

## The Highland Council

Minutes of Meeting of the **Economy and Infrastructure Committee** held in the Council Chamber, Council Headquarters, Glenurquhart Road, Inverness on Thursday, 2 February 2023 at 10.30 am.

### **Present:**

Mr C Aitken	Mr P Logue
Mr M Baird	Mr W MacKay (Remote)
Mr I Brown	Ms J McEwan
Mr M Cameron	Mr H Morrison (Remote)
Mr A Christie (Substitute)	Ms L Niven
Mr K Gowans	Mr K Rosie (Remote)
Mr M Green	Mr R Stewart (Remote)
Mr R Jones (Remote)	Ms K Willis

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

Dr C Birt (Remote)	Mr R MacKintosh
Mr R Bremner (Remote)	Mrs A McLean
Mr J Bruce	Mr T MacLennan
Ms T Collier (Remote)	Mr D Macpherson (Remote)
Ms S Fanet	Mr J McGillivray (Remote)
Mr R Gale (Remote)	Mr D Millar (Remote)
Ms M Hutchison (Remote)	Mr C Munro (Remote)
Ms E Knox (Remote)	Mr P Oldham (Remote)
Mr G MacKenzie (Remote)	

### **Officials in Attendance:**

Mr M MacLeod, Acting Depute Chief Executive and Executive Chief Officer  
Infrastructure, Environment and Economy  
Mr A Maguire, Head of Development and Regeneration  
Ms T Urry, Head of Roads and Infrastructure  
Mr A McCann, Economy and Regeneration Manager  
Mr D Chisholm, Tourism & Inward Investment Team Leader  
Mr A Puls, Environment Team Leader  
Ms N Wallace, Service Lead, Environment, Development and Active Travel  
Ms E MacIver, Principal Engineer  
Mr C Baxter, Senior Engineer  
Mr T Stott, Principal Planner  
Mr D Cowie, Principal Planner  
Mr D Summers, Principal Transport Officer  
Ms J Cromarty, Project Manager Highland Bus Partnership  
Mr N Osborne, Climate Change Manager, Performance and Governance  
Mr A MacLeod, Policy Officer, Performance and Governance  
Mr K Forbes, Property Manager (Estates Management)  
Mr G Stuart, Forestry Officer  
Mr N Young, Transportation Officer  
Miss J MacLennan, Joint Democratic Services Manager, Performance & Governance  
Mrs O Marsh, Committee Officer, Performance & 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 Mrs H Crawford, Mr A Rhind and Mrs T Robertson.

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

The Committee **NOTED** the following Declaration of Interest:-

Item 10: Mr M Green

and Transparency Statements:-

Item 8: Mr A Christie

Item 10: Mr H Morrison

Item 12: Ms S Fanet

Item 16: Mr A Christie

Item 17: Mr A Christie

#### **3. Good News Naidheachdan Matha**

The Chair informed Members of a number of items of good news as follows:-

- the Council's in-house bus pilot project had commenced operations on 4 January 2023;
- Invercoe Bridge, Lochaber, had undergone a complete bridge replacement, funded by the Scottish Government's Local Bridge Maintenance Fund and the Council's Capital Programme and the new bridge had opened to traffic in December 2022;
- the Scottish Government had awarded the Council £2.51m from its Regeneration Capital Grant Fund programme for three community-led projects in Knoydart, Tain and John O'Groats;
- the Community Regeneration Team had been working closely with prospective applicants to bring forward Expressions of Interest and completed applications for Community Regeneration Funding. It was expected that, by the end of March, some £5m would be awarded to over 100 projects, and thanks were expressed to Fiona Cameron, Programme Manager, and her small team for their work in helping communities to help themselves by identifying and delivering local regeneration projects; and

- Inverness and Cromarty Firth ports had been successful in securing Green Freeport status.

In relation to the latter, the Chair went on to state that the Green Freeport covered an extensive area in the Cromarty Firth and Inverness and meant that Highland would have a vital role in the country's transition to net zero. It had been brought about by people with different interests working collaboratively with a shared vision and it was now necessary to ensure it translated into shared success. The Council Leader had written to the Secretary of State for Scotland to welcome the news and the Council looked forward to continuing to work with the consortium to maximise the multi-generational benefits this was expected to bring for Highland communities.

