

The Highland Council

Minutes of Meeting of the **Corporate Resources Committee** held in the Chamber, Council Headquarters, Inverness on Wednesday 22 February 2023 at 10.30 am.

Present:

Ms S Atkin (substitute)	Mr D Louden
Mr M Baird	Mr A MacDonald
Mr R Bremner	Mr G Mackenzie
Mr J Bruce	Mr S Mackie
Mrs G Campbell-Sinclair	Mr D Millar
Mr A Christie	Mr C Munro
Mr R Gale	Mr P Oldham
Mr S Kennedy	Mr R Stewart
Mr B Lobban	

Non-Members also present:

Ms S Fanet	Mr R MacKintosh
Mr J Finlayson	Mr T MacLennan
Mr K Gowans	Mr J McGillivray
Mrs B Jarvie	Mr M Reiss

Officials in Attendance:

Mrs K Lackie, Interim Chief Executive
Mr M MacLeod, Interim Depute Chief Executive
Mr E Foster, Head of Finance, Resources and Finance
Mrs S McKandie, Head of Revenues and Customer Services, Resources and Finance
Ms E Barrie, Interim Head of HR, Resources and Finance
Mr D Scott, ICT Transformation Manager, Performance and Governance
Mrs L Dunn, Joint Democratic Services Manager, Performance and Governance
Ms A Macrae, Senior Committee Administrator, Performance and Governance
Ms R Ross, Committee Administrator, Performance and 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 D Louden in the Chair

BUSINESS

1. Apologies for Absence Leisgeulan

Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of Mr M Green and Mr A Rhind.

2. Declarations of Interest Foillseachaidhean Com-pàirt

The Committee **NOTED** the following:

- Transparency Statements: Items 5, 6.b, 10, 11.ii – Mr A Christie
- Transparency Statement: Item 9 – Mr R Stewart

3. **Preliminaries/Good News** **Naidheachdan Matha**

Preliminaries

The Chair advised that this was Mr E Foster's last meeting of the Committee before leaving the Council to take up a new post. He paid tribute to Mr Foster's sage advice during his tenure which had been highly valued and appreciated by Members and conveyed best wishes to Mr Foster and family for the future.

Good News

The Chair advised that the Council had signed up to the Scottish Government Young Person's Guarantee Scheme which demonstrated the organisation's ongoing commitment to the supporting young people into the world of work with the aim of retaining young talent within Highland. He detailed the activity of work being undertaken for young people within the Council through Scheme, The My Future, My Success programme, the Employability Service and Modern Apprenticeships. The Council was committed to providing work experience and where possible to support requests from schools/colleges. The Council was also committed to supporting the most vulnerable young people particularly with barriers to attendance and vulnerabilities to achieving a positive destination after education.

The Chair acknowledged the excellent collaboration within the Council on this activity of work and thanked all officers involved in delivering on the commitment of the Young Person Guarantee Scheme.

The Committee **NOTED** this item.

4. **Late Submission of Expenses Claims** **A' Cur A-steach airson Cosgaisean Anmoch**

It had previously been agreed by the Corporate Resources Committee that late submissions of Elected Members expenses claims would be presented to the Committee for approval.

The Committee **APPROVED** the following claims:

- i. Mr Laurie Fraser £88.20 mileage for the months of June and August 2022; and
- ii. Mr Russell Jones £495.90 mileage for the months of July, August, September and October 2022.

5. **Corporate Revenue and Capital Monitoring Report to 31 December 2022** **Aithisg Teachd-a-steach Corporra agus Sgrùdadh gu 31 Dùbhlachd 2022**

Transparency Statement: Mr A Christie made a Transparency Statement in respect of this item as he had a connection in his capacity as a Non-executive director of NHS Highland. However, having applied the objective test, reviewed his position in relation to the item and any personal connection, he did not consider that he had an interest to declare.

a. **Corporate Revenue Monitoring to 31 December 2022** **Sgrùdadh Teachd-a-steach Corporra gu 31 Dùbhlachd 2022**

There had been circulated Report No **RES/01/23** by the Head of Corporate Finance.

During discussion, Members raised the following main points:-

- concern at the scheduling of the Corporate Resources Committee close to the forthcoming full Council meetings in March 2023, particularly the budget meeting. An assurance was provided that the scheduling of meetings would be considered to ensure this situation did not arise next year;
- confirmation was sought and provided that it was hoped there would be further improvement in the outturn position by the end of the next quarter, factoring in the effect of industrial action by teachers and the recent mild weather in relation to winter maintenance. However, it was important Members were mindful of the potential impact of unforeseen events;
- clarification was sought and provided that in relation to the significant underspend on Covid 19 funding, a review of earmarked reserves would form part of the budget papers to be considered by the Council on 2 March 2023; and
- the contribution the management of staff vacancies had made to the savings achieved on the Education and Learning budget. It was confirmed this information would be provided directly to Mr R Stewart outwith the meeting.

