

The Highland Council

Minutes of Meeting of the Isle of Skye and Raasay Committee (Comataidh an Eilein Sgitheanaich agus Ratharsair) held remotely on Monday, 30 August 2021 at 10.30 am.

Present:

Mr John Finlayson
Mr John Gordon

Mr Calum MacLeod
Mr Calum Munro

Officials in attendance:

Mr Malcolm MacLeod, Executive Chief Officer, Infrastructure, Environment & Economy
Mr Willie MacKinnon, Ward Manager, Communities and Place
Mr Scott Dalgarno, Development Plans Manager, Infrastructure, Environment & Economy Service
Mr Douglas Chisholm, Development Plans Manager, Infrastructure, Environment & Economy Service
Ms Donna MacAllister, Engagement Coordinator, Infrastructure, Environment & Economy Services
Mr Peter Finlayson, Quality Improvement Manager, Education and Learning Service
Mr Gordon Macdonald, Roads Operations Manager, Infrastructure, Environment & Economy Service
Mr E McIntosh, Localism & Engagement Co-ordinator, Communities and Place
Mr Colin Howell, Head of Infrastructure, Infrastructure, Environment & Economy Service
Mr Colin Simpson, Principal Officer – Europe, Tourism & Film, Transformation & Economy Service
Mr Shane Manning, Principal Traffic Officer, Communities and Place
Ms Wendy Anderson, Programme Administrator/Development Officer, Infrastructure, Environment & Economy
Miss Julie MacLennan, Democratic Services Manager, Performance & Governance Service
Ms Morgan Zavarella, Committee Officer, Performance & Governance

Also in Attendance:

Inspector Ross McCartney, Police Scotland (Item 4)
Mr Stuart MacPherson, Highlands & Islands Enterprise (Item 7)

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

**1. Apologies for Absence
Leisgeulan**

There were no apologies for absence.

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

Item 5 – Mr C Munro (Non- Financial)
Item 7 – Mr C Munro (Non-Financial and Financial)

3. Minutes Geàrr-chunntas

There had been circulated for information Minutes of Meeting of the Isle of Skye and Raasay Committee (Comataidh an Eilein Sgitheanaich agus Ratharsair) held on 31 May, 2021 (which had been approved at the Highland Council meeting held on 24 June, 2021).

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

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

There had been circulated Report No SR/10/21 by the Area Inspector for Police which provided an update on progress with reference to the objectives outlined in the Highland Policing Plan 2020-2023.

Following a summary of the report by the Area Inspector, the following main points were raised:-

- in response to concerns raised regarding parking issues, and specifically queries as to when such issues became criminal offences and what powers were available to the Police, it was noted that parked vehicles causing obstructions and/or danger would be classed as a criminal offence and dealt with by the Police. In addition, the parking situation was monitored as part of Weekly Meetings held by the Police when any emerging trends would be identified;
- in response to queries as to whether there had been any reports of anti-social behaviour towards retail workers in the area, it was confirmed that there had been no such reports but that any incidences of such behaviour would not be tolerated;
- it was noted that a breakdown of 'hotspots' for speeding in the area would be provided in a report to a future meeting;
- in response to concerns expressed regarding bullying on social media, it was confirmed that the Police did everything possible to identify those responsible and also provided advice and support to victims. In addition, information on Online Support Forums was also provided; and
- also in relation to speeding, there was serious concern about tourists driving at excessive speeds throughout the area and it was hoped that the increased enforcement of speed limits which had been noticed during the pandemic could be continued. It was also suggested that a future report should be submitted to the Committee to allow consideration of issues which had arisen during the tourist season, including feedback from the Police, in order to ensure that lessons were learned for coming years.

Having scrutinised the report, and having thanked Inspector McCartney for his presentation, the Committee otherwise **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. **Newton Rooms** **Seòmraichean a' Bhaile Ùir**

Declaration of Interest –

Mr C Munro declared a non-financial interest in this item as a Director of Kilmuir Community Trust which was now in ownership of Kilmuir Hall and would be hosting a Newton Room for local school children but, having applied the test outlined in Paragraphs 5.2 and 5.3 of the Councillors' Code of Conduct, concluded that his interest did not preclude his involvement in the discussion.

A Verbal Update was provided at the meeting by the Quality Improvement Manager on the progress to date of the Pop-Up Newton Rooms. In this regard, it was noted that Highlands and Islands Enterprise had appointed international specialist firm, FIRST Scandinavia, the company which had developed and owned the Newton Concept, to create one of Scotland's first Newton Rooms at Caol Youth Centre in Fort William.

Newton Rooms offered practical education in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) for schools and the plan across Highland was to develop a network of Pop-Up Newton Rooms to promote STEM subjects across primary and secondary schools.

During discussion, the following main points were raised:-

- equality of STEM provision across the region, awareness of STEM careers and STEM pathways and attracting STEM experts to the area would be key in the future;
- STEM careers were so important for young people and it was imperative that the same opportunities were available as elsewhere across the Highlands in order to retain and encourage young people to live and work in the area for the long term;
- there was a need for Portree High School to be considered as a possible future location;
- it was noted that High Life Highland were also creating their own STEM team and that this would be extremely important for parents as well as young people which was very much welcomed; and
- this was a learning process for all and it was especially pleasing to see 'green' modules included which would help with meeting the targets being set in relation to climate change issues in future.

The Committee otherwise **NOTED** the update on Newton Rooms as detailed.

6. **Area Roads Capital Monitoring 2021/2022 Progress Report** **Aithisg Adhartais Obair-ghleidhidh Rathaidean**

There had been circulated Report No. SR/11/21 by the Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure, Environment & Economy which detailed the progress for the 2021/22 Capital Roads Maintenance Programme for Isle of Skye and Raasay and sought formal approval for additional and amended schemes which had been added after the Area Committee meeting on 29 March 2021.

During discussion, the following main points were raised:-

- the funding which had been received had been widely welcomed and had made a huge difference to the area, In this regard, the thanks of the Committee were conveyed to the Roads & Transport team for the projects which were in progress and those projects which had been completed;
- there was concern about the manpower available in terms of the reduction in staffing over recent years and also in noting that the current shortage of HGV drivers nationally was also having an effect at a local level in the area;
- in regard to surface dressing, it was noted that in areas where there had been slippage, preparatory work would be undertaken with an update provided for Ward Business Meetings on specific locations; and
- the Roads & Transport Team had to be commended in particular for the flexibility which had been shown in completing projects and undertaking repairs as part of the programme.

Thereafter, the Committee: -

NOTED the progress of the 2021/22 Area Roads Maintenance Capital Programme for the Skye & Lochalsh Area;

APPROVED the amendments and additions to the 2021/22 Surface Dressing and Surfacing Programmes; and

NOTED the progress of the Strategic Schemes allocated to Skye & Raasay Area.

7. **Skye and Raasay Future** **Àm ri Teachd an Eilein Sgitheanaich is Ratharsair**

Declarations of Interest – Mr C Munro declared a non-financial interest in this item as a Director of Kilmuir Community Trust which had a project on the list at Appendix 1 to the report and also a financial interest on the basis that his wife was a teacher 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.

There had been circulated Report No. SR/12/21 by the Executive Chief Officer (Infrastructure, Environment & Economy) which sought adoption of a new place-based investment framework for the area known as Skye and Raasay Future.

The report also sought approval for the next steps in securing its adoption through other partners and groups and confirming the ongoing collaborative approach to implementation and monitoring.