It was important to acknowledge that this success was the result of the work of many people within the Council over a long period of time, including former Council Leader - Margaret Davidson, Councillor Alasdair Christie, the Convener - Councillor Bill Lobban, and the current Council Leader - Councillor Raymond Bremner. He also thanked officers for their extraordinary contribution throughout the protracted process, particularly the Chief Executive, the Executive Chief Officer, Infrastructure, Environment and Economy, the Head of Development and Regeneration and the Development Plans Manager.

Members welcomed the Chair's inclusive remarks. In addition, it was commented that Members were receiving frequent queries from constituents as to what a Green Freeport was and it was suggested it would be helpful to add some explanatory information in a prominent position on the Council's website.

The Committee otherwise **NOTED** the good news.

#### **4. Revenue and Performance Monitoring Quarter 3 to 31 December 2022 Sgrùdadh Teachd a-steach agus Coileanadh Cairteal 3 gu 31 Dùbhlachd 2022**

There had been circulated Report No. ECI/1/2023 dated 16 January 2023 by the Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure, Environment and Economy.

During discussion, Members raised the following main points:-

- in relation to lost income, information was sought, and provided, on the areas of greatest variance and what could be done to recover the situation;
- with regard to the Corran Ferry, the age of the vessels and the money being spent on repairs highlighted the importance of replacement ferries being included in the Capital Programme;
- it having been queried whether there was a plan to recruit to the vacant posts in Planning, Environment and Building Standards, it was confirmed that advertisements had just gone out for four additional Planners utilising the increased income from planning fees. In addition, information was sought, and provided, as to whether there was any correlation between a backlog in the planning team and the lack of building warrant fee income;

- a number of constituents had commented to Members that winter maintenance was noticeably worse than in previous years and a response was sought, and provided, in that regard. The Chair added that discussions were ongoing as to how the service could be improved. However, winter maintenance vehicles could only be in one place at a time and he expressed gratitude to the drivers who worked unsociable hours in extremely challenging conditions;
- planning performance was relatively good given the pressure the service was under, there having been a huge increase in the number of planning applications in recent years in addition to the impact of Covid. The recruitment of additional Planners was welcomed and Members were confident this would lead to improved performance in the next year or so; and
- concern was expressed regarding underspends relating to staff vacancies and it was queried whether the money could be re-allocated to road maintenance, particular reference being made to the poor state of the roads in Caithness.

The Committee **NOTED**:-

- i. the more detailed reporting of gross income and gross expenditure to improve scrutiny of net budgets as set out in Appendices 1-3 of the report;
- ii. the revenue monitoring position for the period to 31 December 2022;
- iii. net spend at the end of Quarter 3 totalled £22.727m;
- iv. based on the best available information to date, a service budget gap of £2.706m was forecast to end of 2022/23;
- v. many areas of the Service relied on income to pay for services, and this continued to improve;
- vi. 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;
- vii. further adjustments would be made in future quarterly reporting to reflect the updated apportionment of costs and savings across the new structure; and
- viii. scrutinised the Directorate's performance information.

## **5. Capital Monitoring Quarter 3 2022/23** **Sgrùdadh Calpa Cairteal 3 2022/23**

There had been circulated Report No. ECI/2/2023 dated 18 January 2023 by the Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure, Environment and Economy.

The Committee **NOTED**:-

- i. the financial position as at 31 December 2022; and
- ii. the estimated year end forecast.

## 6. Speed Limit Policy Update Cunntas às Ùr mu Chasg Astair

There had been circulated Report No. ECI/03/2023 dated 5 January 2023 by the Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure, Environment and Economy.

