

10. Notices of Motion Brathan Gluasaid

Where relevant, Notices of Motion and Starred Items coming before Council (and Notices of Motion coming before Area Committees) for consideration shall be accompanied with a factual assessment completed by the "Chief Financial Officer" being the person designated by the Council for the purpose of Section 95 of the 1973 Act identifying whether there are financial implications arising from adopting the Motion/Starred Item. If financial implications have been identified, the proposal will be referred to the next meeting of the Corporate Resources Committee for a full assessment and referral back to the next Council.

The following Notices of Motion have been received by the Head of Corporate Governance

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(i) "Council recognises:

- we are in the middle of the worst cost of living crisis for 50 years. Inflation is forecast to hit 18% next year.
- The Highlands is already one of the worst areas in the country for fuel poverty with 1 in 3 of our households already in it, double the national average.
- the energy plan proposed by the UK government will do nothing to help those reliant on heating oil and other domestic fuels which are not included in the energy price cap.
- many households are already at the brink and will struggle to pay their heating bills with prices as they are, even if the October price increase is frozen.
- as well as heating and electricity costs, the costs of the daily commute have increased with active travel and public transport being non-viable options for many Highland residents given the distance they have to travel.

Therefore council shall:

- Set up 'heat hubs' in council owned buildings to provide warm spaces for those unable to heat their homes in the winter months.
- Organise a local Emergency Cost-of-Living Summit, with invites to all relevant parties including Citizens Advice, food banks, local trade unions, public transport operators, NHS Highland, and MP/MSPs to explore local solutions to the cost of living crisis.
- Review all council owned housing for retrofitting of energy saving measures such as insulation to protect our tenants from price increases and keep them warmer this winter.
- Review eligibility criteria for all council administered benefits to ensure these criteria still include all those who need support given the projected massive rise in fuel and food bills.
- Review the council's food waste strategy to ensure no unused or expiring food from council premises, including schools, ends up in landfill.
- Revive and support the community resilience structures which helped many communities through Covid, including offering council-owned kitchens such as school/community centres for the provision of hot meals.
- Write to the UK Government with the following asks:
 - o Develop a support scheme for households reliant on heating oil and other domestic fuels currently excluded from all proposed plans

- Extend the Rural Fuel Duty Relief Scheme to 10p a litre, and expand the scheme to cover all postcodes in the Highland area
- Reduction in the standard rate of VAT to 17.5%, saving the average Highland household £600 a year
- A re-introduction of the pensions triple lock to support the Highland's pensioners, saving elderly residents an additional £300.
- Restore the Universal Credit supplement of £20, which was cancelled by the UK Government in September 2021, and double to £40/week
- Write to the Scottish Government with the following asks:
 - Cancel the 3.8% rise in rail fares, and expand coverage of the Highland Railcard Scheme to all Highland postcodes and all Highland rail services
 - Increase disability benefits to the maximal allowable amount as opposed to the current plan to copy the UK Government which will leave benefits lagging up to 4% behind inflation
 - Fund urgent insulation schemes to help keep people warm this winter, and protect them from massive price rises, noting even the pre-pandemic rate of insulation in Scotland would take 164 years to insulate every vulnerable household”

Signed: David Gregg Angela MacLean Alex Graham

S95 officer assessment of financial implications:

Dependant on how the actions contained in this motion will be implemented it is anticipated that the following aspects of this motion would have a financial impact, the magnitude of which cannot be determined at this point in time:

- Set up 'heat hubs' in council owned buildings to provide warm spaces
- Organise a local Emergency Cost-of-Living Summit
- Review all council owned housing for retrofitting of energy saving measures
- Review eligibility criteria for all council administered benefits to ensure these criteria still include all those who need support
- Revive and support the community resilience structures which helped many communities through Covid, including offering council-owned kitchens such as school/community centres for the provision of hot meals

- (ii) “Hundreds of thousands of young people across Scotland have signed up for free bus travel since the Young Persons Free Bus Travel Scheme launched in April this year. Registration is higher in some local authority areas than others, and Highlands ranks very low with a registration rate of only 28%, compared to a high of 91% in Inverclyde, and 78% in Western Isles (data from 20th June).

This Council wants to ensure that all young people under 22 in Highland can access their right to free bus travel, and has identified that more young people are accessing free bus travel in areas where local authorities are working closely with schools and public libraries to facilitate registration.

This Council recognises that many young people and families need help to register, especially if they do not have easy access to the required ID documents to apply for free bus travel. This Council recognises it needs to provide information and support for young people and their families to apply online and offline, and will work further with schools, Council support services, and public libraries to help facilitate

registration so that all young people, including refugees and those seeking asylum, can access the free bus travel scheme. This Council undertakes to encourage greater take-up rates of the under 22s free bus passes in Highland”.

Signed: Kate Willis Ryan MacKintosh

S95 officer assessment of financial implications:

It is anticipated that enacting this motion would be done by using existing Council and HLH staffing resources. Whilst this would not require the commitment of additional financial resources there may be an opportunity cost associated with this as staff have to place other tasks in abeyance to deliver the actions required by this motion.

- (iii) “Council notes that, following the planning decision of 18th August 2022, the Ironworks in Inverness will be forced to suspend a number of its operations, including live music performances, unless it can secure a new venue.

