

The Highland Council

Minutes of Meeting of the **Economy and Infrastructure Committee** held in the Council Chamber, Council Headquarters, Glenurquhart Road, Inverness on **Thursday, 25 August 2022 at 10.30 am.**

Present:

Mr C Aitken (remote)	Mr W MacKay (remote)
Mr M Baird	Ms J McEwan
Mr I Brown	Ms L Niven (remote)
Mrs I Campbell (substitute)	Mr A Rhind
Mr M Cameron	Mrs T Robertson
Mr K Gowans	Mr K Rosie (remote)
Mr M Green	Mr R Stewart
Mr R Jones	Ms K Willis
Mr P Logue (remote)	

Non-Members also present:

Mrs B Jarvie (remote)	Mr J McGillivray (remote)
Mr D Loudon (remote)	Mr D Millar (remote)
Mr A MacKintosh (remote)	Mr P Oldham (remote)
Mrs A MacLean (remote)	Mrs M Paterson
Mr D MacPherson	

Officials in Attendance:

Mr M MacLeod, Executive Chief Officer - Infrastructure & Environment
Ms C Campbell, Head of Community Operations
Mr A Maguire, Head of Development and Regeneration
Ms T Urry, Head of Roads and Transport
Ms F Cameron, Programme Manager
Mr A McCann, Economy and Regeneration Manager
Mr A McKinnie, Strategic Lead (Waste Services)
Mr D Jones, Area Planning Manager (North)
Ms D Sutton, Amenities Services Manager
Mr S Hindson, Planning Team Leader
Mr A Puls, Principal Officer (Building Control)
Mr S Manning, Principal Traffic Officer
Ms L Dunn, Principal Administrator, Corporate Governance
Ms F MacBain, Committee Administrator, Corporate Governance
Mrs Olalla Bayon-Vazquez, Committee Administrator, Corporate Governance

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

Mr K Gowans in the Chair

Business

1. Apologies for Absence Leisgeulan

Apologies were intimated on behalf of Ms H Crawford (substituted by Mr J Bruce) and Mr H Morrison (substituted by Mrs I Campbell).

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

The Committee **NOTED** the following:-

Item 6c: Mrs T Robertson (Declaration 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. **Good News** **Naidheachdan Matha**

The Chair informed Members of a list of good news on the following topics:-

- 20mph early adoption for the roll out of the National Strategy.
- Rural Tourism Infrastructure Fund Review
- Blar Mhor, Fort William, Phase 1 Housing

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5. **Appointments to Sub-Committees/Working Groups** **Cur an Dreuchd gu Fo-Chomataidhean/Buidhnean Obrach**

i. **Education Transport Review Committee** **Comataidh Ath-sgrùdaidh Còmhdhail Foghlaim**

The remit of the Education Transport Review Committee was to determine

The Committee **AGREED** that the following be established:-

- Education Transport Entitlement Review Sub Committee – 5 Members

In accordance with the above, nominations from the respective Groups had been tabled at the meeting.

The Committee:-

- NOTED** the remit; and
- AGREED** the membership of the Education Transport Review Committee as detailed - Mr W MacKay; Mr R Jones; Mr D Millar*; Ms J McEwan; Mr R Stewart

ii. **Harbours Management Board** **Bòrd Stiùiridh nan Calaidhean**

There was circulated the remit of the Harbours Management Boards remit.

The Committee **AGREED** that the following be established:-

- Harbours Management Board – 10 Members

In accordance with the above, nominations from the respective Groups had been tabled at the meeting.

The Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the remit; and
- ii. **AGREED** to **RECOMMEND** to the Council the Harbours Management Board membership as follows - Ms S Atkin*; Mr I Brown; Mr M Green; Ms J McEwan; Mr C Munro*; Ms L Niven; Mr K Rosie; Mr R Stewart; Mrs T Robertson; Vacant.

6. Appointment to Outside Bodies

Cur an Dreuchd gu Buidhnean air an Taobh A-muigh

- a) HITRANS Tier 1 Ferry Users Consultation Groups
Buidhnean Co-chomhairleachaidh Luchd-cleachdaidh Aiseagan Ìre 1 HITRANS

The interests of ferry users had previously been represented by the Scottish Executive's Ferry Users Consultation Group. However, this had been disbanded and a three-tier system had been set up to cover issues at all levels from local through to national.

The three levels of Consultation Groups were: Tier 0 which covered local issues, Tier 1 which covered regional groups and Tier 2 which covered national issues.

The Scottish Government had asked HITRANS to set up the Tier 1 Ferry Users Consultation Groups.