During discussion, Members raised the following main points:-

- whilst the report was welcomed, the real issue was not the designation of more 20mph zones but what was going to be done in terms of enforcement and to change the culture. Many drivers were still speeding in existing 20mph zones, putting pedestrians and cyclists at risk, and information was sought on proposed enforcement techniques and what discussions had taken place with the Police. The Chair concurred with the points raised, commenting that it was not only a matter of enforcement but of education. He confirmed that discussions would take place with the Police and that a multi-agency approach was essential to address the challenges associated with implementing 20mph zones;
- information was sought as to what lessons were being learned from other local authorities that had implemented 20mph zones, specifically The City of Edinburgh Council;
- culture change had to start somewhere and the Speed Limit Policy was welcomed as a starting point and would save lives;
- support was expressed for the proposed policy aims, bearing in mind some of the driver behaviour Members had witnessed. However, there were also good conscientious drivers who enjoyed the pleasure of motoring;
- the more slowly a vehicle travelled the less energy it carried hence there would be less damage in a collision. In addition, stopping distances were shorter at lower speeds and driver vision wider;
- the Police did not have the resources to increase their monitoring of speeds;
- having 20mph signs on the road itself was helpful;
- it was necessary to put more traffic calming measures in place. However, they could be an issue for emergency vehicles. In addition, whilst the desire to see lower speeds in housing estates and around schools was recognised, measures such as speed bumps were costly to install and had consequences for local residents in terms of noise and light disturbance and it was necessary to look at alternatives;
- it was understood Police Scotland had advised the Council the Speed Limit Policy was unenforceable and unworkable, in which case implementing it was a costly exercise for something that was unlikely to achieve the desired outcomes. It having been queried whether the advice from Police Scotland would be published, the Head of Roads and Infrastructure confirmed that she was not aware of any such advice having been received but she undertook to look into the matter;
- there was not a “one size fits all” solution, and the need for discussions with Local Members and Community Councils as to the best way forward for individual localities was emphasised. The Chair concurred, adding that site-specific solutions should be discussed at Area Committees;

- when building new housing schemes, it was necessary to take account of places for children to play safely whilst allowing traffic to move;
- an additional recommendation was proposed, namely, that a report be presented to the next meeting on additional actions and interventions that could be initiated to change culture and improve compliance. The Chair confirmed that he was happy to accept the proposed addition;
- concern was expressed that implementing the policy would lead to increased journey times which would in turn reduce productivity and make it more difficult for individuals and businesses in rural communities to access to key services. It was asked that, in discussions at Area Committees, there be a strong emphasis on the economic impact on the more fragile and remote communities in Highland; and
- the current situation in some Highland towns, such as Fort William, was confusing due to the myriad of different speed limit zones and the need for a simple recognised principle of 20mph in urban areas was emphasised.

The Committee:-

- i. **APPROVED** the Speed Limit Policy as contained in Appendix B of the report;
- ii. **NOTED** that after the policy was approved, the “Speed Limits Manual” would be finalised and distributed, including to the Roads Redesign Working Group; and
- iii. **AGREED** that a report be presented to the next meeting on additional actions and interventions that could be initiated to change culture and improve compliance.

#### **7. Infrastructure, Environment & Economy Workforce Planning 2022–2025 Planadh Feachd-obrach Bun-structair, Àrainneachd & Eaconamaidh 2022–2025**

There had been circulated Report No. ECI/04/2023 dated 9 January 2023 by the Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure, Environment and Economy.

During discussion, Members commended the proactive approach to succession planning, utilising the Modern and Graduate Apprenticeship Scheme and the Council’s Graduate Intern Programme.

The Committee otherwise **NOTED** the Infrastructure, Environment & Economy Service Workforce Plan for 2022–2025.

#### **8. Inner Moray Firth Proposed Local Development Plan 2 Plana Leasachaidh Ionadail 2 ga Mholadh airson Linne Mhoireibh A-staigh**

**Transparency Statement: Mr A Christie made a Transparency Statement in respect of this item as a Non-Executive Director of NHS Highland. However, having applied the objective test, he did not consider that he had an interest to declare.**

There had been circulated Report No. ECI/05/2023 dated 7 January 2023 by the Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure, Environment and Economy.

During discussion, thanks were expressed to officers for the huge amount of work that had gone into the Development Plan over a considerable period, and the time and effort afforded to Community Councils and community groups.

In relation to INS18: Knocknagael, a field/green space separating two housing estates that was used for play and leisure activities, the recommendation in the Plan was to build 100 houses on the site. However, there was an active community that wanted a Community Asset Transfer and a community group wanted to establish a community growing space, encouraging people to have food larders in the area. It seemed sad, when the city of Inverness was expanding so fast and the government wanted people to live within a few minutes of green space, to build on the last area of green space in an urban ward and it was suggested it was unnecessary, there being plenty of brownfield sites around Inverness that could be utilised.