Council further notes that failure to find a new home for the Ironworks will leave the Highlands without a purpose-use live events venue with a capacity of over 1000 attendees.

Council affirms its support for the Ironworks to continue its operations in Inverness. It agrees that cultivating the Highlands as a cultural hub is both desirable and necessary for the retention and recruitment of the working-age population, as well as being key for mental health and wellbeing across the Highlands.

Council directs the administration to work with the management of the Ironworks to ensure that this cultural asset is not lost to the Highlands”.

Signed: Molly Nolan Morven-May MacCallum

S95 officer assessment of financial implications:

No direct financial implications are anticipated as a result of this motion

- (iv) “This council notes that tax payers of Highland pay the fifth highest council tax as a percentage of average annual average income out of all 32 Scottish local authorities and recognises that The Highland Council are failing to meet Its key performance targets as outlined in the customer service charter.

In the interest of providing an acceptable level of service to taxpayers. This Council instructs the Executive Chief Officer for Performance and Governance to present a Customer Service improvement plan to the next full Council Meeting outlining what action must be taken to meet these targets and what monitoring will be in place to continually measure performance. This Council instructs that a new customer charter is drafted to reflect the level of service that can be expected in the interim period”.

Signed: Ruraidh Stewart Helen Crawford Isabelle MacKenzie

S95 officer assessment of financial implications:

It is anticipated that development of a Customer Service Improvement Plan and new customer charter would be done by using existing Council staffing resource. Whilst this would not require the commitment of additional financial resources there may be an opportunity cost associated with this as staff have to place other tasks in abeyance to deliver the actions required by this motion.

Once developed, an assessment can be made of whether the implementation of those items will require additional resource.

- (v) "It is Council policy to achieve more efficient business practices, and to work towards reaching net zero carbon pollution across its operations by 2025.

"Previous Council practice of providing printed paper copies of all committee papers and associated documents to all members was halted a few years ago. Up until then some half a million sheets of paper were printed out for members each year at a significant cost to council tax payers.

"To reduce consumption in this current climate emergency, save staff time, and save money, this Council therefore reaffirms the policy that officers will not print out papers for members where the material is available online.

"Recognising that some members will be less computer literate than others, this Council agrees that ICT runs a workshop, or series of workshops, on navigating, annotating and working with PDFs, the sharepoint facility and other Council software and Council smartphones to help members transition from paper'.

Signed: Chris Ballance Bill Lobban

S95 officer assessment of financial implications:

It is anticipated that the proposed workshops would be run by using existing Council staffing resource. Whilst this would not require the commitment of additional financial resources there may be an opportunity cost associated with this as staff have to place other tasks in abeyance to deliver the actions required by this motion.

It is not possible to quantify what level of printing of Council papers is still taking place however any reduction in print volumes that arises as a result of the proposed workshops will deliver a saving.

- (vi) "Council recently gave the President of Ukraine the Freedom of the City of Inverness as a mark of solidarity with the struggle of the Ukrainian people.

This Council now wishes to offer further, more practical, support for Ukrainian people in Inverness.

This Council therefore instructs E & I committee to investigate a study into the feasibility and cost of offering a free one year bus pass to all refugees and asylum seekers who have arrived in Highland Region since March 2022, and to report on this to the next full Council meeting for a decision then on whether to implement the scheme.

Signed: Ryan MacKintosh Chris Balance

S95 officer assessment of financial implications:

It is anticipated that the proposed study would be done by using existing Council staffing resource. Whilst this would not require the commitment of additional financial resources there may be an opportunity cost associated with this as staff have to place other tasks in abeyance to deliver the actions required by this motion.

That study and subsequent report to council should include an assessment of the cost of delivering the proposed policy.

- (vii) “This Council restates its acceptance of a climate and ecological emergency, as agreed in May 2019. The success of the Archimedes screw on the River Ness has demonstrated the potential to produce renewable energy using Council-owned assets and funding streams such as Salix.

In July National Grid announced a £7bn upgrade in transmission systems in the north of Scotland to deal with the expected growth in renewable electricity. (National Grid ESO ‘Pathway to 2030’ July 2022). It is vital that the Council maximises its involvement in the growth of renewables to ensure that the benefits of increased renewable generation support the council tax-payer, rather than the shareholders of multinational developers. It is time for the Council to develop an ambitious, bold and courageous strategy, to match Tom Johnston’s visionary Power from the Glens project of the 1940’s, by using Council land and resources to maximise income to the Council.

In recognition of the need to move to Net Zero as quickly as possible, Council agrees that, working with the ongoing outsourced review into income possibilities from renewables, senior service leaders formulate a strategy, Power to the People, to maximise the use of Council-owned buildings, car-parks and land for the production of renewable energy, by solar, wind, water, and ground and water-source heating, a strategy which identifies all potential appropriate locations for power production, and outlines potential funding opportunities, for presentation to the Climate Change Committee for consideration at its first meeting in 2023”.

Signed: Chris Ballance Kate Willis

S95 officer assessment of financial implications:

It is unclear whether the Council has sufficient internal resource to develop the proposed strategy, Power to the People. If it does not additional resource will be required. There may be an opportunity cost associated with any time spent by existing staff on the development of this strategy as they may have to place other tasks in abeyance to develop the strategy.

As part of the strategy development it is essential that it includes an assessment of the resources required to implement it as well as the benefits it would deliver.