

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

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

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

**Present:**

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

**In Attendance:**

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

**Mr B Lobban in the Chair**

Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of Mr J Bruce, Ms K Currie, Ms E Knox, Mr N McLean, Mr M Reiss, Ms E Roddick, Mr A Sinclair and Mr B Thompson.

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

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

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

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

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

Item 9 – Mr A Christie (Financial)

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Sutherland County Committee – Starred Item 7 – Dornoch Common Good - Consultation on proposal to dispose, by lease, and changes of use of Common Good land at Dornoch Links to Royal Dornoch Golf Club - **AGREED**

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

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

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

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

The Council **AGREED** the following

### **(i) Wellbeing Joint Sub Committee**

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

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

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

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

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

### **(iii) South Planning Applications Committee**

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

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

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

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

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

**Mr M Gunn**

**To the Leader of the Council**

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

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

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

The response had been circulated.

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

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

*\*Reply to Mr Gunn as follows –*

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

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

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

**(i) Mr A Graham**

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

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

The response had been circulated.

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

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

**(ii) Mr R Gale**

**To the Leader of the Council**

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

The response had been circulated.

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

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

**(iii) Mr A Graham**

**To the Leader of the Council**

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

The response had been circulated.

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

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

**(iv) Mr A Jarvie**

**To the Chair of the Education Committee**

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

The response had been circulated.

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

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

**(v) Mr A Jarvie**

**To the Chair of the Economy & Infrastructure Committee**

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

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

The response had been circulated.

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

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

**(vi) Mrs I MacKenzie**

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

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

The response had been circulated.

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

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

**(vii) Mr D Macpherson**

**To the Chair of the Economy & Infrastructure Committee**

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

The response had been circulated.

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

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

**(viii) Mr D Macpherson**

**To the Chair of the Economy & Infrastructure Committee**

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

The response had been circulated.

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

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

**(ix) Mr D Macpherson**

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

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

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

The response had been circulated.

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

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

**(x) Mr D Macpherson**

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

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

The response had been circulated.

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

In response, it was confirmed that this was underway.

**(xi) Mr B Boyd**

#### **To the Leader of the Council**

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

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

The response had been circulated.



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

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

**(xii) Mr A Baxter**

**To the Chair of the Education Committee**

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

The response had been circulated.

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

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

**(xiii) Mr D Macpherson**

**To the Chair of the Economy & Infrastructure Committee**

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

The response had been circulated.

(There was no supplementary question).

**(xiv) Mr D Macpherson**

**To the Chair of the Economy & Infrastructure Committee**

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

The response had been circulated.

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

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

**8. Notices of Motion  
Brathan Glusaid**

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

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

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

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

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

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

Signed: Mr D Rixson Mr G Adam

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

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

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

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

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

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

### **Decision**

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

### **(iii)**Culloden Academy

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

#### **For the Motion**

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

#### **For the Amendment**

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

#### **Abstentions**

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

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

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

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

Signed: Mr A Graham Mr A Christie Mrs T Robertson

During discussion, Members raised the following issues:-

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

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

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

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

### **For the Motion**

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

## **For the Amendment**

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

## **Abstentions**

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

## **Decision**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

During discussion, Members raised the following issues:-

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

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

### **Decision**

The Council:-

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



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

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

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

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

During discussion, Members raised the following issues:-

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

### **For the Motion**

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

### **For the Amendment**

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

### **Decision**

The Council:-

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

## **10. Staff Survey Suirbhidh Luchd-obrach**

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

During discussion, Members raised the following issues:-

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

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

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

### **Decision**

The Council:-

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

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

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

During discussion, Members raised the following issues:-

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

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

### **Decision**

The Council **AGREED**:-

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

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

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

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

During discussion, Members raised the following issues:-

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

### **Decision**

Members:-

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

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

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

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

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

**14. Recess Powers**  
**Cumhachdan Fosaidh**

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

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

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

**16. Extension of the Highland Council Re-Settlement Programme**

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

**Decision**

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

The meeting ended at 5.45pm.