

## The Highland Council

Minutes of Meeting of the **Communities and Place Committee** held in the Council Chamber, Council Headquarters, Glenurquhart Road, Inverness on Wednesday 17 August 2022 at 10.30 am.

### **Present:**

Mr A Baldrey	Mrs B Jarvie
Mr M Cameron	Mr B Lobban
Mr A Christie (substitute)	Mr P Logue
Ms T Collier (via Teams)	Mr W MacKay (via Teams)
Mr J Finlayson (via Teams)	Mr G MacKenzie (Chair)
Mr L Fraser	Ms L Niven
Mr A Graham	Ms M Nolan
Mr R Gunn	Ms M Reid (substitute)
Mrs J Hendry	

### **Non-Members also present:**

Mr R MacKintosh	Mrs M Paterson
Mr D Macpherson (via Teams)	Mr A Rhind
Mr D Millar (via Teams)	Mrs T Robertson (via Teams)
Mr C Munro (via Teams)	Mr K Rosie (via Teams)

### **In attendance:**

Ms D Manson, Chief Executive  
Mr A Gunn, Executive Chief Officer, Communities and Place  
Ms C Campbell, Head of Community Operations and Logistics  
Ms A Clark, Head of Community Support and Engagement  
Mr A McKinnie, Strategic Lead, Waste Strategy and Operations  
Mr A Yates, Strategic Lead, Environmental Health and Bereavement Services  
Miss J MacLennan, Principal Administrator  
Miss M Murray, Committee Administrator  
Ms R Ross, Committee Officer

### **Also in attendance:**

Chief Superintendent C Trickett, Police Scotland  
Group Commander M Humphreys, Scottish Fire and Rescue Service

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

### **Mr G MacKenzie in the Chair**

#### **Preliminaries**

Prior to the commencement of formal business, the Chair extended his best wishes to the Vice Chair, Mr Hugh Morrison, who was currently recovering from a recent bout of ill health.

He emphasised the importance of the Communities and Place Committee and the need to strive for excellence in all service areas within its remit. There were an equal number of new and returning Elected Members on the Committee, which he hoped would be

beneficial, and he intended to work as collaboratively as possible.

He went on to inform Members that, as they may have heard through the media, two unions, Unite and GMB, had announced strike action in waste, street cleaning and recycling services which was due to commence from 24 August 2022. It was important staff were recognised and rewarded at a time of significant economic challenges. Staff were valued and continued to deliver public services following what had been a very difficult period over the last couple of years.

Negotiations were being conducted nationally through COSLA on the pay award. Work was also taking place with key Council officers, which involved trade union colleagues, regarding the announcement on the proposed industrial action. Information would be made available to the public, staff and Members regarding how strike action would affect the Highlands and they would all be kept informed of developments.

## **Business**

### **1. Apologies for Absence Leisgeulan**

Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of Mr J Bruce, Mr R Gale and Mr H Morrison.

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

There were no declarations of interest.

### **3. Recess Powers Cumhachdan Fosaidh**

The Committee **NOTED** that the recess powers granted by the Council at its meeting on 30 June 2022 had not been exercised in relation to the business of the Committee.

### **4. Police Performance Report Aithisg Coileanaidh Poileis**

There had been circulated Report No CP/07/22 dated 9 August 2022 by Chief Superintendent Conrad Trickett, Police Scotland.

Prior to handing over to Chief Superintendent Trickett, the Chair referred to the tragic events that had taken place in Skye and Dornie the previous week and extended his thoughts to the families and communities affected. Whilst the Police role and response to the events was important, it was not the focus of the Police Performance Report and he reminded Members that it was not appropriate to ask Chief Superintendent Trickett any questions related to the events on what was an ongoing investigation.

Chief Superintendent Trickett then provided a detailed summary of the report during which he spoke to each of the local policing priorities in turn, namely: Road Safety and Road Crime; Antisocial Behaviour, Violence and Disorder; Acquisitive Crime; Protecting Vulnerable People; Serious Organised Crime; and Terrorism and Public Order.