There had also been circulated an additional Appendix which included minor amendments in relation to the original appendix.

During discussion, the following main points were raised:-

- thanks were conveyed to the Officers concerned for the work which had been undertaken and the extensive documents which had been circulated;
- there was also a need to record the outstanding community input to this Council and Highlands & Islands led initiative which had taken place during a pandemic.

Above all, this demonstrated the strength of joint working/collaboration in the empowerment of local communities;

- with reference to the proposed outcomes which had been detailed in the report, it was stressed that the next stage of working together to make the best use of resources would be of vital importance;
- it was hoped that this achievement through partnership working and process would be recognised on a Council wide basis as a really exciting and positive example for all;
- it was anticipated that the work which had been undertaken to date would help with alignment in relation to future funding opportunities;
- the references to Gaelic throughout the documents was noted and welcomed;
- the extremely successful holistic approach with communities would help to provide a bright and sustainable future for the area; and
- this should be viewed as a 'living document' and used as an example of 'best practice' for future partnership working across the Council.

Thereafter, the Committee:-

AGREED the draft "Skye & Raasay Future" (SARF) at Appendix 1 to the report;

NOTED the comments made during the engagement events and online consultations as set out in the Architecture & Design Scotland report enclosed at Appendix 2;

NOTED that the SARF would be prepared in an online 'Storymap' format;

AGREED the next steps for securing adoption of SARF by partner groups and organisations, and the ongoing collaborative approach to governance as set out in Section 6;

NOTED that the adoption process proposed would include consideration of SARF by the Council's Economy and Infrastructure Committee; and

NOTED that the implementation of SARF would rely on collective responsibility across all public sector partners and communities across Skye & Raasay. Internally, this would set the framework for Council services and budgets to be aligned with the outcomes and priorities where appropriate.

8. **Community Asset Transfer Request: Raasay Ferry Terminal CAT Port-Aiseig Ratharsair**

There had been circulated Report No. SR/13/21 by the Executive Chief Officer (Communities and Place) which asked Members to consider and agree a recommendation to vary a Community Asset Transfer request from Raasay Development Trust relating to ownership of Raasay Ferry Terminal.

During discussion, it was confirmed that this was an exciting development which empowered the local community and as such the Officers concerned were thanked for the well constructed and comprehensive report which had been presented.

Thereafter, the Committee **AGREED** to vary the Community Asset Transfer request for approval as follows - a 99-year lease of Raasay Ferry Terminal to Raasay Development Trust for £1 p/a if asked and on the terms as detailed in the recommendation in the report.

**9. Portree Link Road
Rathad Ceangail Phort Rìgh**

There had been circulated Report No. SR/14/21 by the Executive Chief Officer (Infrastructure, Environment & Economy) relating to the proposed Portree Link Road.

During discussion, it was confirmed that this was exciting news which would benefit the whole of Skye, with ambitious and realistic timescales. Also, the developer contributions were very much appreciated and welcomed in that they would help with the transformation of the area, not least through the differences made with the flow of traffic. There was also a need to recognise that this would be a vital component in the future Development Plan.

Thereafter, the Committee:-

NOTED the funding position in respect of the Portree Link Road;
AGREED to the submission of a planning application for the scheme; and
NOTED the proposed delivery programme.

**10. Visitor Management Plan
Plana Stiùiridh Luchd-tadhail**

There had been circulated Report No. SR/15/21 by the Executive Chief Officer (Infrastructure, Environment & Economy) which provided an update on the progress in delivering the activities outlined in the Highland Council Visitor Management Plan.

During discussion, the following main points were raised:-

- the thanks of the Committee were conveyed to the Officers involved with the Visitor Management Plan which had made a huge difference to the area, with the employment of Seasonal Access Rangers in particular being commended as being vital for the future;
- the levels of visitor management and support had been excellent and much appreciated by both tourists and residents in the area;
- the response at a local level had to be acknowledged and it would be imperative to ensure that this was continued;
- in terms of issues to be taken forward, this included an extension of the Comfort Scheme if possible and the installation of additional Passing Place signs as a priority;
- the area was classed as a major tourist destination and as such the Visitor Management Plan was greatly needed and would help to improve the visitor experience; and
- the Council wide response on this issue had been greatly appreciated and very much welcomed. In this respect, it was confirmed that the production of a specific Skye & Raasay report at the end of very season should be implemented and this should include a section on lessons learned for the future.

Thereafter, the Committee otherwise **NOTED** the information provided by each Service on progress to date on delivering the Visitor Management Plan actions as detailed in Appendix 1 to the report.

**11. Highland Coastal Communities Fund – Assessment of Application
(Glendale Community Hall)
Maoin Coimhearsnachd Cladaich Ghleann Dail**

There had been circulated Report No. SR/16/21 by the Executive Chief Officer (Infrastructure, Environment & Economy) which invited the Committee to consider an application for Highland Coastal Communities funding for Glendale Community Hall.

Following consideration, and in thanking the Glendale community for the submission of such an excellent project, the Committee **AGREED** to award a grant of £25,014.56 for Glendale Community Hall as detailed in the report.

**12. Update on Parking Revenue
Teachd-a-steach bho Pharcadh**

There had been circulated Report No.SR/17/21 by the Executive Chief Officer (Infrastructure, Environment & Economy) which provided an update on the income generated from car park management and indicated the ongoing work to determine the final cost out-turns and link with the overall Council policy on car parking income.

During discussion, and in noting that a further report on this issue would be submitted to the Economy & Infrastructure Committee in December, it was stressed that it was important that the arrangements in respect of the future allocation of funding were clearly set out and clarified for Members and also for the community as there had been some confusion in this respect.

Thereafter, the Committee otherwise **NOTED** the terms of the report as circulated.

**13. Place Based Investment Funds – Proposed Funding Allocations
Maointean Tasgaidh Stèidhichte air Àite – Riarachaidhean Maoin eachaidh gam Moladh**

There had been circulated Report No. SR/18/21 by the Executive Chief Officer (Communities and Place) which invited the Committee to agree the budget allocation for Place Based Investment Funding outlined in the report and to note the markers for future spend.

During discussion, thanks were conveyed to Officers for the work undertaken on what were very positive projects which were warmly welcomed by Members and local communities.

It was also suggested that, over the next two month period, work should commence on planning for proposed action in the following year which would be a good use of time.

Thereafter, the Committee **AGREED** the proposed allocation of Place Based Investment Funds as follows - Investment in additional Seasonal Staff Hours for Amenity Services - £14,000

It was also **NOTED** that the projects related to the following themes were under development and would be brought for consideration to a future meeting - Commercial Business Opportunities, Skye & Raasay Future, Roads, Social Isolation and Loneliness.

The meeting ended at 12.55pm.

The Highland Council

Minutes of Meeting of the **Communities and Place Committee** held remotely on Tuesday 31 August 2021 at 11.30 am.

