

The Highland Council

Minutes of Special Meeting of the **City of Inverness Area Committee** held in the Council Chamber, Council Headquarters, Glenurquhart Road, Inverness on Friday 4 November 2022 at 9.30 am.

Present:

Mr C Aitken (Teams)	Ms E Knox (Teams)
Mr C Ballance	Mrs I MacKenzie
Mr B Boyd	Mr R MacKintosh (Teams)
Mr I Brown (Chair)	Mr A MacKintosh
Mr M Cameron (Teams)	Ms K MacLean
Mrs G Campbell-Sinclair	Mr D Macpherson
Mr A Christie	Mrs B McAllister
Mr D Fraser (Teams)	Mrs M Reid
Mr K Gowans (Teams)	Mrs T Robertson
Mr A Graham	Mr A Sinclair (Teams)
Mrs J Hendry	

In attendance:

Mr A Gunn, Executive Chief Officer, Communities and Place
Ms A Clark, Head of Community Support and Engagement
Ms S McKandie, Head of Revenues and Customer Services
Mr D Haas, Inverness City Area Manager
Ms L Harrison, Accountant
Miss J MacLennan, Principal Administrator
Miss M Murray, Committee Administrator
Ms R Ross, Committee Officer

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

Mr I Brown in the Chair

Business

1. Apologies for Absence
Leisgeulan

Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of Ms H Crawford and Mr D Gregg.

2. Declarations of Interest
Foillseachaidhean Com-pàirt

There were no Declarations of Interest.

3. Inverness Common Good Fund: Financial Monitoring and Budget Allocation Report
Maoin Math Coitcheann Inbhir Nis: Aithisg Sgrùdadh Ionmhasail agus Riarachadh Buidseit

There had been circulated Report No CIA/25/22 dated 20 October 2022 by the Executive Chief Officer, Communities and Place.

The recommendations in the report were as follows:-

- i. consider the 2022/23 financial monitoring report for the six months to 30 September 2022; note the predicted outturn and associated underspend and note the potential discretionary areas of the budget where spending could be redirected;
- ii. consider utilising £0.100m of the predicted underspend from the 2022/23 budget to increase the single tier payment for those applicants that satisfied the eligibility criteria for the Winter Payment Scheme for 2022/23 to £150 in the light of the Cost of Living Crisis;
- iii. consider and agree any areas of the budget they may wish to repurpose for poverty alleviation measures;
- iv. consider and discuss the type of poverty alleviation measures they would wish to see proposed, noting any proposals would be subject to a report to CIAC on 24 November 2022, noting that this is subject to and dependent upon the type of proposals suggested and the associated work to develop these in sufficient time for the meeting on the 24 November 2022; and
- v. agree to a series of Members' workshops to be held in preparation of the ICGF Budget for 2023/24, with a focus on establishing priorities for the ICGF, planned to be presented to the first scheduled meeting of the CIAC in 2023.

The Provost of Inverness and Area, Mrs G Campbell-Sinclair, stated that, given the current financial uncertainty, the rise in inflation and interest rates, the recent budget statement by the Scottish Government's Deputy First Minister, John Swinney, and the financial turmoil at Westminster as Chancellor Jeremy Hunt's budget statement on 17 November 2022 was awaited, it was important that the Committee moved forward, as well-informed as it could be, under what were unprecedented circumstances.

Mrs G Campbell-Sinclair, seconded by Mr C Ballance, then **MOVED** that the Committee:-

- i. agree recommendation 2 on today's agenda to ensure that the winter payment of £150 was not delayed; and
- ii. defer all other business on today's agenda to the City of Inverness Area Committee on 24 November 2022.

Other Members expressed opposition to the proposal, commenting that the purpose of today's meeting was to discuss poverty alleviation measures ahead of the meeting of the Committee on 24 November. It was suggested that the Council's Political Administration did not want scrutiny of the budget or to discuss different proposals such as providing three support workers to help elderly people and check on their wellbeing rather than spending £150k on five hours of entertainment for Hogmanay. To spring such a proposal on Members at the meeting was unfair and was not a good look for any Committee to adopt. Members were urged to vote against the proposal, continue with the meeting and use the time to have the intended debate on the Inverness Common Good Fund, looking at different directions and strategies, that would help the Committee come to a consensus that would benefit the vulnerable people of the city.

Additionally, concern was expressed that the Scottish Conservative and Unionist group had not had a pre-Committee briefing and that matters were not being communicated correctly. Members had made an effort to come to Council Headquarters for the meeting and had expected a full agenda, and it was felt that nothing had been achieved during the current session due to the postponement/rescheduling of meetings.

Mr A Christie, seconded by Mrs T Robertson, then moved, as an **AMENDMENT**, to proceed with today's agenda as laid out and notified to the public and press.

On a vote being taken, the **MOTION** received 12 votes and the **AMENDMENT** received 8 votes, with no abstentions. The **MOTION** was therefore **CARRIED**, the votes having been cast as follows:-

For the Motion:

Mr C Ballance, Mr B Boyd, Mr I Brown, Mr M Cameron, Mrs G Campbell-Sinclair, Mr D Fraser, Mr K Gowans, Mrs J Hendry, Ms E Knox, Mr R MacKintosh, Ms K MacLean, and Mrs M Reid.

For the Amendment:

Mr C Aitken, Mr A Christie, Mr A Graham, Mrs I MacKenzie, Mr A MacKintosh, Mr D Macpherson, Mrs B McAllister and Mrs T Robertson.

During further discussion, some Members expressed dissatisfaction at the manner in which business had been conducted and an assurance was sought that no money would be spent on festive lights between now and the meeting of the City of Inverness Area Committee on 24 November 2022. In response, it was explained that the festive lights budget had been agreed by the Committee in February 2022 and advice was provided that there was no basis to change this position until the Committee had debated the matter.

Decision

Notice of
Amendment

The Committee **AGREED**:-

- i. recommendation 2 on today's agenda (as detailed above) to ensure that the winter payment of £150 was not delayed; and
- ii. to defer all other business on today's agenda to the City of Inverness Area Committee on 24 November 2022.

The meeting concluded at 9.50 am.