

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 R Balfour
Mr J Bruce
Mr C Fraser
Mr R Gale
Mr J Gordon
Mr A Henderson

Mr A MacInnes
Mr D Macpherson
Mr D MacLeod
Mr H Morrison
Mrs M Paterson
Mrs T Robertson

Non-Members also present:

Mrs J Barclay
Mr R Bremner
Ms I Campbell
Mr J Finlayson
Mr D Louden
Mr W MacKay

Mr C MacLeod
Mr J McGillivray
Mr C Munro
Mr P Saggars
Mr B Thompson
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 Gluasad So-mhaoin Coimhearsnachd

a. Annual Community Asset Transfer Report 2020/21 Aithisg Bhliadhna Gluasadan So-mhaoin 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 Gluasad So-mhaoin 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**:-

- (i) 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);
- (ii) 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;
- (iii) the work undertaken to continue to improve performance in complaints handling;
- (iv) the Council had successfully implemented on time, the new revised Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO) Model Complaints Handling Procedure (MCHP) in April 2021;
- (v) 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;
- (vi) 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
- (vii) 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:

- (i) the positive trends on customers preference to make complaints electronically, 83% using a digital channel;
- (ii) 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;
- (iii) 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;
- (iv) 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.