During discussion, the following issues were raised:-

- thanks were expressed for the comprehensive report;
- speeding was one of the most common issues raised by constituents, one observation being that there was not enough enforcement by traffic police. The majority of offenders were people who lived locally and it was felt that issuing speeding tickets would be more of a deterrent than an educational approach and would get the message around the community more quickly;
- clarification was sought regarding the reported detection rates of 101% for speeding offences and 203% for drug supply;
- concern was expressed that members of the public were experiencing difficulty reporting non-emergency crimes via the 101 number, and it was queried whether there were any improvement plans in that regard;
- in relation to serious road accidents, lengthy road closures caused further issues and it was queried whether there were any way roads that could be re-opened more quickly when there was not a fatality;
- reference was made to recent national coverage regarding an increase in LGBTI-related hate crime, and comment was sought from a Highland perspective;
- Chief Superintendent Trickett having commented in his introduction that assaults were lower because the night-time economy was not in full swing due to Covid, it was suggested that it was necessary to factor out the Covid years to get a true comparison. It was concerning that serious assault figures were more or less flat whereas other crimes were down, and information was sought as to the reasons for that;
- police stations in Wick and Thurso had previously been open to the public 24/7. Many people did not have internet access and, given the previous comments regarding the difficulties reporting non-emergency crimes via the 101 number, it was queried whether there was any possibility of increasing the hours during which police stations were manned;
- information was sought as to how successful the introduction of the Naloxone spray as an emergency antidote to overdose had been. Chief Superintendent Trickett undertook to obtain figures in respect of the rollout in Caithness and feed back to Members;
- in relation to the increase in theft by shoplifting, and with reference to the difficult economic times, information was sought as to the types of goods commonly stolen and whether a further increase was anticipated. In addition, it was queried whether it was possible to capture the reasons for shoplifting;
- concern was expressed that fraud was becoming more sophisticated, and information was sought as to what was being done nationally to get ahead of that and stop the spoofing of legitimate phone numbers;
- concern was expressed regarding the increasing number of Looked After Children and, given that such children were a vulnerable group, it was queried whether there were any links with the statistics on acquisitive and drug crime and, if so, how that was being addressed;
- in the past, children's care homes would receive regular visits from community police which had been a good way to build trusting relationships, and information was sought as to what happened now that more children were placed in foster homes;

- in relation to CCTV, information was sought as to how contact was made with the monitoring centre to request that cameras be directed at an ongoing incident; and
- Members having read that applications to join Police Scotland were down by 50%, information was sought on the position in Highland.

In relation to children's residential care, the Chief Executive highlighted that, in the last year, external reports had been commissioned, looking at provision across the Highlands, which would be presented to the Health, Social Care and Wellbeing Committee. In addition, two different types of external review had been carried out which would be submitted to the Corporate Parenting Board and there would be feedback on inspection so there would be a lot of detail coming forward in the next six to twelve months.

Chief Superintendent Trickett having responded in detail to the issues raised, the Committee **NOTED** progress made against the objectives set within the Highland Local Policing Plan 2020-2023 Year 2, attached as Annex A to the report, for the period covering 1 April 2021 to 31 March 2022.

The Chair thanked Chief Superintendent Trickett for his time and, on behalf of the Committee, extended best wishes and admiration to his staff for the good work they did throughout Highland.

He explained that he had spoken to Chief Superintendent Trickett about the possibility of upgrading guidance for Members around signing applications for shotgun licences. Chief Superintendent Trickett had agreed to do so and would come back in due course and address the understandable anxiety Members might feel about signing such documents.

## **5. Scottish Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS) Highland Performance Report Aithisg Coileanaidh Seirbheis Smàlaidh is Teasairginn na h-Alba**

There had been circulated Report No CP/08/22 dated 1 August 2022 by the Local Senior Officer for Highland, Scottish Fire and Rescue Service.