Present:

Mr G Adam	Mr A MacInnes
Mr R Balfour	Mr D Macpherson
Mr J Bruce	Mr D MacLeod
Mr C Fraser	Mr H Morrison
Mr R Gale	Mrs M Paterson
Mr J Gordon	Mrs T Robertson
Mr A Henderson	

Non-Members also present:

Mrs J Barclay	Mr C MacLeod
Mr R Bremner	Mr J McGillivray
Ms I Campbell	Mr C Munro
Mr J Finlayson	Mr P Saggars
Mr D Louden	Mr B Thompson
Mr W MacKay	Ms J Tilt

In attendance:

Ms D Manson, Chief Executive
 Ms C McDiarmid, Executive Chief Officer Communities and Place
 Ms A Clark, Head of Service (Community Support and Engagement), Communities and Place
 Ms C Campbell, Head of Service (Community Operations and Logistics), Communities and Place
 Mr A McKinnie, Senior Waste Manager, Communities and Place
 Mr A Yates, Environmental Health Manager, Communities and Place
 Ms D Ferguson, Senior Ward Manager, Communities and Place
 Ms A Morrison, Customer Resolution and Improvement Team Leader, Communities and Place
 Ms L Kinnear, Promoting Positive Relationships Coordinator, Education and Learning
 Mr M Mitchell, Service Finance Manager, Resources and Finance
 Miss J MacLennan, Democratic Services Manager, Performance and Governance
 Miss J MacLennan, Principal Administrator, Performance and Governance
 Miss M Murray, Committee Administrator, Performance and Governance
 Miss M Zavarella, Committee Officer, Performance and Governance

Also in attendance:

Chief Superintendent C Trickett, 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.

Mr A Henderson in the Chair

Business

1. Apologies for Absence Leisgeulan

Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of Mr B Allan, Ms K Currie, Mr R MacWilliam, Mr I Ramon and Mr A Rhind.

2. Declarations of Interest Foillseachaidhean Com-pàirt

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

Item 10 – Mr D Macpherson (non-financial)

Item 16 – Mr G Adam and Mr J Gordon (both financial)

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

The Chair highlighted the following items of good news:-

- a recent internal audit reviewing fleet operations had concluded that Substantial Assurance was given. The audit had looked at policies and procedures to ensure that the Council complied with the requirements of its Goods Vehicles Operator Licence, and in particular assessed policies covering the Council's vehicle operator centres, vehicle maintenance and driver behaviour. Members were reminded that failure to adhere to the operator licence requirements could result in fines or in the licence being withdrawn by the Traffic Commissioner. The audit had also examined the contract management arrangements for the hire of cars and light commercial vehicles up to 3.5t from a particular supplier to assess whether appropriate action was taken to manage poor performance by the contractor. Two medium priority actions and one low priority action had been identified and these had been responded to in the action plan. The full report would be presented to the Audit and Scrutiny Committee on 23 September 2021;
- The Council was honoured to have received the Employer Recognition Scheme Gold Award for outstanding support to the Armed Forces community. Representing the highest badge of honour, Employer Recognition Scheme Gold Awards were awarded to organisations that employed and supported those who served, veterans and their families. 493 organisations in the UK had been awarded the coveted Gold status. To win an award, organisations had to provide 10 extra paid days leave for reservists and have supportive HR policies in place for veterans, reservists and Cadet Force adult volunteers, as well as spouses and partners of those serving in the Armed Forces. Organisations also had to advocate the benefits of supporting those within the Armed Forces community by encouraging others to sign the Armed Forces Covenant and engage in the Employer Recognition Scheme. This was excellent news for the Council and reflected the hard work that had been done in recent years, not only internally but with external partners through the Highland Armed Forces Community Covenant Partnership and the Military Liaison Group; and
- throughout the pandemic the Service Point team had been supporting communities with the delivery of registration of birth, deaths and marriages. This has been on an appointment only basis and based on relevant COVID-19 guidance. From Monday 30 August 2021, housing and welfare services teams

would offer their customers appointments to attend face-to-face meetings with officers, following an assessment of their needs. Risk assessments had been done and safe working protocols and practices agreed. The exception to this was Inverness Service Point which had been refurbished. Arrangements were being made to move the team back to the Town House from Castle Wynd and Members would be updated more fully once there was certainty on dates. The extension of appointments to these services would continue until the end of September when it was expected to open the doors fully to customers without the need for an appointment. This would tie in with everyone being offered a double dose of the vaccine. The date for further re-opening would be considered in line with any COVID guidance that might be in place at that time. Carrying out the necessary risk assessments had been a significant task and thanks were expressed to officers in that regard.

On the point being raised, it was confirmed that officers were working closely with colleagues in the Housing and Property Service to progress the identification of a new site for Gairloch Service Point. Members were assured that interim arrangements would be put in place for the provision of face-to-face appointments to ensure that people in the area were not disadvantaged.

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

4. Recess Powers Cumhachdan Fosaìdh

The Committee **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 the Committee.

5. Presentation from the Highland Armed Forces Community Partnership Taisbeanadh bho Chom-pàirteachas Coimhearsnachd Feachdan Armaichte na Gàidhealtachd

Ms D Ferguson, Senior Ward Manager, and Ms L Kinnear, Promoting Positive Relationships Coordinator, Highland Council, gave a presentation on the Highland Armed Forces and Veterans Community Covenant Partnership, the Defence Employer Recognition Scheme and the Military Liaison Group (Education).

Councillor R Balfour, the Council's Armed Forces and Veterans Champion, expressed thanks to the Senior Ward Manager and the Promoting Positive Relationships Coordinator for their efforts in relation to the Council receiving the Employer Recognition Scheme Gold Award, as highlighted by the Chair under item 3. He went on to speak in amplification of the presentation and to his role as Armed Forces and Veterans Champion, which comprised both liaison and welfare aspects.

During discussion, the following issues were raised:-

- children and young people having been identified in the presentation as a priority area, Members were encouraged to research the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child which was now embedded in Scots law; and
- reference was made to harrowing images and videos from areas of conflict and it was hoped that appropriate interventions through the Armed Forces and Veterans' Community Covenant Partnership would reduce the potential for

children of Armed Forces personnel to have Adverse Childhood Experiences which would, in turn, reduce harms in later life.

The Committee otherwise **NOTED** the presentation.

6. Community Asset Transfers Glusad So-mhain Coimhearsnachd

a. Annual Community Asset Transfer Report 2020/21 Aithisg Bhliadhna Glusadan So-mhain Coimhearsnachd 2020/21 agus iarrtasan làithreach

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

The Committee:-

- (i) **AGREED** the annual report on Community Asset Transfer as detailed in the report and at Appendix 1, for submission to the Scottish Government; and
- (ii) **NOTED** the key learning points and opportunities related to asset transfer outlined in section 5 of the report.

b. Community Asset Transfers – Local Area Committees Glusad So-mhain Coimhearsnachd

In accordance with the Scheme of Delegation, from March 2021 all Community Asset Transfers below the value of £100,000 had been considered at the local Area Committee. In addition, any transfers below the value of £10,000 had been subject to delegated officer approval.

The Committee **NOTED**:-

- (i) the following asset transfers had been considered at local committees since the last meeting of this committee on 12 May 2021:
 - a. Sutherland County Committee: a request for ownership of South Bonar Public Toilets, Picnic Area and Car Park to Kyle of Sutherland Development Trust. Approved 17 May 2021;
 - b. Badenoch and Strathspey Committee: a request for ownership of the Kingussie Market Stance Pitch from Kingussie Camanachd Club. Approved 9 August 2021;
 - c. Isle of Skye and Raasay Committee: a request for ownership of Raasay Ferry Terminal Building from Raasay Development Trust. Recommended for approval on a 99 year lease. Approved 30 August 2021; and
- (ii) the following asset transfer had been approved under officer delegated authority:
 - a. Transfer of Elgol Public Toilets to Broadford and Strath Community Interest Company 31 May 2021.

7. Police Scotland Performance Report Aithisg Choileanaidh Poileas Alba

There had been circulated Report No CP/25/21 dated 17 August 2021 by the Highland Local Policing Commander, Chief Superintendent Conrad Trickett.

