b. Investment in Befriending Scheme (jointly with Ward 15) - £15,000
 - c. Fitness & Well-being initiative - £30,000
 - d. Total = £100,000
- v. Ward 17
 - a. Housing Need Assessment – Amount to be confirmed
 - b. Community Growing projects – Amount to be confirmed

- c. Reports will be brought back to future CIAC
- vi. Ward 19
 - a. Inshes Community Park - £50,000
 - b. Inverness College UHI ABC Garden Project - £50,000
 - c. Total = £100,000

and **NOTED** the identified priority areas for the following two Wards and that reports detailing funding allocation proposals would be brought to a future meeting of the Committee:

- vii. Ward 14
 - a. Mental health and wellbeing of communities with a specific focus on developing community spaces including play areas.
- viii. Ward 17
 - a. Housing needs assessment
 - b. Community growing projects

9. Inverness Common Good Fund: Discretionary Scheme for Winter Payments 2021/22

There had been circulated Joint Report No. CIA/27/21 dated 1 July 2021 by the Interim Head of Revenues & Business Support and the Inverness City Area Manager.

During discussion, several Members commended the scheme and praised the work of the welfare team.

Thereafter, the Committee **AGREED** the following recommendations for the 2021/22 Inverness Winter Payments Discretionary Scheme:-

- i. to accept applications from 1 December 2021 to 28 February 2022 inclusive;
- ii. to increase the single tier payment for those applicants that satisfied the eligibility criteria for the Scheme for 2021/22 by 12-month (May 2021) Consumer Price Index (2.1%) to £88;
- iii. to provide a budget of £200,000 as agreed by Members at the August 2020 Committee meeting to accommodate the continuing demand arising from Covid-19, ongoing welfare reforms and fluctuations in energy costs;
- iv. that the criteria utilised for the 2020/21 scheme as set out in paragraphs 8.2 to 8.6 of the report should be used as the basis for the 2021/22 scheme;
- v. that the discretionary scheme be made available to residents in the City of Inverness and the landward areas of the seven City Wards; and
- vi. promoted payment by BACS for this discretionary scheme as this was the most secure method of payment for recipients of the payment and the Council alike.

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

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, concluded that his interest did not preclude his involvement in the discussion.

**a) Victorian Market, Inverness – Action Plan – Update
Cunntas Bliadhnaidh na Margaidh Bhictòrianaich**

There had been circulated Joint Report No. CIA/28/21 dated 28 July 2021 by the Executive Chief Officer (Infrastructure, Environment and Economy) and the Executive Chief Officer (Communities and Place).

The Committee **NOTED**:-

- i. the progress in respect of the work agreed through the Action Plan since the reports presented to Committee on 29 August and 21 November 2019 and 27 August 2020.
- ii. the progress of the works for the transformation of the Market Hall and Fish Hall of the Victorian Market.
- iii. that all practicable steps continued to be taken to maximise third party funding opportunities;
- iv. that further reports would be made to the City of Inverness Area Committee on progress; and
- v. that the Victorian Market Stakeholder Group had delivered on the key aims of establishing an Action Plan for the Victorian Market and developing a significant infrastructure project.

**b) Inverness Common Good Fund Sub-Committee Annual Report 2019/20
Aithisg Bhliadhnaidh Fo-Chomataidh Maoin Math Coitcheann Inbhir Nis**

There had been circulated Report No. CIA/29/21 dated 9 July 2021 by the Executive Chief Officer Communities and Place.

The Committee **NOTED** the work of the Inverness Common Good Fund Sub-Committee as described within the report.

**c) Financial Monitoring
Sgrùdadh Ionmhasail**

There had been circulated Joint Report No. CIA/30/21 dated 6 August 2021 by the Executive Chief Officer Resources and Finance and the Inverness City Area Manager.

The Committee **NOTED** the financial monitoring report to 30 June 2021 and that overall expenditure was within agreed budgets.

d) Capital Projects
Pròiseactan Calpa

There had been circulated Joint Report No. CIA/31/21 dated 6 August 2021 by the Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure, Economy & Environment and the Executive Chief Officer Communities and Place.

The Committee **NOTED** the current status of capital projects.

e) Grants Applications over £10,000
Iarrtasan Tabhartais thar £10,000

Declaration of Interest - Miss J Campbell declared a non-financial interest in this item as a Board Member of Eden Court Highlands 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. CIA/32/21 dated 10 August 2021 by the Executive Chief Officer Resources and Finance. A copy of supporting documentation had also been circulated as Booklet A.

The Committee determined the current grant applications as follows:-

- 1) Visit Inverness Loch Ness Ltd (VILN) – **APPROVED** a grant of £20,000;
- 2) Change Your World Events Ltd – **APPROVED** a grant of £3,000; and
- 3) Fraser Park Bowling Club – **APPROVED** a grant of £12,799.

11. Recess Powers
Cumhachdan Fosaidh

It was **NOTED** that the Recess Powers granted by the Council at its meeting on 24 June 2021 had not been exercised in relation to the business of this Committee.

12. Membership of Committees, etc
Ballarachd Chomataidhean, msaa

The Committee **AGREED** to appoint:-

- i. Mrs G Campbell-Sinclair and Mr D Macpherson to the Inverness Common Good Fund Sub-Committee;
- ii. Mrs C Caddick to the Events and Festivals Working Group;
- iii. Mr A Jarvie to the Inverness City Arts Working Group;
- iv. Mr C Aitken to the City and Area Recovery Group; and
- v. Mr C Aitken to Inverness Area Sports Council.

13. Minutes Geàrr-chunntas

The Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the Minutes of the City of Inverness Area Committee held on 27 May 2021;
- ii. **APPROVED** the Minutes of the Inverness Common Good Fund Sub-Committee held on 9 August 2021;
- iii. **NOTED** the Minutes of the Victorian Market Stakeholder Management Group held on 29 June 2021; and
- iv. **APPROVED** the Minutes of the Inverness Events and Festivals Working Group held on 28 June 2021.

14. 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 item on the grounds that it involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraphs 6 and 9 of Part 1 of Schedule 7A of the Act.

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

There had been circulated to Members only Joint Report No CIA/33/21 dated 30 July 2021 by the Head of Development and Regeneration and the Property Manager (Estates).

The Committee **NOTED** the recommendations as detailed in the report.

The meeting ended at 4.30pm.