Group Commander Humphreys, SFRS, provided a detailed summary of the report during which he spoke to a number of Key Performance Indicators, namely: All accidental dwelling fires; All fatal accidental dwelling fire casualties; Non-fatal accidental dwelling fire casualties; All deliberate fires; Special Services – Road Traffic Collisions; False Alarms; Non-domestic fire safety; Domestic fire safety activities; Proportion of station hours available for emergency response; and Injury Accidents.

During discussion, the following issues were raised:-

- thanks were expressed for the comprehensive report;
- information was sought on the current situation at Thurso Fire Station, where a number of experienced firefighters had resigned, and there had been instances of appliances having to be brought in from Wick;
- reference was made to a day in July when there had been no fire appliances available in Skye and Lochalsh, the only appliances covering everywhere west of Fort Augustus having been on the Isle of Raasay and in Gairloch. Concern was expressed that this could happen on any given day and, whilst there were

very few instances when the SFRS was needed, the public would be alarmed if they knew of the situation. An assurance was sought that the matter would continue to be rigorously looked at. However, the efforts that had been made by the SFRS thus far were welcomed and it was hoped that the trial taking place in Tongue and Bettyhill could be extended to Skye. It was added that it was an aspiration to have a full-time fire service on Skye, particularly if there was a resumption of air services from Broadford, which would provide a local full-time career and attract people to the SFRS;

- in relation to domestic fire safety, it was queried whether it was hoped to expand the targeting of at risk homes; and
- an update was sought as to the health of Community Response Units, particularly those in Balintore and Cromarty.

Group Commander Humphreys having responded to the issues raised, the Committee **NOTED** and scrutinised the Highland Performance Report.

The Chair thanked Group Commander Humphreys for his time and, on behalf of the Committee, extended thanks to his staff for all they did.

It was confirmed that, in future, Police Scotland and the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service would report to alternate meetings of the Committee.

## **6. Communities and Place Draft Directorate Service Plan 2022/23 Dreachd Phlana Seirbheis Buidheann-stiùiridh Choimhearsnachdan agus Àite 2022/23**

There had been circulated Report No CP/09/22 dated 1 August 2022 by the Executive Chief Officer, Communities and Place.

During discussion, the following issues were raised:-

- many communities were asking when the permanent re-opening of Service Points and extended availability of Registration facilities would take place and it was requested that this be taken into consideration when finalising the draft Service Plan. The Chair confirmed that discussions were already taking place in that regard and he expected to be able to report back in the near future;
- the Service Plan in its current form could not be measured as it did not specify inputs in terms of financial and human resources or what the outcomes would be if improvement actions were achieved. In addition, it was questioned whether the introduction was comprehensive enough and it was suggested that a column for challenges and risks be included. However, the column on how success would be measured was welcomed;
- particular reference was made to the improvement action to continue to progress the 6 workstreams set out in the amenities review, and it was queried whether the poor standard of grass cutting across the city of Inverness at present was because of staff shortages and recruitment challenges in which case it was questioned how the development of a strategy and delivery of the standard of grass cutting required could be achieved. Grass cutting was one of the most common issues raised by constituents and the need for improvements was emphasised. Reference was made to the poor state of prominent banks in parts of Inverness and to the remote-control mower that had been purchased for such banks and sloping areas, which Members had not seen this year and hoped would be available for the autumn and next year. Further information

- was sought, and provided, on the amenities review, and the Chair confirmed that a report in that regard would be presented to the full Council in September;
- it was questioned whether a member of the public looking at the Service Plan would get a full picture of the range of services it covered and how they were being provided, and it was suggested that more detail was required in that regard and in the section on resources; and
- human resources were an important input, and it would be helpful to provide more detail on how recruitment might be enhanced and new ways of working to give the public confidence that recruitment challenges were being addressed. The Chair confirmed that this was under review and would be addressed at the full Council in September.