During a verbal update, it was highlighted that the new style of reporting provided more qualitative information and a picture of the work ongoing across the Highland region. Context was provided in relation to several key areas of the report and it was emphasised that all statistics continued to be impacted by Covid-19. It was commented that the Service would be heavily supporting COP26 in Glasgow to protect security arrangements in place which would put additional demand on the service during that time.

During discussion, the following issues were raised:-

- appreciation was expressed for the fulsome and detailed report;
- several Members expressed concern on behalf of constituents for lengthy delays in the 101 service and the Highland Local Policing Commander would analyse the gap between the statistics and anecdotal evidence and bring more detailed information to a future meeting of the Committee;
- in response to questions about the software to track 101 statistics, it was explained that the software required investment and infrastructure and there was ongoing work through Police Scotland to address this;
- police efforts towards missing persons initiatives were commended;
- having officers out on bicycles and engaging with the local community continued to be a positive initiative;
- the support of police officers that worked closely with the Sutherland Community Partnership was commended;
- Operation CEDAR and Driver Engagement North initiatives were positive, there continued to be careless driving across Highland and it would be useful to roll out similar initiatives to young people;
- information was sought, and provided, on initiatives with youth and the Highland Local Policing Commander would review current and future planning regarding educational initiatives for young people in relation to safe driving and bring an update to a future meeting of the Committee; and
- in response to a question about the safety of cyclists on the road, it was explained that there had not been an increase in accidents involving cyclists which could suggest that cyclists were generally being treated respectfully by other road users.

The Committee:-

- (i) **NOTED** the progress made against the objectives set within the Highland Local Policing Plan 2020-2023 Year 1, for the period covering 1 April 2020 to 31 March 2021;
- (ii) **AGREED** that more detailed information be provided to a future meeting of the Committee regarding 101 and the gap between anecdotal evidence and current statistics; and
- (iii) **AGREED** that current and future planning regarding educational initiatives for young people in relation to safe driving be reviewed and an update brought to a future meeting of the Committee.

8. Visitor Management Plan: update on service implementation Plana Stiùiridh Luchd-tadhail: fios às ùr mu bhuileachadh seirbheis

There had been circulated Report No CP/26/21 dated 31 August 2021 by the Executive Chief Officer Communities and Place.

During discussion, the following comments were made in relation to public convenience provision:-

- whilst the increase in the number of comfort scheme providers was welcomed, more people might be inclined to take part if the payment to providers was increased, and it was suggested that this be reviewed for the following year;
- on Skye, many communities had taken over the provision of toilets and it was necessary to continue to encourage that. The local ward was also supporting toilet schemes in places such as Glendale;
- it was important to remember that some comfort schemes were in small rural communities and did not have the capacity to deal with large numbers of visitors due to being reliant on septic tanks;
- it was highlighted that Castle Moil Restaurant, Kyleakin, while new to the comfort scheme, had replaced the scheme previously in place with another provider;
- many businesses did not have enough staff to cope with the frequent cleaning regime required should they become a comfort scheme provider;
- it was suggested that an audit of public toilet provision and what could be done better going forward be carried out. The Chair reminded Members that toilet provision was not a statutory duty but something the Council had picked up on, and it was necessary to consider how to obtain funding to help;
- there was still a need for public toilet provision outwith the tourist season and, whilst it was recognised that this was not a statutory duty, it was an expectation by the public which it was necessary to balance against what the Council was seeking to achieve in terms of savings and diversification of service provision. If and when the comfort scheme was reviewed it was suggested that, rather than simply increasing the payment to comfort scheme providers, the money could be used strategically to provide public toilets in communities where there was an expectation to do so – eg Wick, which had no public toilet and very few comfort scheme providers;
- concern was expressed regarding the condition of Dornie Hall toilets, opposite Eilean Donan Castle, due to misuse by the public. The Hall Committee now wanted the toilets refurbished, and it was questioned what would happen if they were to close; and
- if assets were allowed to deteriorate they would quickly become a liability, and the need to ensure adequate funding was in place to maintain Council-operated public toilets was emphasised. Particular reference was made to Golspie public toilets which were in a poor state of repair and where the gents charging machine had been out of order for several months leading to inequity and vandalism.

Other comments were made as follows:-

- thanks were expressed to all staff involved for the huge efforts that had been made to enhance services, which had mitigated the number of complaints received. The introduction of Seasonal Access Rangers had been particularly successful, and it was hoped that the posts would be retained in future years;

- reference was made to the Traffic Order coming into force to prevent overnight parking by motorhomes in cemetery car parks. It having been queried how this would be policed at weekends, it was confirmed that Access Rangers were on duty at weekends, and
- in reply it was acknowledged that there was currently no budget provision for the maintenance of public conveniences nor capital budget for their refurbishment and that the operational revenue budget had previously been reduced by 25% as a budget saving. Work was underway to survey the condition of previously closed public conveniences to identify options for re-opening, community asset transfer or disposal. New resources for public conveniences would need to be part of wider investment choices to be made by Council for this year and next year.

The Committee **NOTED**:-

- (i) the one-off investment for public conveniences would be fully committed this year and was augmented by an award of £11,000 from the NatureScot Better Places funding;
- (ii) the enhanced public convenience service with Council public conveniences now numbering 75, with infrastructure improvements for 7, operational support for the new Storr toilets, 14 new providers for the comfort scheme now numbering 50 for this season and support for a community group running portaloos;
- (iii) the one-off investment for enhanced waste services was fully committed and the additional seasonal waste staff and fleet are responding to increased litter and waste arising; and
- (iv) that all further opportunities for additional external funding would continue to be sought.

9. Annual Complaints Performance Report – 2020/21 Aithisg Choileanaidh Ghearanan Bhliadhnaile– 2020/21

There had been circulated Report No CP/27/21 dated 13 August 2021 by the Executive Chief Officer Communities and Place.

During discussion, the following issues were raised:-

- Members welcomed the report, the format of which was commended, and the improvements that had been made to date in respect of the key performance indicators;
- one of the themes being conveyed to some Members was a lack of communication from the Council on key issues. In particular, Community Councils felt they were not being included in correspondence on issues they had been involved with. Information was sought, and provided, on the extent to which officers were aware of this and were raising awareness amongst staff that it was important that community representatives were involved in and felt part of the resolution of local issues. It was added that placing more emphasis on communication would lead to fewer complaints. It was suggested that if Members had specific examples these be provided to officers outwith the meeting so they could be looked into;
- the importance of following procedure, setting expectations and responding to customers within the specified timescale was emphasised;

- procedures could be amended if there was a particular element that that could be improved upon, and Members with a customer services background offered their assistance in that regard; and
- some Members had received positive feedback from Community Councils that complaints and requests for information were being responded to more quickly and that some Community Councils had advised Members they received too much communication.

The Committee **NOTED**:-

- of all customer enquiries, requests for service and complaints managed through the customer relationship management (CRM) system, 0.7% had been complaints (1048 complaints in 2020/21);
- compared to the previous year, in 2020/21 there had been an 11% decrease in customer contact recorded and a 39% decrease in complaints probably affected by Covid impacts;
- the work undertaken to continue to improve performance in complaints handling;
- the Council had successfully implemented on time, the new revised Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO) Model Complaints Handling Procedure (MCHP) in April 2021;
- that the Service was unable to report on indicator 7 this year, customer satisfaction with the complaint's services provided. This information had previously been analysed using the Council's citizens panel survey which had not run in 2020 during the pandemic;
- that the SPSO would publish their revised list of performance indicators in 2021/22 and the format of the performance report might be different in future years. Further information on these indicators would be advised to the Committee as part of the development of the Communities and Place Service performance framework; and
- now the initial phase of the new CRM project had concluded successfully, work was underway to look at the additional functionality it could provide, including a Councillor portal.