Mr A Christie, seconded by Mr C Aitken, **MOVED** that INS18 be designated as community land and an agricultural site, which was its previous status prior to the Inner Moray Firth Development Plan recommendations.

However, the Clerk questioned the competency of the motion, explaining that she had taken legal advice and site-specific comments were a matter for Area Committees. If Mr Christie had wanted to challenge the decision of the City of Inverness Area Committee the appropriate course of action would have been a Notice of Amendment.

Members having questioned the logic of the governance arrangements, the Chair emphasised that the Committee was being asked to consider the strategic aspects of the Plan and that, to be as local as possible, powers had been delegated to Area Committees to make decisions on the local aspects.

During further discussion, the following points were raised:-

- Members welcomed the Development Plan and emphasised its importance in terms of setting out what communities wanted, what the Scottish Government wanted, the Council's vision moving forward, planning, signalling to developers and businesses what the Council wanted to work on with them, and encouraging people to invest in the Highlands;
- there was a lot of good work taking place and it was necessary to celebrate it;
- it was questioned what the next steps would be in terms of going back out to communities, how communities could get more involved in what was happening in their area and how the Council and other statutory agencies such as NHS Highland engaged. It was added that one of the good things to come out of National Planning Framework 4 was that health boards had to start engaging more with the planning system;
- Members looked forward to seeing how things developed over the next couple of years, particularly in terms of green transport;

- having a strategic direction would aid decision-making at Planning Applications Committees;
- it was welcomed that localism had been recognised in the development of the Plan and the work of Area Committees on the local aspects was commended; and
- clarification was sought, and provided, as to the policy position in respect of nature-based solutions;

The Committee:-

- AGREED** the recommended Council response to strategic issues relevant to the Plan area raised in representations received on the Proposed Plan as set out in Appendix 1 of the report ;
- NOTED** the issues raised in representations as they related to place-specific matters and **NOTED** the local/City Committee agreed response to these issues as set out in Appendix 2 of the report;
- AGREED** to authorise officers to undertake the statutory and other procedures required to submit the Plan to Scottish Ministers and to progress the Plan through its examination up to but excluding the Plan's adoption; and
- AGREED** to authorise the Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure, Environment & Economy, in consultation with the Chair of this Committee, to make any necessary Habitats Regulations Appraisal, factual or other non-material changes to Appendix 1 of the report prior to its submission to Scottish Government.

## 9. Developer Contributions Tabhartasan Luchd-leasachaidh

There had been circulated Report No. ECI/06/2023 dated December 2022 by the Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure, Environment and Economy.

During discussion, Members raised the following main points:-

- there were challenges associated with the Council's Capital Programme, mainly due to prices for goods and materials increasing in line with inflation, yet the same inflationary increases could not be applied to developer contributions. That being the case, it was questioned how the Council was ever going to be able to fund the schools needed in the city of Inverness, and at what point would it be necessary to think about not granting planning permission for new housing developments because it was unaffordable to build the infrastructure and schools needed. Reference was made to the issues affecting existing Inverness schools in terms of overcrowding, increasing numbers of modular units and temporary classrooms, and lack of dining and toilet capacity, and feedback was sought, and provided, on the issues raised;
- developers built houses but developer contributions helped the Council to build communities. The review of developer contributions was welcomed and it was hoped it would lead to more realistic contributions going forward and an increased dialogue with developers;



- it was welcomed that it was proposed to increase communication and closer working with community groups and it was hoped this would result in access to a wider range of community facilities that were more attuned to local needs and aspirations; and
- clarification was sought, and provided, as to whether developer contributions to roads infrastructure and public transport were also under review.

The Committee:-

- NOTED** the findings of the benchmarking review of developer contributions in Highland at section 4 and Appendix 1 of the report;
- AGREED** the protocol for identifying developer contributions at Appendix 2 of the report;
- AGREED** the Terms of Reference for the Developer Contributions Action Group at Appendix 3 of the report;
- AGREED** the steps to coordinate infrastructure delivery through the Developer Contributions Action Group and the Capital Programme Board; and
- AGREED** the full list of proposed actions and next steps in Section 6 of the report.