The Committee:-

- NOTED** the draft Directorate Service Plan for 2022/23 and **AGREED** that the points raised during discussion would be taken into consideration; and
- NOTED** that the draft plan would be subject to review following the approval of a new Council Programme and Corporate Plan and completion of development work outlined in section 5 of the report.

**7. Revenue Budget Monitoring Report: 2021/22 Outturn and 2022/23 Quarter 1 Aithisg Sgrùdaidh Buidseat Teachd-a-steach: Fìor Shuidheachadh 2021/22 agus Cairteal 1 2022/23**

There had been circulated Report No CP/10/22 dated 5 August 2022 by the Executive Chief Officer, Communities and Place.

During discussion, the following issues were raised:-

- in relation to the 2022/23 Revenue budget, information was sought, and provided, as to when the line by line review referred to would be completed and, with regard to the projected overspend, what expenditure would be controlled, how it would be controlled, what the impact would be, and whether any account had been taken of a pay settlement that was beyond the amount identified in the Council budget at present;
- with regard to the re-opening of Service Points, it was understood that they would be looked at on an individual basis and decisions made based on demand;
- in relation to the underspend on staff costs set out in Appendix 3 of the report, it was necessary to understand where these vacancies were and, more importantly for robust scrutiny, the impact on service provision of not being able to recruit to them. The Executive Chief Officer, Communities and Place, explained that amending the revenue monitoring appendix template to provide more detail by subjective would be applicable to all services, not just Communities and Place, and he undertook to raise the matter with the Chair of the Corporate Resources Committee and the Head of Corporate Finance. Additionally, he confirmed that work would be undertaken as to what further information could be provided on vacant posts;
- the overall annual budget was much bigger than the net total on Appendix 3 would suggest as this did not include income;
- in relation to the Bereavement Services, Burials and Cremations budget, it was queried whether it was the case that income exceeded expenditure. The

- Executive Chief Officer, Communities and Place undertook to obtain further information and respond to Mr A Graham outwith the meeting; and
- information was sought, and provided, as to what type of vehicles were being purchased or repaired.

The Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the final outturn for the 2021/22 Revenue budget for the Communities and Place Service of £691k underspend;
- ii. **NOTED** the forecasted outturn for the 2022/23 Revenue budget for the Communities and Place Service as at Quarter 1 was £1.225m overspend;
- iii. **NOTED** the principal reasons for the 2022/23 forecasted overspend were higher costs pertaining to fuel and parts including vehicle components, spares and tyres;
- iv. **AGREED** the Executive Chief Officer – Communities and Place would ask the Chair of the Corporate Resources Committee and the Head of Corporate Finance to consider the appendix template as part of the overall monitoring report; and
- v. **AGREED** that work be undertaken as to what further information could be provided on vacant posts.

#### 8. **Capital Budget Monitoring Report: 2021/22 Outturn and 2022/23 Quarter 1 Aithisg Sgrùdaidh Buidseat Calpa: Fìor Shuidheachadh 2021/22 agus Cairteal 1 2022/23**

There had been circulated Report No CP/11/22 dated 8 August 2022 by the Executive Chief Officer, Communities and Place.

During discussion, the following issues were raised:-

- the previous Administration had agreed to review the Capital Programme so that the total capital cost for each project was included rather than just the amount allocated for the year. It was requested this information be provided across all Committees so Members had an idea how far along specific projects were;
- it was questioned if the column heading in the Capital Budget for 2022/23 should be changed from “2022/23 Approved Budget” to “2022/23 Approved Budget plus any over or underspend from 2021/22” or whether the column should be separated out so Members had the information across the totality of the project;
- information was sought, and provided, as to how the replacement of the Service’s HGVs would reduce carbon emissions; and
- in relation to the increased forecasted budget for the Residual Waste Management Facility at the Longman, it was explained that this was due to a material change and the increased construction costs.