The Committee scrutinised and **NOTED** the general improvement in performance reported and further **NOTED** this was a journey of continuous improvement, with performance summarised below:

- the positive trends on customers preference to make complaints electronically, 83% using a digital channel;
- that most complaints (72%) were received and resolved at frontline and did not require an investigation. This figure was similar to 2019/20 but showed a decrease over a five-year period. The consequential increase in complaints being closed after investigation (up from 5.9% in 2017/18 to 24.6% in 2020/21) might indicate an increasing complexity in the nature of complaints received;
- in the preceding 4 years the majority of complaints were not upheld at either frontline or after investigation; however, in 2020/21 that trend was disrupted. In 2020/21 around a third were not upheld with over 60% either upheld or partially upheld. This change was being investigated as part of the wider analysis of how we respond to our customers, and the outcome used to drive our continuous improvement;
- the trend in taking less time to respond to a frontline complaint continued with it falling to an average 8.4 days in 2020/21. This was a considerable

- improvement from the average 13.3 days in 2019/20 and 25.9 days in 2016/17;
- (v) in 2020/21 improvement was also seen in the average time taken to investigate complaints, down from 31.3 days in 2019/20 to 20.9 days in 2020/21;
 - (vi) a relatively small number of complaints had extensions to timescales for responses authorised;
 - (vii) an improving trend was seen over the past 5 years with the majority of complaints now resolved within both target timescales (5 days and 20 days). Last year, 54.1% of frontline complaints were closed within the 5-day target; an improvement from 30.4% in 2016/17. 68.7% of investigation complaints were closed within the 20 days' target; an improvement from 46.3% in 2016/17. However, further improvement was required as last year 45.9% of frontline complaints were not concluded in 5 days and 31.3% were not resolved for investigation complaints within the 20-day target;
 - (viii) the number of complaints investigated by the SPSO fell from 53 in 2019/20 to 41 in 2020/21 with 2 taken forward for investigation; 1 was partially upheld and the other was fully upheld. Fewer cases were escalated to the SPSO prematurely, supported by improved awareness of our complaints process; and
 - (ix) targeting improvement in complaints would be supported by the new CRM system currently being implemented.

The Committee **AGREED** that the report be published on the Council's website and submitted to the SPSO.

10. Waste projects update

Aithisg às ùr mu ro-innleachd is pròiseactan sgudail

Declaration of Interest: Mr D Macpherson declared a non-financial interest in this item on the grounds that a relative owned one of the potential sites for a waste transfer station in Fort William, and confirmed that he would take no part in the discussion in that regard.

There had been circulated Report No CP/28/21 dated 9 August 2021 by the Executive Chief Officer Communities and Place.

The Senior Waste Manager provided an update on the three new waste transfer stations referred to in the report. The Executive Chief Officer Communities and Place provided a verbal update on the options appraisal process in respect of a long-term residual waste solution, during which it was confirmed that all the work agreed at the previous meeting of the Committee had been undertaken by the officer project board. The options appraisal had been peer reviewed internally by senior officers and had also benefited from external peer review by a specialist in another Council. The detailed outcome of the options appraisal would be discussed at the Waste Strategy Working Group on 1 September 2021 and Member briefings would take place over the next few weeks.

The appraisal showed that there was a strong case to continue to undertake more site-specific work for an Energy from Waste (EfW) combined heat and power plant at the Longman site, and there would be further reports on this to the Council and the Committee going forward. As previously agreed, a number of Members had last week visited an operational EfW plant to the south-east of Edinburgh and it was

intended to arrange further site visits to that plant for those unable to attend and to visit other plants.

Alongside this workstream, the procurement process for a medium-term solution, ie to continue to transport residual waste outwith the region, was underway for the period 2023-2027 and, if needed, a further 36 months. In summary, work was proceeding in accordance with the timeline set out by the Committee and in fact the Member briefings were taking place earlier than originally planned.

The Chair added that there would be three dates/times for the briefing to accommodate as many Members as possible, and he hoped that all Members would be able to attend.

During discussion, the following issues were raised:-

- there were two important elements to the issue of residual waste, namely, the capital required to develop an EfW facility and the opportunity cost of not doing so quickly. The cost of transporting residual waste outwith the region was a significant part of the Council budget and the sooner it could be reduced the greater the benefit to the Council. The Chair concurred and emphasised the need to seek expertise to inform Members' decisions; and
- the visit to the EfW plant near Edinburgh had been enlightening, educational and had allayed any concerns about smell, noise and smoke. The power generated was being used in the adjacent area and was also being sold back to the national grid. Members who had been unable to attend were encouraged to do so if there was another opportunity in the future; and
- the only downside to developing an EfW plant in Highland was the length of time it would take but the need to move forward was emphasised.

The Committee **NOTED**:-

- (i) the Aviemore waste transfer station was progressing towards completion;
- (ii) the programme of works for Inverness waste transfer station was underway;
- (iii) the more positive outlook for developing similar waste transfer infrastructure in Fort William;
- (iv) the improving prospect of securing a new lease for the existing Household Waste Recycling Centre in Fort William; and
- (v) the process for preparing recommendations for a long-term residual waste solution was on target using the approach set out in the report to the last meeting of the Committee, the verbal update on the options appraisal process, and that further Member engagement and reporting would be programmed from early September 2021.

11. Revenue Monitoring Report: 2020/21 out-turns and 2021/22 Quarter 1 Aithisg Sgrùdaidh Teachd-a-steach: fìor-shuidheachaidhean 2020/21 agus Cairteal 1 2021/22

There had been circulated Report No CP/29/21 dated 15 August 2021 by the Executive Chief Officer Communities and Place.

During discussion, the following issues were raised:-

- the new format of reporting was welcomed, together with the Service underspend for 2020/21; and
- the cost of materials tradesmen used had increased and it was questioned how this impacted on the Council.

The Committee **NOTED**:-

- (i) the final out-turn position of a Service underspend of £493k for 2020/21;
- (ii) the adjustments made to the service budget arising from Council budget decisions on savings and new investment, including one-off investment for visitor management and place-based funds with some funds still to be allocated to the service for waste and visitor management;
- (iii) the range of Covid funding streams available to the Service to draw down for specific Covid services;
- (iv) the work now progressed and underway on removing service re-charges with the fleet and plant budget re-set for Q1 and that waste and street cleaning is being reviewed in Q2;
- (v) the current Q1 position as shown on Appendices 3 and 4 of the report with a forecast pressure of £792k associated with several income targets not expected to be met across waste, bereavement and Registrar services and in relation to public conveniences, fleet workshops and reduced demand for export health certificates;
- (vi) the forecast was cautious at Q1 and mitigation was in place to avoid an overspend at year end as set out in paragraph 5.12 of the report;
- (vii) the progress made with the 18 savings agreed for the service amounting to £567k as shown on Appendix 5 of the report, with 16 savings achieved, some of the waste saving of £168k regarded as at risk in Q1 and a Registrar saving of £45k not achievable due to external price setting; and
- (viii) further adjustment to the budget would be reported in Q2 monitoring and during this time work would begin to develop the Service's new performance framework which would describe the results expected from the Council's investment the Service and the savings to be made.