Thereafter, the Committee **NOTED** the:

- i. financial position of the General Fund and HRA revenue budgets as at 31 December 2022 and the estimated year end forecast; and
- ii. status of budgeted savings in the year.

b. Corporate Capital Monitoring to 31 December 2022
Sgrùdadh Calpa Corporra gu 31 Dùbhlachd

There had been circulated Report No **RES/02/23** by the Head of Corporate Finance.

During discussion, Members raised the following main points:-

- concern at the impact of the delay by the Scottish Government in announcing the successful projects for funding from the Learning Estate Investment Programme on the ability of the Council to develop and set its capital programme;
- there was awareness of the current challenges in terms of contractor availability and rising inflation, however the Capital Programme was essential to communities and economic development in the Highlands; and
- the difficult circumstances facing Government and the Council at the current time. A seminar on the Capital Programme had been arranged at which it would be helpful to have Members input. Detailed consideration of the Programme was required irrespective of the Scottish Government's announcement.

Thereafter, Mr A Christie seconded by Mr A MacDonald moved to approve the recommendations as set out in the report along with a further recommendation that a letter be sent by the end of this month signed by all Group Leaders expressing concern over the delay in announcing the successful projects for funding from the Learning Estate Investment Programme. The letter should include reference to the disappointment the failure to announce was having on children, parents, and staff at Beaully Primary, Dunvegan Primary, Park Primary, Tornagrain Primary and St Clements school, as well as the consequent delay the Highland Council now faced as a direct result in setting the Capital Programme.

Mr D Loudon seconded by Mr C Munro moved as an amendment the recommendations as set out in the report.

On a vote being taken, there were 6 votes for the motion, 10 for the amendment and no abstentions, and the **AMENDMENT** was carried, the votes having been cast as follows:

For the motion: Mr M Baird, Mr J Bruce, Mr A Christie, Mr R Gale, Mr A MacDonald, Mr R Stewart

For the amendment: Mrs S Atkin, Mr R Bremner, Mr G Campbell-Sinclair, Mr S Kennedy, Mr B Lobban, Mr D Louden, Mr G Mackenzie, Mr D Millar, Mr C Munro, Mr P Oldham

Decision

The Committee **NOTED** the:

- i. spend for Q3 2022/23, the estimated year end outturn and the funding profile;
- ii. whole life financial overview and risk assessment rating for the major capital projects; and
- iii. review of the capital programme remained ongoing and an update would be brought to Council in March 2023.

6. Revenue and Performance Monitoring to 31 December 2022 Sgrùdadh Teachd-a-steach agus Coileanadh gu 31 Dùbhlachd 2022

a. Depute Chief Executive's Service Seirbheis an Iar-Àrd-Oifigeir

There had been circulated Report No **RES/03/23** by the Interim Chief Executive/Chief Executive.

The Committee considered and **NOTED** the:

- i. latest forecasted outturn for Quarter 3 for the 2022/23 financial year; and
- ii. performance information provided at Section 7 of the report.

b. Resources and Finance Service Seirbheis nan Goireasan agus an Ionmhais

Transparency Statement: Mr A Christie made a Transparency Statement in respect of this item as he had a connection in his capacity as General Manager of Inverness, Badenoch & Strathspey Citizen's Advice Bureau. However, having applied the objective test, reviewed his position in relation to the item and any personal connection, he did not consider that he had an interest to declare.

There had been circulated Report No **RES/04/23** by the Interim Chief Executive.

The Committee **NOTED** the:

- i. Revenue position for Quarter 3 period to 31 December 2022;
- ii. statutory performance indicators, local key performance measures and where available, comparisons to Scottish averages; and
- iii. effectiveness of the standard and level of services provided by the Resources and Finance Directorate and alignment with the Council's commitment to Best Value and continuous improvement.

c. Performance and Governance Service
Seirbheis a' Choileanaidh agus an Riaghlachais

There had been circulated Report No **RES/05/23** by the Executive Chief Officer Performance and Governance/Interim Chief Executive.

The Committee **NOTED** the:

- i. revenue monitoring position for the period 1 April 2022 to 31 December 2022;
- ii. Directorate was on track to deliver all approved savings by the end of the financial year; and
- iii. Directorate's performance information.

7. Treasury Management - Summary of Transactions
Rianachd Ionmhais - Geàrr-chunntas Ghnothaichean

There had been circulated Report No **RES/06/23** by the Head of Corporate Finance.