The Committee **NOTED**:-

- i. the capital outturn position for the Communities and Place Service for 2021/22;
- ii. the forecasted capital outturn for the Communities and Place Service for 2022/23 as at Quarter 1; and
- iii. the current forecasts for the major projects in the Communities and Place Service.

## 9. Playpark Funding Update

### Fios às Ùr mu Mhaoineachadh Pàirce-cluiche

There had been circulated Report No CP/12/22 dated 3 August 2022 by the Executive Chief Officer, Communities and Place.

During discussion, the following issues were raised:-

- it was queried if the Scottish Government's funding for playparks would accelerate and if it was sufficient, in Highland, to meet the Scottish Government's manifesto commitment to renew every playpark. Indications were that there was a need to identify external sources of funding;
- whilst additional funding was to be welcomed, its drip feeding was questioned. This resulted in all local authorities trying to purchase equipment at the same time, thus causing issues surrounding available supply, and, given the cost of play equipment, only a limited amount of work could be done at one time. Furthermore, equipment would continue to deteriorate and the point might be reached when some of it needed to be removed on grounds of health and safety. The Chair was therefore requested, and he agreed, to lobby Scottish Government for larger allocations to be made;
- in response to a question, it was confirmed that the Scottish Government funding could not be used to meet installation costs;
- there was a need for additional personnel trained to inspect play equipment; and
- the focus on replacing play items rather than purchasing additional items, given the maintenance backlog, was to be welcomed.

The Committee **NOTED**:-

- i. the full details of the Scottish Government grant as set out in the report to the Communities and Place Committee in November 2021;
- ii. the allocation and distribution of funding for 2022/23;
- iii. £232k of the Scottish Government grant had been carried forward from 2021/22 to spend in 2022/23;
- iv. the Scottish Government had stated that the remaining £50 million of funding required to be allocated to local authorities by the end of this parliamentary term in May 2026;
- v. funding was for capital works relating to refurbishing playparks, and not intended for ongoing maintenance costs;
- vi. the additional funding from Area Committees for 2021/22;
- vii. progress made in improving playparks during 2021/22;
- viii. playparks were within the scope of the amenities review being considered by the Redesign Board and that as the play parks strategy developed progress reports would be considered by the Board before being finalised;
- ix. a time-limited post with full costs recovered from the award had been approved by the Communities and Place Committee on 10 November 2021. The allocation of £15k for 2021/22 had not been spent and had been rolled forward to 2022/23. Estimated costs for 2022/23 were £22.5k reflecting that the recruitment process was not yet complete;

and **AGREED**:-

- x. that the Scottish Government be lobbied to accelerate the distribution of playpark funding.

## **10. Update on Service Enhancements from Visitor Management Plan Funding Fios às Ùr mu Leasachaidhean Seirbheis bho Mhaoineachadh Plana Stiùiridh Luchd-tadhail**

There had been circulated Report No CP/13/22 dated 8 August 2022 by the Executive Chief Officer, Communities and Place.

During discussion, the following issues were raised:-

- although not part of the Visitor Management Scheme, information was sought as to the current position regarding the Wick Public Convenience (PC) refurbishment;
- in response to a question it was confirmed that a report regarding the new modular unit, replacing the old Glenmore PC, would be presented to the Badenoch and Strathspey Committee on 29 August 2022;
- there were refurbished toilet facilities in places like Alness and Melness, not requiring significant capital investment, and it was questioned if these would be brought on line. Members were reminded that a strategic review had taken place in 2018 when a number of sites such as these had been closed;
- when looking for new Comfort Schemes it was important to give early notice in areas with high tourist numbers;
- communities in Elgol and Broadford were currently building their own toilets, with support from disaggregated budgets, and this demonstrated that partnership working and community engagement was the way forward
- it was queried if there were any recruitment difficulties for Visitor Management Operatives at waste management visitor sites as there were reports of overflowing bins. In response, it was confirmed that there was only one vacancy and the incidents of overflowing bins were likely due to a matter of timing; and
- given the need to reduce residual waste overall, the possibility of providing mixed recycling containers at litter bins was raised. It was confirmed that these were provided at some sites but the quality of the recycling was poor.