12. Update on the support for businesses exporting and importing food Fios às ùr mu thaic airson gnothachasan às-mhalairt is ion-mhalairt a' gabhail a-steach chosgaisean

There had been circulated Report No CP/30/21 dated 30 July 2021 by the Executive Chief Officer Communities and Place.

The Committee:-

- (i) **NOTED** the demand was lower than expected from businesses in the region for Export Health Certificates (EHC) in the first half of 2021 as businesses adjusted to new EU requirements and were impacted by Covid;
- (ii) **NOTED** the consequential loss of income to the Council meant the income target for this service was unlikely to be met and a budget pressure of around £47k was currently expected for 2021/22;
- (iii) **NOTED** the challenges faced by the environmental health team at that time in providing the discretionary EHC service and with uncertainties on future demands;

- (iv) **AGREED** to retain the current fees for EHCs through to 31/3/2022 to enable a longer period for review, capturing the lifting of Covid restrictions and further settling in of EU requirements on exporting business; and
- (v) **NOTED** the new legislative duty around physical checks of EU food imports at Border Control Posts, with work underway to plan for fish landings at Scrabster from 1st January 2022. This was a chargeable service to enable cost recovery and affected environmental health and trading standards teams.

13. Licensing of activities involving animals Ceadachd ghnìomhan a' buntainn ri beathaichean

There had been circulated Report No CP/31/21 dated 30 July 2021 by the Executive Chief Officer Communities and Place.

The Committee:-

- (i) **NOTED** the new licensing system for pet selling, operating certain animal welfare establishments (including rehoming centres and animal sanctuaries), engaging in other animal rehoming activities and dog, cat and rabbit breeding which came into force 1st September 2021;
- (ii) **APPROVED** that the Council would use Council officers and either a vet or Scottish SPCA Inspector (if appropriate), for the initial inspection of dog breeders, cat breeders, and rabbit breeders;
- (iii) **APPROVED** that the Council would use Council officers for the initial inspection of applications for a person involved in animal rehoming activities or for pet sales or for animal welfare establishments. If considered necessary, the Council may also use a Vet or Scottish SPCA Inspector (if appropriate). This may include the Vet or Scottish SPCA Inspector carrying out an inspection;
- (iv) **APPROVED** that the fees for all licence applications for 2020/21 and 2021/22 follow the current fees for dog breeders and pet shops as set out below:

Licence type	New licence application	Renewal application (every 1-3 years)
Pet selling	£165*	£127
Animal rehoming activities	£165*	£127
Animal welfare establishments	£165*	£127
Dog breeding	£165*	£127
Cat breeding	£165*	£127
Rabbit breeding	£165*	£127
* As permitted by the regulations the costs of an inspection if required, by a vet or Scottish SPCA Inspector if appropriate, will be recharged to the applicant		

- (v) **APPROVED** that, in keeping with Scottish Government guidance, where Animal Welfare Establishments could demonstrate they were a charity they were charged 50% of standard application and renewal fees; and
- (vi) **APPROVED** that cost recovery for enforcement action in relation to any licensable activity of an unlicensed operator was based on the appropriate productive hourly rate for the grade of officer taking the action with full cost

recovery proposed unless it cost more to pursue the cost or where the operator had made their best efforts to comply with any enforcement action.

14. Recycling Improvement Fund (RIF) Update Fios às Ùr mu Mhaoin Leasachaidh Ath-chuairteachaidh

There had been circulated Report No CP/32/21 dated 31 July 2021 by the Executive Chief Officer Communities and Place.

It having been confirmed that recycling material was treated outwith Highland, the Committee **NOTED**:-

- (i) the fund was a five-year programme of £70m and it would operate on a rolling basis for new expressions of interest (EOI) and stage 2 applications from local authorities;
- (ii) seven EOIs were submitted to address levelling up, alignment with recycling improvements already planned and in support of new national recycling requirements expected, totalling over £7.6m;
- (iii) positive feedback from Zero Waste Scotland (ZWS) with all EOIs meeting the criteria for the next stage;
- (iv) that one stage 2 application was submitted within the two-week deadline for the first round of submissions for extending the garden waste service to accommodate housing growth in East Inverness and Nairn;
- (v) work would continue to develop stage 2 applications for the remaining projects and these along with any new EOIs would involve further Member briefing and reports; and
- (vi) a Member workshop on route optimisation was planned prior to the next Committee meeting in November 2021. This was part of the waste transformation project.

15. Communities & Place Capital Monitoring – Outturn for 2020/21 and Quarter 1 2021/22

Aithisg Sgrùdaidh Calpa: fìor-shuidheachadh 2020/21 agus Cairteal 1 2021/22

There had been circulated Report No CP/33/21 dated 16 August 2021 by the Executive Chief Officer Communities and Place.

The Committee **NOTED**:-

- (i) the capital outturn position for 2020/21 financial year had been an underspend of £0.117m; and
- (ii) the financial position as at 30 June 2021 and the estimated year end forecast.

16. Scottish Government Short Term Lets: consultation response on draft Licensing Order and Business and Regulatory Impact Assessment (BRIA) Aontaidhean-màil Geàrr-ùine Riaghaltas na h-Alba: Freagairt cho-chomhairleachaidh mu dhreachd Òrdugh Ceadachd agus Measadh Buaidh Gnothachais is Riaghlachais

Declarations of Interest: Mr G Adam and Mr J Gordon declared financial interests in this item on the grounds that they operated short-term lets 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 remaining and taking part in the discussion.

There had been circulated Report No CP/34/21 dated 30 July 2021 by the Executive Chief Officer Communities and Place.

During discussion, the following issues were considered:-

- the proposed legislation was complex in nature;
- there were potential weaknesses with the planning control areas. For example, it was a widespread approach and using it to reduce overprovision might be quite difficult and inequitable whereas the licensing method would reduce short term lets simply through the natural turnover of licences;
- it was questioned if planning control areas would generate more properties for local purchasers;
- these new measures would likely require additional staff to be recruited; and
- tourism played an important part in the Highland economy and it was vital that locals who had diversified to subsidise their income were not penalised.

The Committee:-

- (i) **NOTED** the issues covered by the latest consultation including the introduction of overprovision as a possible licensing consideration, and the introduction of required policies related to the new legislation; and
- (ii) **AGREED** to homologate the consultation response as set out at Appendix 2 of the report which was submitted to meet the Scottish Government deadline of 13 August 2021.

The meeting ended at 3.25 pm.

The Highland Council

Minutes of Meeting of the **Economy and Infrastructure Committee** held **remotely** on **Wednesday, 1 September 2021 at 10.30 am.**

Present:

Mr R Balfour	Mr W MacKay
Mr B Boyd	Mr D MacLeod
Mr I Brown	Mr C Munro
Mrs H Carmichael	Mr D Rixson
Mr J Gray	Mrs T Robertson
Mr A Henderson	Mr K Rosie (substitute for Mr Gowans)
Mr D Louden	Mr P Saggars
Mr A MacInnes	Mr A Sinclair

Non-Members also present:

Mr G Adam	Mr D Mackay
Mr A Baxter	Mr J McGillivray
Mr R Bremner	Mr H Morrison
Mr A Christie	Mrs M Paterson
Mrs M Davidson	Mr A Rhind
Mr R Gale	Mr B Thompson
Mr B Lobban	

Officials in Attendance:

Mr M MacLeod, Executive Chief Officer - Infrastructure, Environment and Economy
 Ms K Lackie, Executive Chief Officer - Performance & Governance
 Mr A Webster, Regeneration Team Leader
 Mr M Hilton, Planner
 Mr S Dalgarno, Development Plans Manager
 Mr C Howell, Head of Infrastructure
 Ms T Urry, Head of Roads and Transport
 Mr M Mitchell, Service Finance Manager
 Mr A Puls, Acting Environment Manager
 Miss J MacLennan, Democratic Services Manager
 Ms F MacBain, Committee Administrator
 Mr A MacInnes, Committee Administrator

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

Mrs T Robertson in the Chair

1. Apologies for Absence Leisgeulan

Apologies were submitted for Mr K Gowans.