In discussion, Members raised the following main points:-

- the Head of Corporate Finance be commended on converting short term loans into longer term borrowing through the Public Works Loan Board at a very favourable rate prior to the increase in interest rates, resulting in significant reductions in loan repayments for the Council;
- clarification was sought and provided that security was a main consideration for the Council when undertaking borrowing and ensuring the Council's borrowing was spread across different counterparty organisations. A counterparty limit was set for each lender to mitigate against circumstances where an individual organisation failed;
- an opinion was sought and provided on the predictions for interest rates going forward and reference was made to the importance to having flexibility in terms of having some element of short term borrowing; and
- a report be brought forward on the UK Bank Bail-in Legislation and its possible impacts to the Council. It was confirmed that a response would be provided directly to Mr T MacLennan on this request.

The Committee considered and **NOTED** the Treasury Management Summary of Transactions reports for the period to 31 December 2022.

8. Banking and Related Financial Transactions – Authorised Signatories
Gnothachasan Ionmhasail Bancaireachd is a' Buntainn ri Bancaireachd – Luchd-soidhnigidh Ùghdarraichte

There had been circulated Report No **RES/07/23** by the Head of Corporate Finance.

The Committee **APPROVED** the:

- i. deletion of Margaret Grigor, Finance Manager Corporate Budgeting, Treasury & Taxation from the list of authorised signatories for banking and related financial transactions with immediate effect;
- ii. deletion of Edward Foster, Head of Corporate Finance from the list of authorised signatories for banking and related financial transactions with effect from 3 March 2023; and

- iii. addition of Brian Porter, Head of Resources and Sheila McKandie, Head of Revenues and Customer Services to the authorised signatories list with immediate effect.

9. **Grievance Policy and Guidance Review and Update** **Ath-sgrùdadh is Ùrachadh den Phoileasaidh is den Stiùireadh Ghearanan**

Transparency Statement: Mr R Stewart made a Transparency Statement in respect of this item as he had a connection on the basis that a family member was an employee of Highland Council. However, having applied the objective test, reviewed his position in relation to the item and any personal connection, he did not consider that he had an interest to declare.

There had been circulated Report No **RES/08/23** by the Interim Depute Chief Executive.

- confirmation was sought and provided that the updated policy would apply only to new grievances;
- an assurance was sought and provided that the policy and guidance sought to reinforce statutory requirements and good practice;
- the number of grievances that had been submitted over the past year and the number that had progressed to a Members stage 3 hearing. It was confirmed this information would be provided directly to Mr R Stewart outwith the meeting;
- further clarity was sought and provided as to the process to be followed when an employee had both a grievance and disciplinary process being conducted in tandem;
- concern as to why union colleagues had agreed to the removal of Member involvement at stage 3 of the process on the basis this provided for extra scrutiny and was beneficial to their members and those not in a union. It was explained this was in line with best practice and without infringing the rights of an individual sought to ensure staff received an appropriate hearing for their grievance and a quicker resolution;
- it should be mandatory for all managers within the Council to receive robust induction training on human resources matters such as grievances and disciplinary processes, including retrospectively, and for refresher training to be provided; and
- the implementation of the updated policy and guidance and impact on staff would be reviewed in six months and a report brought back to the Committee.

The Committee:

- i. **APPROVED** the updated Grievance and Resolution Policy and Guidance as outlined in Sections 5 and 6 of the report; and
- ii. **AGREED** that implementation of the updated policy and guidance be monitored and reviewed.

10. **Recognition of the King's Coronation** **Aithne do Chrùnadh an Rìgh**

Transparency Statement: Mr A Christie made a Transparency Statement in respect of this item as he had a connection in his capacity as a Non-executive director of NHS Highland. However, having applied the objective test, reviewed his position in relation to the item and any personal connection, he did not consider that he had an interest to declare.

There had been circulated Report No **RES/09/23** by the Interim Chief Executive.

The Committee:

- i. **APPROVED** an additional bank holiday on Monday 8 May 2023 for all staff;
- ii. **NOTED** offices, service points, council run ELCs and schools (subject to the Scottish Government approval as outlined in paragraphs 3.5 and 4.4 of the report) would be closed; and
- iii. **NOTED** that normal emergency response would be available from services on 8 May 2023 with enhanced payments applying.

MINUTES OF MEETINGS GEÀRR-CHUNNTAS CHOINNEAMHAN

11. Minutes of Meetings Geàrr-chunntasan Choinneamhan

Transparency Statement: Mr A Christie made a Transparency Statement in respect of item 11.ii as he had a connection in his capacity as a Non-executive director of NHS Highland. However, having applied the objective test, reviewed his position in relation to the item and any personal connection, he did not consider that he had an interest to declare.

The following Minutes of Meetings had been circulated and:

- i. **APPROVED** - Central Safety Committee – 2 December 2022;
- ii. **APPROVED** - Staff Partnership Forum – 1 February 2023; and
- iii. **NOTED** - Appeals & Disputes Committee – 3 February and 17 February 2023.

The meeting was closed at 11.45pm.