

The Highland Council

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

Present:

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

Officials in Attendance:

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

Also in attendance:

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

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

Mrs H Carmichael in the Chair

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

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

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

Business

1. Apology for Absence Leisgeulan

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

2. Declarations of Interest Foillseachaidhean Com-pàirt

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

Item 3 – Mr A Christie (financial)

Item 8 – Mr A Jarvie (non-financial)

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

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

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

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

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

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

During discussion, Members raised the following issues:-

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

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

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

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

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

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

During discussion, Members also raised the following issues:-

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Thereafter, the Committee:-

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

During discussion, Members raised the following issues:-

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

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

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

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

9. Bught Park Feasibility Study Pròiseact Dèanamh Co-ionann

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

During discussion, Members raised the following issues:-

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

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

Thereafter, the Committee:-

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

10. Proposed Car Parking Charge Amendments

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

During discussion, Members raised the following issues:-

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

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

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

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

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

For the Motion

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

For the Amendment

A Jarvie and C Smith.

Abstention

D Fraser

The Committee **AGREED**:-

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

14. Inverness Common Good Fund
Maoin Math Coitcheann Inbhir Nis

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

- a) Events and Festivals**
Tachartasan agus Fèisean

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

During discussion, Members raised the following issues:-

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

Thereafter, the Committee:-

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

b) Capital Projects Update Report
Sgrùdadh Ionmhasail agus Pròiseactan Calpa

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

**15. Minutes
Geàrr-chunntas**

There had been circulated Minutes of Meetings as follows:-

City of Inverness Area Committee held on 18 February and 22 April 2021 – **NOTED** - on the basis that a correction would be made to the Minutes of the Meeting held on 18 February to include a declaration of interest made at that meeting by Mr A Jarvie which had been omitted in error;

Inverness Common Good Fund Sub-Committee held on 8 March and 26 April 2021 – **APPROVED**;

Victorian Market Stakeholder Management Group held on 23 February and 13 April 2021 – **NOTED**;

Inverness Events and Festivals Working Group held on 15 March 2021 – **APPROVED**; and

City and Area Recovery Group held on 1 March and 1 April 2021 – **NOTED**.

The meeting ended at 4.55pm.