The Committee **AGREED TO RECOMMEND** to the Council the membership of:-

- i. the Argyll Ferry Users Consultation Group which covered services operated in Oban, Colonsay, Iona, Lismore, Coll, Tiree, Barra, South Uist and Ardnurchan – Ms S Fanet*;
- ii. the Lochaber and Skye Ferry Users Consultation Group which covered the Small Isles, Mallaig, Armadale, Raasay, Kilchoan and Lochaline – The following nominations, having been duly nominated and seconded, were received as follows:- Mr D Millar; Mr C Munro; Mrs T Robertson and Ms K Willis.

On a vote being taken, Mr Millar received 10 votes, Mr Munro received 15 votes, Mrs T Robertson received 7 votes and Ms Willis received 11 votes, with no abstentions, the votes cast having been as follows:-

Votes for Mr D Millar

Ms L Niven, Mr W Mackay, Mr K Rosie, Mr M Cameron, Mrs I Campbell, Mr R Jones, Ms K Willis, Mr I Brown, Mr M Green, Mr K Gowans;

Votes for Mr C Munro

Mr P Logue, Ms L Niven, Mr C Aitken, Mr W Mackay, Mr K Rosie, Mr M Cameron, Mrs I Campbell, Mr R Jones, Ms K Willis, Mr M Baird, Ms J McEwan, Mrs T Robertson, Mr I Brown, Mr M Green, Mr K Gowans

Votes for Mrs T Robertson

Mr P Logue, Mr C Aitken, Mrs I Campbell, Mr R Stewart, Mr M Baird, Ms J McEwan, Mrs T Robertson

Votes for Ms K Willis

Mr P Logue, Ms L Niven, Mr C Aitken, Mr W Mackay, Mr K Rosie, Mr M Cameron, Mr R Jones, Ms K Willis, Mr I Brown, Mr M Green, Mr K Gowans

The Committee **AGREED** to appoint Mr D Millar*, Mr C Munro* and Ms K Willis to serve on the Lochaber and Skye Ferry Users Consultation Group.

- iii. the Hebrides Ferry Users Consultation Group which covered Barra, North and South Uist, Harris, Lewis and links to Skye – Mr C Munro*.

- b) Highland Tourism Partnership
Com-pàirteachas Turasachd na Gàidhealtachd

The Council was a member of the Highland Tourism Partnership, a strategic group that brought together representatives from the tourism industry with the main public sector organisations involved in tourism.

The Committee **AGREED** to appoint Mr K Gowans to represent the Council on this group.

- c) Directorship of Inverness Airport Business Park
Dreuchd-stiùiridh Pàirc Gnothachais Port-adhair Inbhir Nis

Declaration of Interest: Mrs T Robertson declared an interest in this item as a Director on the Board of Inverness Airport Park and, in accordance with paragraph 5.6 of the revised Code of Conduct, left the online meeting for this item.

Inverness Airport Business Park (IABP) was a joint venture company set up in May 2005 between Moray Estates, Highlands and Islands Airports Ltd, Highlands and Islands Enterprise and the Highland Council.

The Committee **AGREED** to appoint Mr M Green to represent the Council on the IABP Board of Directors and that the Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure, Environment & Economy attend board meetings in an advisory capacity.

- d) Local Access Fora
Fòrain Inntrigeadh Ionadail

The Committee **AGREED** to delegate the appointment of Councillors to the Local Access Fora to the respective Area Committees.

- e) European Maritime & Fisheries Fund – Highland Moray Fisheries Local Action Group (FLAG)
Maoin Mara & Iasgach na h-Eòrpa – Buidheann-gnìomha Ionadail Iasgach na Gàidhealtachd is Mhoireibh

The Committee **NOTED** the progress of the Highland Moray Fisheries Local Action Group (FLAG).

The Committee had been asked to appoint 2 members to the Highland Moray Fisheries Local Action Group (FLAG).

In this regard, nominations were received as follows:-

Mr K Gowans, Mrs T Robertson and Mr K Rosie

On a vote being taken Mr K Gowans received 10 votes, Mrs T Robertson received 7 votes and Mr K Rosie received 9 votes, the votes cast having been as follows:-

Votes for Mr K Gowans

Mr P Logue, Ms L Niven, Mr W Mackay, Mr K Rosie, Mr M Cameron, Mr R Jones, Ms K Willis, Mr I Brown, Mr M Green, Mr K Gowans

Votes for Mrs T Robertson

Mr P Logue, Mr C Aitken, Mrs I Campbell, Mr R Stewart, Mr M Baird, Ms J McEwan, Mrs T Robertson

Votes for Mr K Rosie

Ms L Niven, Mr W Mackay, Mr K Rosie, Mr M Cameron, Mr R Jones, Ms K Willis, Mr I Brown, Mr M Green, Mr K Gowans

The Committee **AGREED** to appoint Mr K Gowans and Mr K Rosie to the Highland Moray Fisheries Local Action Group (FLAG).