The Committee **NOTED**:-

- i. the Visitor Management Plan was not recurring funding;
- ii. the investment in public conveniences and waste services would be fully committed this year;
- iii. the enhanced public convenience service with 75 Council operated facilities, infrastructure improvements for 40 facilities, 15 new comfort scheme providers now taking the total to 52, and support for a community group running portaloos; and
- iv. any new funding streams would be pursued.

## **11. Waste Management Service Update Fios às Ùr mun t-Seirbheis Rianachd Sgudail**

There had been circulated Report No CP/14/22 dated 3 August 2022 by the Executive Chief Officer, Communities and Place.

During discussion, the following issues were raised:-

- the amount of hard work being undertaken for the Council to meet its obligations under the forthcoming new regulations was acknowledged;
- it was queried how it was proposed to transfer waste once the landfill sites were closed. Rail transport was suggested as this would remove a considerable amount of lorries from the roads each day, particularly the A9, thus reducing road carbon emissions and alleviating congestion on what were already busy roads;
- information was sought, and provided, as to discussions taking place between the Council and the Scottish Government regarding Energy from Waste sites; and
- there were reports of confrontations at recycling centres as a result of individuals who were unaware of restrictions regarding vehicle types such as vans and trailers and perhaps the time was now right to revisit the rules so as to avoid waste either ending up in landfill or being fly-tipped.

The Committee **NOTED**:-

- i. the significant work being undertaken to deliver Waste Management Services, both current and looking to the future;
- ii. the Aviemore waste transfer station construction had been completed;
- iii. the construction programme for Inverness waste transfer station was well underway;
- iv. Heads of Terms were awaited for the preferred site upon which to develop the Fort William waste transfer station and the new lease for the existing Household Waste Recycling Centre in Fort William;
- v. the progress to expand garden waste collection services with support from the Recycling Improvement Fund (RIF);
- vi. the use of digital technology (Route Optimisation) supporting the implementation of changes in service delivery;
- vii. a strategic options appraisal examining future waste and recycling collection possibilities was being undertaken with the aim to determine how Highland Council might align with Scotland's Household Recycling Charter;
- viii. progress with site investigation studies in support of the Longman Green Energy Hub ambition;
- ix. the award of disposal services for residual waste, as a medium-term solution, becoming effective from 2023 reduced the Council's reliance on landfill from 2023 and would be fully compliant with the ban on biodegradable waste entering landfill which would come into effect as from the 31 December 2025;
- x. key recommendations from the independent review instructed by the Scottish Government into the role incineration played in Scotland's waste hierarchy;
- xi. key work being undertaken by Waste Management;

and **AGREED**:-

- xii. that recycling centre restrictions be reviewed.

## **12. Annual Community Asset Transfer Report 2021/22 Aithisg Bhladhnaid Glusad So-mhaoin Coimhearsnachd 2021/22**

There had been circulated Report No CP/15/22 dated 3 August 2022 by the Executive Chief Officer, Communities and Place.

It was disappointing that a number of Asset Transfers had not been concluded due to delays with conveyancing and it was hoped these could be expedited to allow communities to progress with their projects. There was a variety of reasons for such delays but one of the changes that had been made, which would hopefully avoid this in future, was for a full title check to be made when a community group made an expression of interest. In addition, access rights could be given on a temporary basis and, ideally, community groups should have their own independent expert legal advice.

The Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the annual community asset transfer report and the update on transfers that had taken place over the previous 12 months;
- ii. **AGREED** the proposed response to the questions on learning from the Community Empowerment Act outlined in section 5; and
- iii. **AGREED** the annual report on Community Asset Transfer as detailed in the report and at Appendix 1 of the report, for submission to the Scottish Government.

### **13. Community Participation and Involvement Update** **Fios às Ùr mu Chom-pàirteachadh is Chom-pàirteachas Coimhearsnachd**

There had been circulated Report No CP/16/22 dated 3 August 2022 by the Executive Chief Officer, Communities and Place.

During discussion, the following issues were raised:-

- while some participation requests had been very successful in the past, Highland Council should aim to take an inclusive and broad approach to community engagement;
- information was sought, and provided, as to how many of the 10 temporary Community Support Officers were still in post and the recruitment measures to fill the vacant posts; and
- in response to a question concerning the resourcing of community partnerships it was confirmed that funding to recruit to the agreed posts was being finalised and that a Development Manager and five Development Officers would be recruited to support partnerships across the area.

The Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the update on the work ongoing to increase participation and involvement of communities in Council activity across Highland; and
- ii. **AGREED** the Annual Participation Request report for the Scottish Government set out at Appendix 1 of the report.

### **14. Enforcement Policy for Environmental Health and Waste Services** **Poileasaidh Cur an Gníomh airson Seirbheisean Slàinte Àrainneachd agus Sgudail**

There had been circulated Report No CP/17/22 dated 3 August 2022 by the Executive Chief Officer, Communities and Place.

The Committee **APPROVED** the updated Enforcement Policy for Environmental Health and Waste Services.

#### **15. Appointment of Members to the Waste Strategy Working Group Cur an Dreuchd Bhall chun na Buidhne-obrach Ro-innleachd Sgudail**

The remit of the Waste Strategy Working Group was to oversee the key actions in relation to the Council's Waste Strategy.

The Committee **AGREED** to appoint 8 Members to the Waste Strategy Working Group, in accordance with the agreed formula, as follows:-

Mr A Baldrey, Mr J Bruce, Mr L Fraser, Mr R Gale, Mr A Graham, Mrs J Hendry, Mr G MacKenzie and Mr H Morrison.

At this stage, the Chair highlighted a number of items of good news as follows:-

- The Community Operations and Logistics section had been shortlisted for three categories in the 2022 Association for Public Service Excellence (APSE) Awards:
  - Best Public/Private Partnership Working Initiative - for the work done to expand the Highland Comfort Scheme by working with local businesses to open up their toilet facilities to the public in return for a monthly payment.
  - Best Collaborative Working Initiative - for the work to convert three artic units to create mobile clinics to deliver the Covid community testing and vaccination programmes for NHS Highland.
  - Best Team, Transport and Fleet Maintenance Services - throughout the pandemic, maintenance staff across the workshops had embraced the challenges and delivered excellent services to internal customers, supporting other Council colleagues to deliver critical services across the Council.

The winners would be announced at the APSE Annual Charity Awards Dinner on 15 September 2022.

- The Community Operations and Logistics section had recruited two Stores Assistants (Modern Apprentices), one in Fort William and one in Portree, and congratulations were expressed to Tonia Harvey, who worked in the Inverness Stores and had completed her Modern Apprenticeship in Clerical and Admin Studies. The Fleet Workshop team had also recruited four apprentice mechanics for Wick, Brora, Inverness and Fort William, and it was intended to recruit an apprentice mechanic in Aviemore shortly.
- As part of the fleet transition to net zero, the latest delivery of refuse collection vehicles had been fitted with electric bin lifts, the use of which provides a practically silent operation and reduced fuel consumption by around 9%. Each lift provided a potential reduced carbon footprint annually of around 3.5 tCO<sub>2</sub>e (3500kg) when measured against traditional fuel operated lifts.

The Chair having expressed his appreciation for the sterling efforts of all involved, the Committee **NOTED** the good news items.

The meeting concluded at 2.45 pm.