#### **10. Local Visitor Levy – Current Progress and Next Steps Cis Luchd-tadhail Ionadail – Adhartas Làithreach agus Ath Cheumannan**

**Declaration of Interest: Mr M Green declared an interest in this as an owner of a holiday rental property and, in accordance with paragraph 5.6 of the revised Code of Conduct, they left the meeting for this item.**

**Transparency Statement: Mr H Morrison made a Transparency Statement in respect of this item as a hotelier. However, having applied the objective test, he did not consider that he had an interest to declare.**

There had been circulated Report No. ECI/07/2023 dated 9 January 2023 by the Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure, Environment and Economy.

The Chair emphasised that the report was about the legislative process for the Local Visitor Levy Bill (the Bill), not the merits or otherwise of introducing a Local Visitor Levy in Highland.

During discussion, Members raised the following main points:-

- one of the areas missing, from a strategic perspective, was the methodology by which a visitor levy, if introduced, would be collected and accounted for and it was suggested officers at CoSLA needed to consider that as well as what any proceeds might be spent on or ringfenced for. Information was sought as to what could be done to feed in in that regard;
- whilst the principle of a visitor levy was acceptable, a lot of discussion needed to take place at Ward and Area Committee level;
- Skye was one of the top destinations for tourists in Scotland and many people in the tourist industry were concerned as to how a visitor levy would

- impact on their business. Like the short-term let licences that many businesses now had to apply for, it was seen as another burden to be faced;
- there was not a lot of time to submit comments and observations before the Bill went through the final process and it was queried how it could be ensured that the Act would allow some flexibility to suit the businesses of Highland, and Skye and Raasay in particular. It was necessary to get some information out to businesses as to what the effects would be in 2026 and reassurance was sought as to the envisioned way forward;
- as well as roads and car parks, tourists needed buses, young people with employability skills to work in the industry, cultural events, access to healthcare and active travel opportunities and it was hoped there would be as much flexibility as possible when it came to allocating the funds generated by a visitor levy and that the local authority and local areas would have a say in what the funds contributed to; and
- whilst it was recognised that the implementation of a visitor levy would call on resources, the prospect of between £5m and £10m being generated annually and reinvested to enhance the visitor experience in Highland was to be welcomed and Members looked forward to future reports as matters progressed.

The Committee:-

- NOTED** the legislative process for the Local Visitor Levy Bill, the likely timescales for its passage through Parliament and implications for its introduction in Highland; and
- AGREED** the Council's proposed next steps, which included an offer to provide verbal and written evidence to Parliamentary Committee(s).

#### **11. Free Bus Travel for Persons Aged Under 22 Siubhal Bus An-asgaidh Dhaibhsan Fo Aois 22**

There had been circulated Report No. ECI/08/2023 dated 9 January 2023 by the Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure, Environment and Economy.

During discussion, Members raised the following main points:-

- officers were thanked for the timely report and the hard work that went into it and for promoting the scheme;
- in Highland the uptake of under 22s using the scheme was lower than the national average. In 2022 the uptake had risen from 28% in June to 41% in November. Members hoped this trend would continue;
- it was felt that the Council should engage with bus operator Stagecoach in an effort to increase bus services in Highland to allow more uptake of this scheme;
- Members were encouraged to take opportunities such as at PTA (parent-teacher association) meetings and community groups to raise awareness and increase uptake; and
- Transform Scotland website was cited as a helpful source of promotion to encourage bus use. In this regard the existing hashtag was highlighted #lovemybus;

The Committee **NOTED**:-

- i. the actions already taken to promote the scheme; and
- ii. the further actions as described in the report.

**12. Electric Vehicle (EV) Infrastructure Network – Tariff Review**  
**Lìonra Bun-structair Charbadan Dealain – Ath-sgrùdadh Prìse**

**Transparency Statement: Ms S Fanet made a Transparency Statement in respect of this item as an owner of an electric vehicle. However, having applied the objective test, she did not consider that he had an interest to declare.**

There had been circulated Report No. ECI/09/2023 dated 20 January 2023 by the Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure, Environment and Economy.

Prior to the commencement of debate the Chair explained that it was proposed to amend recommendation iv to strengthen the governance structure arrangements whereby any variation of the existing rate (either up or down) would be authorised by the Executive Chief Officer Investment, Environment and Economy in consultation with the Chairs of the Economy and Infrastructure and Climate Change Committees on the basis of achieving full cost recovery.