- f) Flood Area Risk Management – Local Plan District Executive Steering Groups
Rianachd Cunnairt Cheàrnaidhean Thuiltean – Buidhnean Stiùiridh Gníomhach Sgìre a’ Phlana Ionadail

The Highland Council were designated as the Lead Local Authority for the “Highland and Argyll Local Plan District” and as a Responsible Authority within the “Findhorn, Nairn and Speyside Local Plan District”, the latter Local Plan District being led by Moray Council. Executive Steering Groups for each Local Plan District helps to direct and facilitate all work that results on the agreement of the Flood Risk Management Strategy and the delivery of the Flood Risk Management Plan.

The Committee:-

- i. **AGREED** to split the membership so an individual member was appointed to each of the Executive Steering Groups for the “Highland and Argyll Local Plan District” and the “Findhorn, Nairn and Speyside Local Plan District”;
- ii. **AGREED TO RECOMMEND** to the Council to appoint Ms S Fanet* to the “Highland and Argyll Local Plan District” Steering Group; and
- iii. **AGREED** to appoint Mr M Green to the “Findhorn, Nairn and Speyside Local Plan District” Steering Group.

7. Revenue Monitoring Final Outturn 2022 and Quarter 1 to 30 June 2022 Fìor Shuidheachadh Sgrùdadh Teachd-a-steach 2022 agus Cairteal 1 gu 30 Ògmhios 2022

There had been circulated Report No. ECI/9/2022 dated 1 August 2022 by the Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure, Environment & Economy.

The Committee **NOTED**:-

- i. the more detailed reporting of gross income and gross expenditure to improve scrutiny of net budgets as set out in the Appendices of the report;
- ii. the revenue budget final outturn position for the year ended 31 March 2022;
- iii. the revenue monitoring position for the period to 30 June 2022;
- iv. net spend at the end of Quarter 1, totalled £4.413m;
- v. based on the best available information to date, a service budget gap of £1.580m was forecast to end of 2022/23;
- vi. many areas of the Service rely on income to pay for services, and this continued to improve;
- vii. the budget gap might change positively or negatively depending on applying expenditure and recruitment controls, aligning services to meet budget savings agreed and continuing income recovery in 2022/23; and
- viii. further adjustments would be made in future quarterly reporting to reflect the updated apportionment of costs and savings across the new structure.

8. Capital Monitoring – Quarter 1 2022/23 Sgrùdadh Calpa – Cairteal 1 2022/23

There had been circulated Report No. ECI/10/2022 dated 12 August 2022 by the Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure, Environment and Economy.

Members thanked staff for their work on various projects and welcomed the move to electric vessels for the Corran Ferry, the completion of the West Link, Inverness, and the detailed design work for the Inshes junction.

The Committee **NOTED** the financial position as at 30 June 2022 and the estimated year end forecast.

9. Dingwall Business Park Flood Bund Leasachadh Bhancaichean Tuile Pàirc Gnothachais Inbhir Pheofharain

There had been circulated Report No. ECI/11/2022 dated 28 July 2022 by the Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure, Environment and Economy.

During discussion, attention was drawn to the importance of the Flood Bund to the Dingwall Business Park and the economy of the town. Reference was made to recent planning applications that had been approved by the North Planning Applications Committee and called in by Scottish Ministers as a result of flooding issues. Reference was also made to the importance of seeking funding for major projects from all appropriate sources.

The Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the update relating to the Dingwall Business Park flood bund; and
- ii. **APPROVED** in principle the adoption of the flood bund subject to agreement over the construction and delivery of the upgrade to the flood bund and also agreement for the resulting liabilities associated with adoption.

10. School Street Zones Trial Deuchainn Sònaichean Sràide Sgoile

There had been circulated Report No. ECI/12/2022 dated 1 June 2022 by the Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure and Environment.

The Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the outcomes of the School Street Zones in other Local Authorities in Scotland;
- ii. **AGREED** that the sites identified in paragraph 9.2 of the report were selected as the pilot locations;
- iii. **APPROVED** an 18-month trial of School Streets Zones at four locations in Highland as per paragraph 9.1 of the report; and
- iv. **NOTED** that the findings of the trial and a recommended policy position would be brought to a future meeting of this Committee.