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

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

- Item 6 – Mr D Louden (financial), Mr D Rixson (non-financial), Mrs H Carmichael (non-financial)
- Item 7 – Mr D Rixson (non-financial)
- Item 8 - Mr D Rixson (non-financial)
- Item 10 – Mr D Louden (non-financial)
- Item 12 – Mr D Louden (financial), Mr C Munro (non-financial)
- Item 15 - Mr D Rixson (non-financial)

3. **Good News** **Naidheachdan Matha**

The Committee **NOTED** the following items of good news:-

- Ewen Macleod, from the Service's Project Design Unit had successfully completed his BSc in Civil Engineering from UHI as a Graduate Apprentice;
- the Service had played a key role in assisting businesses through challenging times, with 15,700 businesses having been paid £193m in 37,000 individual payments; and
- with regard to road improvement, ownership would be taken the following week of three of the five Pothole Pro machines that had been invested in by the Council, with the final two to be available later in the year.

4. **Recess Powers** **Cumhachdan Fosaidh**

The Committee **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 the Committee.

5. **Capital Report** **Aithisg Calpa**

There had been circulated Report No. ECI/31/2021 dated 18 August 2021 by the Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure, Environment and Economy.

In discussion, the following main points were raised by Members:-

- the environment/climate change Salix match funding was highlighted and from an investment from the Council of £1.25m, match funding from Salix of £3.75m would be gained and Officers were commended for this work;
- the Corran Ferry investment of £1.6m for essential design work to make the case for investment in replacement vessels was very good news for Lochaber. However, there would be challenges ahead as the replacement ferries and supporting infrastructure would require significant funding that was not yet in the capital budget. The Lochaber Committee at its last meeting received a presentation from Stantec on the Corran Narrows Socia-economic study. The study underlined the vital nature of the Corran narrows link and the unfeasible option of using the A861 as an alternative. To bring the A861 up to the standard for two way traffic would cost in the region of £198m in comparison to the cost of replacement ferries of around £45m. The Socia Economic Study report would be presented to Members of this Committee in due course;

- it was confirmed that the Invercoe bridge replacement contract had been put to tender and the programme was currently on schedule;
- in relation to the technical problems with the west link swing bridge these had now been resolved and the bridge was fully operational. It was a complicated bridge with sensors and as with other major contracts there would be a contract team debrief and lessons learned would inform work on future contracts; and
- the contract award for the Uig ferry terminal was welcomed and combined with new ferries this would provide economic and social benefits to the area.

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.

6. Economic Prosperity Fund/Economic Recovery Update Maoin Soirbheas Eaconamach/Fios às Ùr mu Ath-shlànachadh Eaconamach

Declarations of Interest: Mr D Louden declared a financial interest as a Director of Highland Opportunity Investments Limited and left the meeting during this item.

Mrs H Carmichael declared a non-financial interest in this item, as the Council-appointed Chair of Highland Opportunity Investments Ltd, and Mr D Rixson declared a non-financial interest in this item as the Council's representative on the Isle of Rum Community Trust, as the Secretary of the Mallaig Heritage Centre, as a Council-appointed Director of Highland Opportunity Investment Limited, and as a member of E&I 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 involvement in discussion.

There had been circulated Report No. ECI/32/2021 dated 9 August 2021 by the Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure, Environment and Economy.

During a summary of the report, the Economy and Regeneration Officer focused on the enhanced business support programme to help businesses to recover, start up and grow. Today would be the launch of the Business start up programme and this would link in with the launch of a national business gateway campaign regarding planning to start a business. Also, the second part of the business support programme was growing businesses and the Committee were being asked to transfer funds for loan investment to Highland Opportunity Investment Limited to manage a small scale loan scheme and recycle capital repayments for future business loan investments. An update was also provided on the Discretionary Grant Scheme funding.

Members in considering the report highlighted their appreciation of the efforts of the business support team over the past 18 months on managing the Covid-19 business support grants. The team had achieved a great deal in a short time which was a tremendous achievement.

A main issue was to provide housing for key employees and it was welcomed that the Economic Recovery Partnership was working to ensure housing provision was available for employees. The provision of housing was also seen as an economic driver and work was ongoing with businesses to identify housing options available for businesses throughout Highland. A pilot project to target new housing projects to businesses in the Cairngorm National Park was underway and the Lochaber Chamber of Commerce were looking to do something similar. It was intended that the Pilot would be expanded to

other areas of Highland in future. Statistical evidence on housing need was required in order to produce this to the Scottish Government for funding.

The Committee **AGREED**:-

- i. to provide £240k from the Economic Prosperity Fund to enable the Council's Investment Company – Highland Opportunity Investments Limited, to manage on its behalf a small-scale loan scheme and to recycle capital repayments for future business loan investments; and
- ii. that the Council seek and secure flexibility from the Scottish Government on how residual Discretionary Grant Scheme funding can be used to support business survival and recovery.

7. Revenue Monitoring Sgrùdadh Teachd-a-steach

Declaration of Interest: Mr D Rixson declared a non-financial interest in this item as the Council's representative to Lochaber Housing Association and its subsidiary Lochaber Care and Repair 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 involvement in discussion.

There had been circulated Report No. ECI/33/2021 dated 6 August 2021 by the Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure, Environment and Economy.

In considering the report, the predicated overspend in the Corran ferry budget was highlighted and if this was likely to continue a commitment was sought from the Council's Administration that they would not be looking for an increase in fares to balance the budget as had happened in previous years which it was felt would be very unfair for residents and businesses on the Ardnamurchan Peninsula. It was advised that currently a £428k overspend was projected on the Corran ferry budget and approximately half of this was down to income shortfall. The rest of the overspend was due to repairs, purchasing of equipment and staffing overspend.

Also, a report on review of Car parking was delayed due to Covid and information was sought when the outcome of this review would be submitted to Committee. It was advised that the intention was to submit a report on the review of Car parking to the December meeting of the Committee.

It was noted that at the end of Quarter 1, a budget gap of £1.678m was forecast, mainly due to lost income and Covid-19 related costs. This position may change depending on progress made with income recovery and ongoing expenditure controls. In particular, it was highlighted that planning and building warrant income was making a strong recovery this year.

The Committee **NOTED**:-

- i. the more detailed reporting of gross income and gross expenditure to improve scrutiny of net budgets as set out in the Appendices to the report;
- ii. the revenue budget final outturn position for the year ended 31 March 2021;
- iii. the revenue monitoring position for the period to 30 June 2021;
- iv. net spend at the end of Quarter 1, totalled £7.664m;
- v. based on the best available information to date, a service budget gap of £1.678m was forecast to end of 2021/22;
- vi. many areas of the Service relied on income to pay for services, and this

continued to be affected in 2021/22 because of Covid-19 impacts. A loss of income and Covid-19 related costs was the key driver of the Service's budget gap;

- vii. the budget gap might change positively or negatively depending on applying expenditure and recruitment controls, aligning services to meet budget savings agreed and income recovery in 2021/22; and
- viii. further adjustments would be made in future quarterly reporting to reflect the updated apportionment of costs and savings across the new structure.