During discussion, Members raised the following main points:-

- the Climate Change Committee had considered the price comparison between electric and traditionally powered vehicles and it was felt that the proposed tariff for journey chargers of 86p would be a step-change in the Council's approach to electrify transport. However, it was understood that this tariff had been reduced following discussions with Transport Scotland and this was to be welcomed;
- the report set out the difference of the cost of journeys between electric a petrol/diesel journey, as amended, and claimed electric powered journeys were cheaper but this was misleading;
- the proposed tariff would be the highest of any local authority in Scotland and it was important Highland Council was competitive in comparison with them;
- some of the risk assessments regarding Option 2 presented to the Climate Change Committee were missing from this report; and
- the Climate Change Committee had made a clear recommendation that this matter be referred back there for consideration, not to be determined at the Economy and Infrastructure Committee today, and this called into question the level of importance the Council assigned the Climate Change Committee.

Thereafter, Mr K Gowans, seconded by Mr I Brown, **MOVED** the recommendations as amended.

As an **AMENDMENT** Mr P Logue, seconded by Ms K Willis, moved that the Committee agrees to respect recommendation 8.iii of Highland Council's Climate Change Committee meeting of 3 November 2022 with the effect that this report be

brought to the next Climate Change Committee for its due consideration.

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

### **For the Motion**

Mr I Brown, Mr M Cameron, Mr K Gowans, Mr M Green, Mr R Jones, Mr W MacKay, Mr H Morrison and Mr K Rosie

### **For the Amendment**

Mr C Aitkin, Mr M Baird, Mr A Christie, Mr P Logue, Ms J McEwan, Ms L Niven, Mr R Stewart and Ms K Willis.

There being an equality of votes, the Chair exercised his casting vote in favour of the **MOTION**, which was therefore carried.

### **Decision**

The Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** that Highland Council EV charge points currently had had a tariff in place since 1 June 2021;
- ii. **NOTED** the budget pressure the current tariff rate placed on the Council;
- iii. **NOTED** the business justification as laid out in the paper;
- iv. **NOTED** progress on the Pathfinder project in section 4.7 of the report, to investigate commercialisation options for the EV network;
- v. **APPROVED** a tariff increase based on the recommendation detailed in section 7 and within Appendix 1 of the report, as of 1 March 2023 in order to:-
  - alleviate existing revenue pressure and reflect increased operating costs;
  - ensure vital income to maintain low carbon transport connectivity assets for, and to, our city and rural communities;
  - provide resource to maintain management of EV Infrastructure (section 6.1 of the report); and
  - ensure charges remained in line with rising operational costs; and
  - **APPROVED** the governance for tariff review. Any variation of the existing rate (either up or down) must be authorised by the Executive Chief Officer – Infrastructure, Economy and Environment in consultation with the Chairs and Vice Chairs of the Economy and Infrastructure and Climate, Change Committees.

## **13. Active Travel Prioritisation and Funding Bids Prìomhachasan agus Tagraidhean Maoineachaidh Siubhail Ghnìomhach**

There had been circulated Report No. ECI/10/2023 dated 9 January 2023 by the Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure, Environment and Economy.

During discussion, Members raised the following main points:-

- in terms of promoting active travel, it was felt that Caithness did not have the sufficient infrastructure or bus services to offer people;
- assurance was sought that pedestrianisation of Queensgate, Union Street and Post Office Avenue did not go ahead, including any closing of Church Street, until full consultation had been undertaken with the business communities, Business Improvement Districts (BID) and the wider public of Inverness;
- the Drummond Road project requirement was questioned as 85% of pupils of this special school required full transportation assistance to get to and from the school;
- concern was raised regarding the Castle Road and Castle Street pedestrianisation projects especially as previous restrictions had been removed. In this regard these projects required much more consultation and scrutiny;
- it was requested that route 25 - Munlochry to Avoch be revised as Black Isle communities needed partnership with Highland Council to progress with this project;
- funding provided from the Scottish Government was welcomed to allow the Council to progress active travel projects;
- it was queried if the Policy would identify revenue funding to ensure routine maintenance could be carried out to new pathways or routes;
- assurance was provided that there would be as many briefings to Members as required for projects and that consultation would take place with the public, Members and local businesses; and
- Members amended the second recommendation to remove the word 'prioritisation' as full consultation had not yet taken place, and to add 'including the development of a clear and inclusive consultation strategy'.

The Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the evidence-led approach used to set out how to prioritise the delivery of Active Travel infrastructure across Highland; and
- ii. **AGREED** that officers proceed with the delivery of this network, following the processes explained in sections 5 and 6 of the report including the development of a clear and inclusive consultation strategy.

#### **14. Tree Management Strategy** **Ro-innleachd Stiùireadh Chraobh**

There had been circulated Report No. ECI/11/2023 dated 18 January 2023 by the Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure, Environment and Economy.

During discussion, Members raised the following main points:-

- whilst Members welcomed the report, it was felt that the report was superficial and light in terms of the Council being a 'good neighbour' and actively managing its tree stock - such as trees planted in inappropriate

- locations, potential storm damage risk to properties, overshadowing properties, root damage to grass lawns etc;
- it was suggested that the report be deferred until further consultation with a wider remit of Members had taken place;
- it was felt that the Council had not undertaken routine maintenance of trees in the past;
- Members also felt there should be more emphasis of mature tree preservation and allowance for leaving deadwood as part of the ecosystem within the tree management strategy as this would help the Council to meet its carbon net zero and biodiversity targets;
- it was suggested that the report incorporate ways to utilise windblown trees rather than leave them to rot away;
- it would be important to ensure that only appropriate tree specimens were planted moving forward and that the Council had adequate numbers of trained staff to implement the strategy;
- advice on dealing with diseased trees should form part of the strategy; and
- further information was requested regarding the Queens Green Canopy initiative.

The Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the contents of the updated Tree Management Strategy; and
- ii. **APPROVED** the Strategy and the policies contained within it; and
- iii. **AGREED** to bring the amended report to the next Economy and Infrastructure Committee following further consultation with Members regarding being good neighbours, detailing tree maintenance protocols and preservation measures for mature trees and dead wood.

**15. National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4) and the Highland Development Plan Scheme 2023**  
**Dealbhaidh Nàiseanta 4 agus Sgeama Plana Leasachaidh na Gàidhealtachd 2023**

There had been circulated Report No. ECI/12/2023 dated 6 January 2023 by the Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure, Environment and Economy.

During discussion, Members raised the following main points:-

- Members emphasised this report was a live document that would be reviewed annually;
- it was queried how the Council apply the Policy to planning decision making, especially in cases where local communities had provided specific input after consultation;
- clarification was sought, and provided, on how community planning partners engagement levels were monitored; and
- in terms of the Local Place Plans, it was queried what would happen if communities did not have the capacity to develop a plan.

The Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the summary of NPF4 in section 5 of the report, in particular its status, now and once adopted and published, as part of the Development Plan for decision making;
- ii. **NOTED** the high-level mapping of NPF4 policies against planning policy in Highland's Local Development Plans as outlined in Appendix 1 of the report and that this would form the basis for further work;
- iii. **AGREED** the Council's approach to carrying out new duties and functions set out for Development Planning as outlined in Section 6 of the report, including a proposed consultation on how the Council communicated and consulted upon development plans;
- iv. **AGREED** the Development Plan Scheme/Newsletter at Appendix 2 of the report which included the Participation Statement and the invitation to prepare Local Place Plans; and
- v. **NOTED** that the full implications of the new Development Plan regulations, and the more detailed steps for preparing a new Highland Local Development Plan, would be reported to Committee as soon as practicable.

**16. Bus Partnership Fund (BPF) and Bus Service Improvement Partnership (BSIP) Update**  
**Cunntas às Ùr mu Mhaoin Com-pàirteachas Bus agus Com-pàirteachas Leasachaidh Seirbheis Bus**

**Transparency Statement: Mr A Christie made a Transparency Statement in respect of this item as a Non-executive director of NHS Highland. However, having applied the objective test, he did not consider that he had an interest to declare.**

There had been circulated Report No. ECI/13/2023 dated 19 December 2022 by the Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure, Environment and Economy.

During discussion, Members raised the following main points:-

- Members welcomed the ongoing hard work in Lochaber regarding the two new bus link projects and the Raigmore Bus Gate project;
- it was advised that public consultation for 'Your views on Public Transport in Lochaber' was available online with a deadline of 6 February 2023; and
- it was confirmed that the consultation meeting held at the Spectrum Centre regarding the Millburn Corridor was extremely well attended. Compliments and positive feedback had been expressed by BID and the public. In this regard Members thanked Officers for their hard work.