11. Planning Enforcement Charter Cairt Cur an Gnìomh Dealbhaidh

There had been circulated Report No. ECI/13/2022 dated 21 July 2022 by the Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure and Environment.

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

- the Planning Enforcement Charter was required to be reviewed, updated and published every 2 years at intervals not exceeding 2 years. It was last reviewed in 2019 and the reason for this was queried. It was explained that the Charter had not been brought to Committee for renewal in 2021 due to restructuring relating to planning enforcement and resourcing issues due to Covid-19;
- the target for responding to initial reports that might require enforcement action was within 5 days. It was felt the target in the Charter was lacking ambition and all targets set should be striving for continual improvement. It was advised that the target date had been reduced from 7 days to 5 days in response to changes to the structure of enforcement that had been put in place. The Service was currently working to a response time of 2.8 days and this would be kept under review;
- before the Charter was published it was requested it be checked for spelling, grammar, punctuation;
- it was disappointing that the Council used retrospective planning to resolve problems as this was not the best way forward; and
- the Council had considered over 3000 planning applications last year despite limited resources with the Planning Service. If the Charter was adopted there was a need to increase the number of Enforcement Officers and Planning Officers. This would increase revenue and improve timescales for considering planning applications.

The Committee **AGREED** to adopt the Charter as set out in Appendix 1 to the report as the Council's statement of planning enforcement policy and procedure.

12. Nature Restoration Fund 2022/23 Maoin Ath-stèidheachadh Nàdair 2022/23

There had been circulated Report No. ECI/14/2022 dated 1 August 2022 by the Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure and Environment.

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

- following discussions with farmers along the A96 trunk road, it was queried if any consideration had been given to using some of the Nature Restoration Fund to install a hedge along some sections of the A96 to prevent sand and wash coming onto the road causing blockages of the road during periods of heavy rain. An undertaking was given to speak to farmers and landowners concerned and provide them with details of the fund;
- it was welcomed that the report referred to restoration on land and sea. However, there were no examples of seabed restoration projects in the report. Therefore, it was queried, why there were not more projects for the restoration of maritime assets as restoring the seabed played an important part in the efforts to stop climate change. It was advised that the Nature Restoration fund relied on projects coming forward for consideration and it was a very small fund to target projects between £2.5k and £20k. The larger Scottish Government Nature Scot fund was more suited to bigger projects and efforts would be made to target organisations that deal with the coastal environment and restoration of the seabed; and
- it was highlighted that the coastline the Highland Council was responsible for was larger than the coastline of France and almost as big as Argentina and this should be emphasised to the UK and Scottish Governments so that they are fully aware of all the issues the Council had with harbours, ports and slipways. The benefits Crown Estate funding could have to the regeneration of coastal areas was also highlighted.

The Committee:-

- i. **AGREED** the funding proposals as set out in paragraph 6 of the report; and
- ii. **AGREED** that funding decisions in respect of the grant scheme be delegated as set out in paragraph 7 of the report .

13. Scottish Biodiversity Strategy Consultation Co-chomhairle Ro-innleachd Bith-iomadachd na h-Alba

There had been circulated Report No. ECI/15/2022 dated 1 August 2022 by the Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure and Environment.

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

- it was highlighted that responses to the consultation were excellent and welcomed an action plan in due course;
- whilst there were no Gaelic implications arising from the report, as this was a Scottish Government strategy, they would have their own Gaelic requirements to be met. In the consultation responses, all headings and main titles would also be translated into Gaelic; and
- improving biodiversity was closely linked with land reform measures and consideration should be given to including reference to land reform in the consultation responses.

The Committee:-

- i. **AGREED** the response to the consultation as set out in Appendix 1 of the report; and
- ii. **NOTED** the key points outlined in the draft Scottish Biodiversity Strategy set out in the report.

14. Visitor Management Plan Plana Rianachd Luchd-tadhail

There had been circulated Report No. ECI/16/2022 dated 8 July 2022 by the Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure and Environment.

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

- in terms of hand dryers being installed in public toilets, with the current cost of electricity, how were community groups operating these toilets going to be able to cope with significant increases in energy costs; and
- there was good awareness of the pressures on infrastructure along the North Coast 500. If there were operational priorities which Members felt required addressed then they were advised to contact Officers to look at how these could be implemented within the Visitor Management budget. In particular, efforts had been made to engage with privately owned caravan sites to try to get them to open up their waste disposal facilities for general use and there had been some success with this. Further, the Council had submitted a bid to the UK Government's Levelling up Fund for improvements along the NC500 route.