8. Rural Housing Supplementary Guidance Stiùireadh Leasachail Taigheadais Dhùthchail

Declaration of Interest: Mr D Rixson declared a non-financial interest in this item as the Council's representative to Lochaber Housing Association and 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 the interest did not preclude involvement in discussion.

Mr D Rixson declared a non-financial interest in this item as the Council's representative to and on 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 the interest did not preclude involvement in discussion.

There had been circulated Report No. ECI/34/2021 dated 20 August 2021 by the Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure, Environment and Economy.

A presentation was provided on the guidance and, during discussion, the following issues were raised:-

- the extensive consultation on, and subsequent changes to, the guidance were welcomed;
- it was hoped some of the issues that remained with the Hinterland policy would be addressed during the ongoing review of the Inner Moray Forth Local Development Plan and that the new guidance would help with the challenges of providing an adequate supply of housing in rural areas;
- information was sought and provided on the use of the words 'positive relationship' to describe the relationship between a small group of houses, and for the use of 'land manager' rather than 'farmer'; and
- it was suggested Members would benefit from a seminar on woodland crofting, ideally with input from and engagement with the Crofting Commission.

The Committee:-

- i. considered and **AGREED** the finalised version of the Rural Housing Supplementary Planning Guidance contained in Appendix 1 of the report;
- ii. **AGREED** to delegate approval to Officers to complete the formal adoption process;
- iii. **NOTED** that, from the point of this Committee approval, the finalised version of the Rural Housing Supplementary Planning Guidance would become a material consideration in the determination of housing planning applications and once statutorily adopted, would replace the existing policy and guidance as set out in paragraph 1.2 of the report; and
- iv. **AGREED** to investigate holding a Members' seminar on woodland crofting with the possible involvement of the Crofting Commission.

9. Roads and Transport Transformation and Roads Capital Allocation Update Fios às Ùr mu Chruth-atharrachadh Rathaidean is Còmhdhalach agus Riarachadh Calpa Rathaidean

There had been circulated Report No. ECI/35/2021 dated 12 August 2021 by the Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure, Environment and Economy.

During a summary of the report, it was explained that the reported figures were for work undertaken to the end of July 2021, and that August activity was not yet included.

During discussion, the following issues were raised:-

- in response to the suggestion the Council invest in new infrared pothole technology, this would be further discussed with Members outwith the meeting;
- information was sought and provided on the purpose of flailing machines for verge maintenance;
- plans to extend passing places on the NC500 were welcomed;
- cross-boundary sharing of work and / or resources was essential; and
- clarification was sought and provided that, at present, the budgets for the three Ross & Cromarty Areas had not been disaggregated and that this was a work-in-progress, with issues such as the location of resources, as well as length of road and population, to be taken into account. Progress would be reported to a future meeting.

The Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the progress being made with the Transformation work underway in respect of Roads and Transport;
- ii. **NOTED** the progress made in the Capital programmes for all works in 2021/22;
- iii. **AGREED**, as detailed in sections 5 and 6 of this report, the proposed distribution of the additional £9M Capital allocation for infrastructure improvements from phases 2 and 3 of the Health and Prosperity Strategy as set out in section 7.2 of the approved report at Highland Council Committee (HC/14/21, 24 June 2021). This did not include the £1.6M for Corran Ferry as approved at Highland Council;
- iv. **NOTED** that any underspend in this year's allocations will be carried forward into the next financial year; and
- v. **AGREED** to discuss with Members outwith the meeting the possible investment in infrared pothole repair technology.

10. Tain and Wick Conservation Areas Sgìrean Glèidhteachais Bhaile Dhubhthaich is Inbhir Ùige

Declaration of Interest: Mr D Loudon declared a non-financial interest in this item as he lived in & owned a property in Tain Conservation Area and left the meeting during discussion.

There had been circulated Report No. ECI/36/2021 dated 6 August 2021 by the Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure, Environment and Economy.

During discussion, the report was welcomed along with the consultation process which had taken cognisance of key local concerns, such as the need to remove the Wick harbour area from the conservation area.

The Committee **AGREED** to: -

- i. adopt the Tain Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan as planning guidance and approve the proposed amendments to the statutory conservation area boundary; and
- ii. subject to agreement of the Caithness Committee, adopt the Wick Pulteneytown Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan as planning guidance and approve the proposed amendments to the statutory conservation area boundary.

11. Transformation Programme – Update on Climate Change Projects Prògram Cruth-atharrachaidh – Fios às Ùr mu Phròiseactan Atharrachadh Gnàthshide

There had been circulated Report No. ECI/37/2021 dated 6 August 2021 by the Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure, Environment and Economy.

During discussion, the importance of moving forward with the hydrogen agenda was emphasised and the appointment of a project manager to assist with this and carbon reduction / renewable energy initiatives was welcomed. Collaborations with UHI or other universities should be considered to work towards reducing costs in hydrogen production, and appropriate plans should be made for vehicle and machinery replacement.

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

12. Place Based Investment Report Aithisg Tasgaidh Stèidhichte air Àite

Declarations of Interest: Mr D Loudon declared a financial interest in relation to the Regeneration Capital Grant Fund as a Director & Company Secretary of Tain Heritage Trust which owned Tain Picture House and left the meeting during discussion of this item.

Mr C Munro declared a non-financial interest in this item as a Director of Kilmuir Community Trust 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 involvement in discussion, unless the discussion pertained directly to the Trust in which case he would leave the meeting.

There had been circulated Report No. ECI/38/2021 dated 3 August 2021 by the Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure, Environment and Economy.

The Committee **AGREED**:-

- i. that an area-based approach is adopted to manage the Place Based Investment Programme grant in 2021/22, with decision-making as detailed in section 7 and proposed area allocations as detailed in Appendix 1 of the report;
- ii. that the Council write to the Scottish Government to request flexibility on the spend profile of Place Based Investment grant; and
- iii. to homologate the Highland Council's Round 9 Stage 1 Regeneration Capital Grant Fund applications to the Scottish Government on 17 June 2021.

13. Minutes Geàrr-chunntas

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

- i. **NOTED** the South Planning Applications Committee held on 27 April and 15 June 2021;
- ii. **NOTED** the North Planning Applications Committee held on 20 April and 8 June 2021;
- iii. **APPROVED** the City Region Deal Monitoring Group held on 21 April and 2 August 2021; and
- iv. **APPROVED** the Harbours Management Board held on 18 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 be excluded from the meeting for the following item on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraphs 6 and 9 of Part 1 of Schedule 7A of the Act.

15. Property Transactions Monitoring Report Aithisg Sgrùdaidh Ghnothachasan Seilbhe

Declaration of Interest: Mr D Rixson declared a non-financial interest in this item as the Council's representative to Lochaber Housing Association and on 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 the interest did not preclude involvement in discussion.

There had been circulated to Members only Report No. ECI/39/2021 dated 30 July 2021 by the Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure, Environment and Economy.

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

16. Land and Property Fearann agus Cuid-seilbh

There had been circulated to Members only Report No. ECI/40/21 dated 30 July 2021 by the Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure, Environment and Economy.

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

The meeting ended at 12.15pm