The Committee **NOTED**:-

- i. the work carried out to date under the BPF Projects; and
- ii. that officers would progress with work on a draft BSIP, in consultation with the Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure, Environment & Economy, in

consultation with the Chair and Vice Chair and the Economy and Infrastructure Committee spokesperson for the Opposition Group as agreed at the meeting of the Economy and Infrastructure Committee of 5 May 2021 where it had been agreed to delegate powers to this group.

**17. Highland Council Water Safety Policy**  
**Poileasaidh Sàbhailteachd Uisge Chomhairle na Gàidhealtachd**

**Transparency Statement: Mr A Christie made a Transparency Statement in respect of this item as a Non-executive director of NHS Highland. However, having applied the objective test, he did not consider that he had an interest to declare.**

There had been circulated Report No. ECI/14/2023 dated 10 January 2023 by the Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure, Environment and Economy.

The Committee **AGREED** the Policy, acknowledged the ongoing work that was taking place and supported the course of action proposed around having a dedicated page on Highland Council's website to cover water safety issues

**18. UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF)**  
**Maoin Soirbheachas Co-roinnte na RA**

There had been circulated Report No. ECI/15/2023 dated 18 January 2023 by the Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure, Environment and Economy.

During discussion, Members raised the following main points:-

- a list of geographical areas at the top of the risk register was requested as these would require to be closely monitored. In this regard it was also queried what project delivery mechanism was in place to ensure adequate progress and success;
- information was sought, and provided, regarding the Council's contribution of funds towards the Lochaber UCI Mountain Bike World Cup; and
- in order to update community councils, it was queried if a timeline for commencing had been agreed.

The Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the successful approval of the UKSPF Investment Plan submitted and formal allocation of funding from the UK Government for 2022/23 and indicative allocations for 2023/24 and 2024/25;
- ii. **AGREED** the UKSPF Delivery Plan as set out in Appendix 1 of the report, including the 2022/23 prioritised spend and decision-making structures; and
- iii. **AGREED** that the City Region Deal Member Monitoring Group remit be extended to include the UKSPF and that UKSPF Programme Delivery Reports be presented to the Economy and Infrastructure Committee on a six-monthly basis.



**19. Species Champion Initiative**  
**Iomairt Curaidh nan Gnèithean**

There had been circulated Report No. ECI/16/2023 dated 14 December 2022 by the Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure, Environment and Economy.

The Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the contents of the report; and
- ii. **APPROVED** the list of Species Champions with the following additions:- Mr M Baird – Honey Bee; Ms S Fanet – Common Eel Grass; Mr M Green – Solitary Bee; Mr R MacKintosh – Red Grouse; Ms J McEwan – Hedgehog; Ms L Niven – Killer Whale.

**20. Appointments to Boards and Other Bodies**  
**Cur an Dreuchd gu Bùird agus Buidhnean Eile**

The Committee **AGREED** the following:-

- Harbours Management Board – Mr H Morrison to replace Ms S Atkin
- Highland Strategic Local Advisory Group of the Community Regeneration Fund - Mr R Jones to replace Mr I Brown.

**21. Minutes**  
**Geàrr-chunntas**

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

- i. North PAC –18 October 2022;
- ii. South PAC – 1 November 2022;

and, **APPROVED** the following Minutes:-

- iii. Harbours Management Board - 9 December 2022;
- iv. City Region Deal Monitoring Group -18 January 2023.

**22. Exclusion of the Public**  
**Às-dùnadh a' Phobaill**

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 items on the grounds that they involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Part 1 of Schedule 7A of the Act, the relevant paragraphs being shown in the reports.

**23. Property Transactions Monitoring Report**  
**Aithisg Sgrùdaidh Ghnothachasan Seilbhe**

There had been circulated to Members only Report No. ECI/17/2023 dated 14 December 2022 by the Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure, Environment and Economy.

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

**24. Land and Property**  
**Fearann agus Cuid-seilbhe**

There had been circulated to Members only Report No. ECI/18/2023 dated 10 January 2023 by the Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure, Environment and Economy.

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

The meeting ended at 2.45 pm