The Committee **NOTED** the information provided by each Service on progress in delivering the 2022 Visitor Management Plan actions and associated budget spend for Q1 as detailed in Appendix 1 of the report.

15. Tourism Infrastructure Bun-structar Turasachd

There had been circulated Report No. ECI/17/2022 dated 1 August 2022 by the Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure and Environment.

The Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the background to and criteria for the Rural Tourism Infrastructure Fund and the current position with all funded projects in Highland; and
- ii. **APPROVED** the Strategic Tourism Infrastructure Development Plan and its designed purpose to best direct future national and local area-based tourism infrastructure spend.

16. Employability Services Seirbheisean So-fhastachd

There had been circulated Report No. ECI/18/2022 dated 3 August 2022 by the Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure and Environment.

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

- it was important to develop a young workforce;
- disappointment was expressed that some Council apprentices had not been enrolled for college timeously; and

- ideally those looking for employment could be matched to sectors where there was a workforce shortage.

The Committee:-

- NOTED** and welcome the No One Left Behind policy and financial agenda which was supporting the design and development of a Highland unique employability service;
- APPROVED** the attached Delivery Plan 2022-25 and Activity Budget for 2022/23; and
- AGREED** that a Members Employability Workshop be arranged to explain further the services offered, the range of clients benefitting from these services and their progression. The Workshop would also outline the development and improvement actions underway by the Council and its HEP partners.

17. Inverness and Highland City Region Deal Cùmhnant Baile Roinne Inbhir Nis agus na Gàidhealtachd

There had been circulated Report No. ECI/19/2022 dated 1 August 2022 by the Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure and Environment.

It was good to see the wide variety of projects throughout Highland coming on stream. However, given the rise in inflation, it was important to keep a tight control on costs.

The Committee **NOTED** progress with the City Region Deal during the first quarter of 2022/23.

18. Community Regeneration Funds Maoinean Ath-bheòthachadh Coimhearsnachd

There had been circulated Report No. ECI/20/2022 dated 5 August 2022 by the Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure and Environment.

The Committee:-

- APPROVED** the aspiration to develop a Highland approach to Community Regeneration including Place Based Plans for all parts of Highland, representative local decision-making structures and multi annual, multi fund grant allocations;
- AGREED** to petition the Scottish Government to seek the required flexibility to roll over and combine annual financial allocations as required from the various external grant funds received;
- AGREED** arrangements, as detailed in Appendices 1, 2 and 3 of the report, for the management of the Highland Coastal Communities Fund, the Place Based Investment Programme and the Community Led Local Development Programme;
- AGREED** to appoint Mr I Brown to represent the Council on the Highland Strategic Local Advisory Group; and
- AGREED** the proposed Change Request process as detailed in Appendix 4 of the report.

19. Draft Directorate Service Plan 2022/23 Dreachd Phlana Seirbheis Buidhinn-stiùiridh 2022/23

There had been circulated Report No. ECI/21/2022 dated 10 August 2022 by the Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure and Environment.

The Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the draft Directorate Service Plan for 2022/23; and
- ii. **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 this report.

20. Minutes Geàrr-chunntas

The Committee **NOTED** the following Minutes of the Planning Applications Committees (PAC): -

- i. North Planning Applications Committee held on 25 January 2022, 15 March 2022, 26 April 2022, 15 June 2022 and 29 June 2022; and
- ii. South Planning Applications Committee held on 8 February 2022, 22 March 2022 and 28 April 2022.

21. Exclusion of the Public Às-dùnadh a' Phobail

The Committee **RESOLVED** that, under Section 50A(4) of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973, the public be excluded from the meeting for the following item on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraphs 6 and 9 of Part 1 of Schedule 7A of the Act.

22. Property Transactions Monitoring Report Aithisg Sgrùdaidh Ghnothachasan Seilbhe

There had been circulated to Members only Report No. ECI/22/2022 dated 26 July 2022 by the Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure, Environment & Economy.

Following discussion, the Committee **NOTED** the recommendations as detailed in the report.

23. Affordable Housing Development Leasachadh Taigheadais Neo-chosgail

There had been circulated to Members only Report No. ECI/23/2022 dated 25 August 2022 by the Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure, Environment & Economy.

Following discussion, the Committee **NOTED** the recommendations as detailed in the report.

24. Land and Property Fearann agus Cuid-seilbh

There had been circulated to Members only Report No. ECI/24/2022 dated 27 July 2022 by the Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure, Environment & Economy.

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

The meeting ended at 12.35 pm.